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MARINE CORPS INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY/ENTERPRISE'S DIVERSITY WAY AHEAD

Introduction

What is diversity and why should the Marine Corps Intelligence Enterprise (MCIA/E) be concerned about it? This paper will explore several aspects of diversity. These aspects include the definition of diversity – including both demographic and ideological diversity – and why being diverse is important to MCIA/E as an organization. It will also explore how to develop, communicate, and manage a diversity plan within an organization and several recommendations for MCIA/E to incorporate diversity.

Title III of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 requires that diversity be incorporated in the Federal workforce in order to ensure that “the nation’s workforce reflects the diversity of the nation as a whole.” There is a fine line that federal agencies have to walk in order to achieve diversity in the workplace because the organization must avoid perceptions of preferential treatment in an effort to raise numbers based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, or national origin (McIntyre, Moberg, & Posner, 1980). Achieving a diverse organization, as mandated by law, requires creativity and a long-term commitment throughout an organization.

Organizational studies have shown that a diverse multicultural organization will have several advantages over less diverse organizations (Soni, 2000). Research has shown that a diverse organization will not be free of tensions, but tensions will be resolved more smoothly and permanently (Ely & Thomas, 2001). A diverse organization will experience increased productivity in both quantity and quality because it embraces creativity and teamwork. It leans on the capital of its people to ensure flexibility and success while redefining its markets and products with an innovative strategy. Historically, MCIA/E has exhibited a deep commitment to cultivating an environment where the contributions of every employee are valued and respected. In keeping with this vision and ensure the growth of diversity within the Marine

Corps Intelligence, the Enterprise should strive to recruit, retain, and promote a workforce that represents a diverse knowledge-base.

Three key components to achieving a diverse organization, both demographically and in thought and experience, are 1) develop a holistic diversity program; 2) commitment to the program organization wide; and 3) effectively manage the program through a management diversity plan. This paper explores cases of successful and unsuccessful diversity programs from both corporations and federal agencies. It also offers recommendations for how (MCIA/E) could effectively apply these lessons to its strategic diversity plan. The goal of this paper is to provide MCIA/E with an actionable roadmap for improving diversity within the organization.

Defining Diversity

Diversity in the workplace is a highly salient issue, because diversity impacts work group effectiveness, organizational turnover, and the overall success of an organization. There are many ways to define diversity. The traditional definition of diversity includes demographic characteristics such as of race, gender, ethnicity, disabilities, and sexual orientation. However, studies of successful diversity programs show that diversity has a much broader definition. This more encompassing definition of diversity recognizes that the skills, insights, and experiences that people develop as members of various cultural groups are potentially valuable resources to an organization. The most successfully diverse organizations are often referred to as multicultural.

These multicultural organizations recognize that diversity is the feature of a mixed workforce that provides a wide range of abilities, experience, knowledge, and strengths. But, that demographic diversity alone is not enough to determine successful or positive working environments (Ely & Thomas, 2001). One drawback to seeking out diverse perspectives in an organization is that perspectives are not easily measurable. Despite this, studies have shown that although physical diversity is the only aspect of diversity mandated by law, the mere presence of women and minorities in an agency's workforce is not a guarantee of diversity of thought within an organization (Soni, 2000). Additionally, research has shown that individual values and belief systems are likely to have a major influence on decision-making (Brown &

Harris, 1993; Tipple & Wellman, 1991). As a result, true diversity in an organization must include cultural characteristics like personality styles, professional mind-sets, and value systems.

Studies of diversity in the workplace find that the perspective a work group has on diversity influences how people express and manage tensions related to perceived differences (Ely & Thomas, 2001). The litmus test for success in achieving the perspective that is all-inclusive is asking whether the organization is trying to assimilate people into what already exists or are people being hired because of the differences they bring to the table? This is important because research has shown that increasing the numbers of traditionally underrepresented groups without altering power relations between dominant cultural views and subdominant cultural views is unlikely to improve the position of the [underrepresented] groups substantially. Simply stated, organizations like MCIA/E need to change their perspective on diversity in order to go beyond the demographic characteristics alone.

