

Vitality!



EFAP NEWSLETTER

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Human Solutions™

Managing Diversity

Understanding, valuing, and celebrating differences is the key



In this issue

The multi-faceted workplace

What managers can do to manage diversity

Workplace strategies to manage diversity

Generational diversity

Invisible diversity

Survey results and our commitment to action

Managing diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for an organization. To maintain a competitive advantage, today's workplaces must (1) fully utilize the talents, abilities, and perspectives of diverse workers, and (2) eliminate workplace barriers that arise from marginalized and disadvantaged status. To ignore the challenge of managing diversity can negatively impact not only the marginalized employees and their productivity, but coworkers and the organization as a whole.

The Canadian workplace is changing, evolving, and diversifying. Consider that in 1901, the Canadian Census recorded 25 different ethnic groups, and in 2006 the Census reported that more than 200 different ethnic groups called Canada their home. About 80 percent of the Canadian workforce is made up of women, visible minorities, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities.

When considering diversity in the workplace, the term is not restricted to ethno-cultures, but includes several diverse populations that can be marginalized or disadvantaged according to gender, age, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, and spiritual practices. All of these groups may experience restricted access to work opportunities and resources, bias and discrimination, depressed earnings, inadequate inclusion, underutilization, and/or overrepresentation in a narrow range of work roles.

Since work, and workplace climate, is a cornerstone of psychological health and well-being, managers and supervisors need to enact

46%

Percentage of the Canadian workplace that is female.
An increase of 53% since 1965.

18%

Percentage of Canadians who are foreign-born.
By 2017 this number is expected to rise to 22%.

41%

Percentage of immigrants who are university-trained.
13% have college diplomas. 8% have trade certificates.

11.5% vs. 4.9%

The national unemployment rate for immigrants who have been in Canada five years or less versus the unemployment rate for the Canadian-born population (2006 figures).

managerial skills that will help them understand, accept, value, and celebrate differences among employees. Judith Plotkin, Human Solutions™ National Director of Business Development comments “Canada has a diverse cultural mosaic and reflecting that is good business practice. A diverse sales force, for example, can better service a diverse marketplace. Organizations have to incorporate diversity more than ever before to be successful and better reflect the needs of their customers.”

The multi-cultural, multi-faceted workplace

The key to diversity is to ensure a welcoming workplace where everyone works well together toward a common goal. It requires recognizing that having different people on the team who bring different strengths can enhance every team. Misunderstandings can easily arise on both sides: a manager is unaware of an employee’s cultural practices, and the employee is not familiar with Canadian cultural norms.

As a manager or supervisor in today’s workplace you might encounter the following:

- You take someone you just hired on a tour of the facility and he or she walks several feet behind you because in his or her culture walking along side the boss is disrespectful.
- The person you just hired addresses everyone as “Mr.” or “Ms” because that’s how he or she was raised.
- Your new employee appears to lack initiative when in fact they are being respectful of authority and are waiting for specific directions.

“When managing different cultural groups, it’s important to recognize that everyone is there to do a job and may go about it in different ways with different work habits. A manager has to be comfortable with everyone getting to the same result in his or her own way,” says Ms. Plotkin.

Generational differences

Many managers are learning that a one-size-fits-all management style does not work when it comes to working with different age groups. “We need to recognize that people come to work with different values, expecting different things, depending on when they grew up and what was happening in the world during those years,” says Ms. Plotkin.

“Younger workers, for example, may be motivated by different things such as the mission statement, value statement, the alignment of what they do, and the organization’s global footprint. These workers grew up learning about the environment and corporate ethics, and they want to understand an organization’s global position and accountability. Baby Boomers, on the other hand, were

What managers can do

- Show interest in the career development of all staff.
- Create opportunities for highly talented employees.
- Delegate fairly in order to develop all team members.
- Communicate that inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour is not tolerated.
- Consider individual needs when enforcing company policies and guidelines.
- Ask staff members how they would prefer to be managed.
- Be patient with yourself and others—working with diverse groups provides many opportunities for mistakes to be made, to be unintentionally offensive, or to react inappropriately. Learn, correct the situation, and move forward.
- Convey respect at all times.
- Seek advice. Contacting the EFAP may help.

Workplace strategies

- Make diversity a priority throughout the organization.
- Establish a diversity team/committee/council to assist in managing diversity throughout the organization.
- Provide diversity training to ensure cultural sensitivity and understanding in the workplace.
- Help skilled new Canadians improve their English or French language skills through training and education.
- Ensure there is commitment from senior managers for diversity goals.
- Realize that it takes time to change corporate culture.

“The effects of increased globalization, flattened organizational hierarchies, substantial influxes of women and people of color (including immigrants), technological innovation, and widespread use of work groups and teams have created an unprecedented need to attend to worker diversity—both in access (bringing people ‘in the door’) and inclusion (bringing people ‘to the table’).”