Developing a Holistic Diversity Program

The goal of a successful diversity program is to educate employees on the meaning of diversity as it relates to organizational goals and values. The first step to developing a holistic diversity program is to assess the current diversity perspective within the organization. This can be accomplished through research, dialoguing with the employees, and auditing the culture and management systems. Senior leaders must communicate their commitment to diversity through written policies, and diversity initiatives must be based on a clear strategic vision. Developing a clear strategic vision is accomplished through engaging the employees and identifying the aspects of diversity that are valued by that organization. Researchers determined that perceptions about equality in the workplace, job satisfaction, and interpersonal relationships vary by racial/ethnic and gender groups based on their experiences in the workplace (Soni, 2000). Research found that white employees who were not provided with a justification and rationale for diversity programs tended to feel more resentment toward newly hired minority personnel and interacted less effectively, than employees who were engaged in the process of developing diversity programs (Soni, 2000).

The Nike Corporation's diversity program is highly regarded in the textile industry. When the Nike Corporation established its diversity program, the company leadership started by engaging employees to determine how the employees felt about diversity. Engaging employees to help develop diversity programs increases the company-wide understanding of what constitutes diversity, how it affects the organizations, and why diversity programs are needed. Once the diversity vision has been established in accordance with the diversity mission, leadership should work to outline and implement an effective diversity program. In order to be effective, diversity programs need to be holistic in their approach. An effective diversity program implements diversity initiatives in training, hiring, and in the day-to-day culture of the organization. All of these are important aspects of communicating a plan. (FY05-06 Nike Corporate Responsibility Plan)

A good example of a company with an effective strategic diversity plan is Wegman's. Money Magazine named Wegman's one of the top companies for diversity (Money Magazine, 2010). They achieve diversity through a five-point plan. Their strategic plan starts with active involvement in the local community. This not only builds brand loyalty, but it helps them in their staffing. Next, to ensure that they have a diverse population for recruiting, they increase the scope of their normal applicant pool by actively educating potential recruits about job opportunities at Wegman's. They do this by partnering with schools, colleges, and community organizations. Wegman's also provides numerous opportunities for training, continuous education, cross-training and moving into new areas of the company. This increases the capabilities of their people and develops loyalty within the corps of employees; by showing that Wegman's is committed to its people. Lastly, Wegman's is committed to diversity in leadership by preparing people to effectively lead others and support the growth and profitability of the company, while living the company values and embracing their culture (Wegman's, 2010).

As Wegman's plan exhibits, a strategic diversity plan includes training and recruitment. Two types of training are crucial to any diversity plan: awareness and skills building training. Awareness training focuses on creating an understanding of the need for and meaning of managing and valuing diversity. Skill-building training focuses on educating employees on how to respond to differences in the work place (Soni, 2000). Diversity training's primary goal should

be to develop knowledge of patterns in which resistance to diversity is manifested in organizations and skills, and attitudes needed for changing these patterns (Soni, 2000). Initial training programs are imperative to infusing the organization with the newly developed diversity vision. The goals of employee-sponsored diversity training should include sensitivity to differences; developing an ability and willingness to recognize, accept and value diversity; minimizing patterns of unequal treatment; minimizing stereotypes and prejudice; and improving cross-cultural interactions (Soni, 2000). Training is also an effective way to manage diversity in the organization. Making training a long-term process ensures that the diversity vision is perpetuated and that new employees understand the culture of diversity that the organization seeks to achieve.

A successful strategic recruitment policy builds on diversity within an organization. A diversity plan focused recruitment program starts with an organizational environment that appeals to candidates from diverse markets (D'Netto & Sohal, 1999). A company should use a diverse recruiting team that is representative of the diverse organization for which they are recruiting. Homogenous recruiting teams meant to target specific races or genders do not exemplify diversity success within a workplace. As with Wegman's, establishing long-term relationships with minority organizations, professional groups, and colleges increases the diversity of a potential recruitment pool (Digh, 1999). In order to ensure that new hires will be able to support the cultural diversity of the organization potential candidates should be interviewed for "diversity competency." Diversity competency is defined as being readily able to recall working with, and learning from culturally different individuals (Cox, 2001).

Organizational Commitment and Buy-in

As the diversity program begins to take shape, senior leadership should begin to engage the workforce in order to establish employee commitment to the program. This is essential to the development and management of diversity within in the organization. While top management support is crucial, it is not sufficient. Organizations also need lower level members, especially key line managers, to support the diversity vision of the organization (Cox & Blake, 1991). Effective communication, internal to the organization, is a must to successfully

implement a diversity program and articulate why diversity is important. Research shows that successful diversity programs require an extensive internal communication network, that allows employees to participate in the development of diversity programs and allows management to articulate diversity policies and objectives, and communicate them directly and clearly to the rest of the organization (Soni, 2000).

An excellent comparison of successes and failures in communication can be made using the examples of diversity programs at Nike Corporation and the Environmental Protection Agency. Nike was successfully in communicated with their employees. They solicited feedback on diversity and inclusion, instituted a one-day diversity class, gathered feedback on current diversity programs, and then made improvements based on that feedback. In addition, Nike developed a formal policy on diversity and created a position for a Vice President of diversity. Throughout the implementation of their diversity program Nike Corp, followed up with employees to see how their improvements were being received. Employees were engaged throughout the organization creating ownership and buy-in to the diversity plan. (Nike Diversity Program Plan)

In contrast, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was unsuccessfully in effectively communicating its diversity program to employees. The EPA's program included issuance of a formal policy statement regarding diversity, establishment of a diversity task force to monitor the program, and a one-day agency-wide mandatory diversity awareness training. Additionally, the EPA's diversity task force oversaw programs that were meant to emphasize diversity. These included rotational assignments, leadership development programs for women and minorities, and observance of variety of commemorative events (Soni, 2000).

From appearances, the Nike diversity program and the EPA's diversity program are very similar. However, the EPA's employees largely considered its diversity program a failure and researchers agreed (Soni, 2000). In contrast, Nike's employees hailed its program and it is widely regarded as one of the most successful diversity programs in the textile industry. The significant difference between the two programs is that from the onset, Nike engaged its employees to help shape and define the program. In contrast, the EPA's program was a top-down driven program. As the program progressed, the EPA employees expressed feelings of

frustration because they did not feel their commitment to the program mattered and they did not understand the purpose of the program (Soni, 2000). When asked, EPA employees only equated the EPA's diversity program with the one-time diversity training session (Soni, 2000). The employees perceived the EPA's plan was merely a matter of increasing numerical representation of women and minorities, which caused significant frustration among the employees (Soni, 2000). In contrast, Nike's policy, defined by the employees and written by management, seeks to increase diversity both in perspective and in numbers.

Private corporations view diversity as means by which they can be competitive and raise profit, but the public sector does not have a profit paradigm to motivate towards organizational diversity. As a result, promoting diversity in a public organization can be more challenging, which is a reason to continually engage employees. "Management scholars warn that while corporations may run the risk of losing their competitive advantage, government faces an even greater risk, that of diminished legitimacy in the eyes of the people it is trying to serve by failing to effectively utilize and manage diversity" (Soni, 2000). To be effective, diversity practices have to be implemented at all levels and in all aspects of the organization.

Managing Diversity

The final component of a diversity program is a continuous process: diversity management. Managing diversity is a key concept in any diversity program, because creating and maintaining an environment that facilitates diversity is a long-term process. This begins with reframing diversity as a resource and a process, not a problem. Managing diversity refers to developing organizational structures and processes that effectively utilize diversity to create an equitable and fair work environment for all employees (Soni, 2000). Cox and Blake (1991) found that a well-managed, diverse workforce holds a potential competitive advantage for organizations. Managing diversity in the workplace requires a new set of skills and attitudes on the part of the managers and workers.

Managing diversity includes managing all the aspects of a well-developed diversity program. It includes overseeing training and recruiting to ensure that it always adheres to the mission and values of the organization (Cox T., 2001). All managers are diversity managers, but

some organizations, like Nike, have chosen to appoint a specific manager within human capital to ensure the vision is communicated to all levels of the organization. Achieving holistic diversity within an organization is a long-term process, and diversity management is the method by which the process is championed.

Managers and leaders to need to be able to examine the ways the differences in the labor force can be a catalyst for new perspectives on an old problem (Ely & Thomas, 2001). In order to create a day-to-day culture of diversity, Nike created venues and environments for open dialogue to encourage diverse opinions and a multitude of perspectives. Nike regularly associates employees at various levels of the organization with its high-level decision makers in order to dialogue and share information. In a public agency, administrators must be willing and able to simultaneously work on issues of productivity and representativeness; and administrators must learn to effectively integrate the old with the new (Tipple & Wellman, 1991). Nike aims to cultivate an inclusive culture, and inspire individuals and teams to find surprising connections and intersections that ultimately fuel business solutions and drive innovation. In addition, Nike seeks to find and create unique and surprising combinations, intersections, and connections within the organization and then shares these insights with academia, industry and government. Managers need to understand that this can lead to more informed diversity utilization and management policies.