Ruth Fessinger, PhD.
Workplace Diversity and Public Policy,
American Psychologist, 2008, 63(4).

faced with a very competitive experience just to get a job, and so they looked the other way when it came to certain corporate issues or a lack of value alignment.”

There is a general consensus (although the exact years may differ) that today’s workforce consists of four generations (US figures from 2007):

- Traditionalists (born between 1922 and 1946) represent 7% of the workforce.
- Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) represent 43% of the workforce.
- Generation X (born between 1964 and 1980) represents 29% of the workforce.
- Generation Y (born between 1980 and 2000) represents 22% of the workforce.

“While it may be a bit of a generalization, much has been said about how traditionalists value quality, respect, and authority. Those of us who are baby boomers are used to being highly competitive, having embraced the value of having to sacrifice to get ahead. Gen X, the first generation to grow up with technology, care more about work-life balance, and Gen Y are the ‘go do it’ group who multi-task, get bored easily, appreciate immediate feedback, and value community.”

“Diversity is a competitive advantage in the marketplace and a smart business move. Taking action to become inclusive has the potential to improve morale and increase productivity.”

Judith Plotkin
Human Solutions™ National Director of Business Development

Invisible diversity

When considering today’s diverse workforce, a multitude of cultures and different age groups are only part of the equation. True diversity must also consider the differences that aren’t so visible. We don’t always see, for example, that an employee has a mental or physical disability or perhaps a different sexual orientation.

“Today’s workforce requires that managers be very sensitive. Managers and supervisors sometimes need to be open-minded, willing to go with the flow, or reach out to others and ask for help. But realistically, they can’t be expected to understand everything to do with another culture or group,” says Ms. Plotkin.

“Managers needn’t get distracted by any of this or shy away from encouraging a very diverse workforce. To help managers and HR and union leaders understand and navigate their way through dealing fairly and appropriately with diverse groups, I would recommend that a workplace establish a peer diversity program. A diversity team that is self-identified and representative of the different backgrounds and needs within the workforce can help make the workplace more sensitive and friendly for all employees. Just as safety messages are everywhere, we are now seeing workplaces putting messages out there related to their mission, vision, and policies that are really employee-focused and show how that particular organization values not just diversity, but overall health and wellness within that. That is the reality of the world today.”

Resources: Diversity in the workplace

Human Resource Development Canada (www.hrdc.gc.ca). HRDC provides a wide variety of information for employers and new Canadians. Visit the site and search *workplace diversity* or *workplace equity*. There is an excellent article on the *Business Case for Diversity*.

World Education Services (www.wes.org). This site allows new immigrants and employers to convert education credentials from any country in the world to their Canadian equivalents.

Hireimmigrants.ca. This site provides invaluable information to help you hire a skilled immigrant.

Diversityintheworkplace.ca. This is Canada’s only online publication dealing with diversity in the workplace, however there is a subscription cost.

New Developments

Responding to your feedback Our commitment to action

Earlier this year we asked customers to complete an online survey to let us know how we are doing and what else we can do to help you and your organization create a healthier, more effective work environment. One of the items that stood out for us was the lack of awareness about some of the services provided under the EFAP such as eldercare, childcare, financial, and legal.



We also know from talking with our customers and the clients who have used our EFAP services that people want to manage their own health and well-being in their own way, on their own time.

With that in mind, we have developed the *Plan Smart Series*™. This represents an evolution of the marketing of our work life services that provided a one-size-fits-all message. The new *Plan Smart Series*™ expands the client's understanding of the breadth of the EFAP service. The *Plan Smart Series*™ provides for the possibility of a variety or combination of services that can include:

- A full assessment by a clinician (by telephone) of the client's needs.
- A customized package of information and tools (this might include books, software programs, DVDs, articles providing the latest research on a specific topic) sent to the client immediately.
- Ongoing telephone consultation with a clinician or in-house expert.
- Referral to specific Human Solutions™ online services.
- Referral to an outside expert under contract with Human Solutions™.

The *Plan Smart Series*™ is designed to provide clients with prevention and early intervention-oriented services targeted to meet the client's unique needs and circumstances. The *Plan Smart Series*™ allows clients to take full responsibility for proactively managing their own and their family members' health and well-being. This means clients can address any concerns they may have very early in the process, long before a small concern becomes a larger problem that requires a counselling intervention.

We will be officially launching the new brand *Plan Smart Series*™ in September so you will be receiving more details at that time. We'll also be providing regular communications to help you promote the new services with your employees. In the next issue of *Vitality!* we will provide further feedback on our customer service and how we are responding to it.

**Want to know more about these new developments?
Contact your Human Solutions™ Account Manager.**

About *Vitality!*

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For more information on the issues presented here feel free to contact your EFAP provider.

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