Managing diversity occurs at all levels, including development of a program, communication of the policies. The most successful diversity programs have applied a combination of efforts including, diversity management offices, top-down enforcement of diversity management, training at all levels, and free to speak environments. Researchers found that striving to create value in appreciating diversity theoretically provides evidence that organization cares about their employees (Soni, 2000). Managing diversity includes managing the complex issues of diversity like intellectual and emotional responses, historical realities, and moral and managerial issues. It also includes follow-ups with employees to see how the program is being received. Lastly, diversity management includes monitoring the change in the diversity culture through the organization, and then evaluating the results against the strategic vision.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The goal of this paper is to provide the Marine Corps Enterprise with a roadmap for achieving the type of diversity that is in-keeping with its organizational values and mission. The deep commitment of the Marine Corps Intelligence Enterprise to its employees and its customers shows that it values the broad spectrum of creativity and knowledge that is fostered by a diverse environment. To ensure the growth of diversity within the Marine Corps Intelligence, the Enterprise should strive to define their organizational diversity, develop a holistic diversity program, and manage the program, all through an effective communication.

Recommendation for Implementation:

Recommendation 1: To assess the current view of diversity within MCIA/E. MCIA/E should conduct internal surveys to establish the current diversity perspective of the organization. The current perspective of employees will be indicative of the type of culture at MCIA/E. Researchers have developed methods for determining the level of intangible diversity in an organization (Hostager and De Meuse, 2002). A multicultural organization is one that fosters and encourages the free exchange of information at all levels of the organization. Diversity perceptions in an organization should be complex. Environments that allow freedom of thought and expression enhance organizational diversity. Through focus groups, MCIA/E can define diversity and inclusion as it relates to the organization. Using this definition, MCIA/E leadership can then develop a clear and concise policy on diversity. In collaboration with focus groups, MCIA/E leadership should develop a strategic policy for implementation of a diversity program.

Recommendation 2: To develop a diversity vision that reflects MCIA/E's organizational values. Once the diversity vision has been established, leadership should work to outline and implement an effective diversity program. In order to be effective, diversity programs need to be holistic in their approach. An effective diversity program implements diversity initiatives in training, hiring, and the daily culture of the organization.

Recommendation 3: To develop a holistic diversity program at MCIA/E. This program will include training, recruiting, and management considerations. The following are sub-recommendations for diversity program development and implementation:

- Diversity Training: MCIA/E needs a diversity training program that helps raise awareness of the importance of diversity. It also needs skill-building training for personnel to help them respond to differences in the work place. A successful strategic recruitment policy builds on diversity within an organization.
- Recruitment: A successful strategic recruitment policy builds on diversity within an organization. MCIA/E needs a diverse and well-trained recruitment team to engage potential employees. It should define its recruitment pool, and identify potential areas for recruitment. A strategic recruitment policy should be developed with the strategic diversity vision in mind. Organizational recruitment should include a diverse group of recruiters that are professional and capable of representing the diversity MCIA/E hopes to achieve. A diverse recruitment approach includes long-term relationships with professional, community, state, and national organizations.
- Diversity Manager: MCIA/E needs a diversity program manager who will engage with the workforce to help develop a strategic plan and oversee its implementation through a strategic program. Managing diversity is the most difficult task within any organization, because it involves the support of all employees and managers. MCIA/E should view diversity as a resource and a process rather than a problem. Senior management support is important, but mid-level managers will execute any policies that are set forth as a result of an active diversity program. Through training and a consistent message, mid-level managers must be equipped with the capability to recognize, accept, and value diversity. They will do this by minimizing patterns of unequal treatment, stereotypes and prejudices, and improving cross-cultural interaction. Management at all levels should be aware of the knowledge patterns that cause resistance to diversity. MCIA/E should make a concerted and systematic effort to communicate diversity goals to employees.

Recommendation 4: To ensure that MCIA/E has an effective culture of communication. An effective culture of communication is one in which information passes between and across the levels of an organization. Organizations with cultures of communication value the information and knowledge of the individuals in their organization and information passes freely at all levels. Communication must be encouraged and fostered, and this is typically done in environments that are open and represent “free-to-speak” atmospheres.

MCIA/E currently has two programs, KA-BAR and the Mentoring Program that helps institute a culture of communication through open dialogue. MCIA/E should consider expanding on these programs to include all employees at all levels during various times of their career. Organizations with effective communication naturally foster diversity, because they foster the exchange of new ideas and information. Communication and diversity are closely related and an organization cannot have one without the other.

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