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Engaging the Diversified Workforce Sustaining Productivity

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ABSTRACT

The argument presented in this article is that highly productive workplaces can be inclusive, and purposefully built to produce the goods and services demanded by customers. A socio-technical system approach can be inclusive in terms of talent and technology and is subject to deconstruction. The characterization of diversity can be made in at least two ways: based on the attributes possessed by the employees; and racial composition of the workforce. A co-constructed competency model can be applied to understand the nature and description of prevailing cultural conditions to effectively engage people to be more productive. An inclusive circle of deeply involved people can design and support the necessary change and generate the synergy, techniques, and the heuristics, to increase productivity.

INTRODUCTION

This paper answers the following questions in four objectives: Is it possible to increase productivity in diversified workplaces? How can a sociotechnical system engage people to be more productive? The first objective offers an introduction to the discussion which will be followed by a definition of some of the key terms. The second objective reviews prudently selected literature about productivity in diverse work environments. This review enables the deduction of the notion that the collective performance espoused in focus groups generate the synergy to impact productivity. The third objective examines the application of positive psychology in advancing organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The last part proposes a sociotechnical systems (STS) model to increase productivity in diversified organizations.

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Increasing Diversity

In Bell (2014), White men and women are the majority of the population followed by Latinos, Blacks, and Asians. The current population is more diverse than it was last century and the White workforce remain the dominant group. The workforce is aging and younger workers are more diverse in race and ethnicity than in the past (see Table 1). Recession-related economic changes have prevented many aging workers from retiring, resulting in even more age diversity in organization than in the past. The trend on higher education is rising among women compared to men. Bell argued that demographic changes impacted individuals, employers, and organizational diversity. Proposing the application of the sociotechnical system technology to progress diversified employers makes organizational sense.

Butner, Lowe, & Billings-Harris (2010) concur with Bell (2014) that the American workforce is increasingly becoming diverse. This implies many things including the fact that minorities and women will need to access the job market in terms of the equal employment opportunities regulations. It also implies that employers will be looking more for talented individuals to add value to their companies. Diversity and representation politically integrate a diverse nation with a measure of legitimacy. Butner et al assert that the impact of diversity on organizational outcomes such as organizational performance employee satisfaction and turnover has become essential. Numerous studies including Sungloo & Rainey (2010) and Butner et al (2010) suggest that employee perceptions and feelings impact productivity. Sungloo & Rainey indicated that employee job satisfaction was reflected on how customers were served and how the job was done. A satisfied employee performed above average and those who are dissatisfied in their jobs were inattentive to the details of the task at hand. Butner et al propounded that employee turnover was costly. The costs associated with lost business could be added to the costs of absence, turnover, and discrimination lawsuits that are commonly associated with mismanagement of diversity.

Table 1. Highlights from the US 2000 and 2008 Census Demographic Profiles

| General Characteristics | 2000 Percent 2008 | Percentage |
|---|------------------------------|------------|
| Total population | 281 421 906 100 304 059 728 | 100 |
| Male | 138 053 563 49.1 149 863 485 | 49.3 |
| Female | 143 368 343 50.9 154 196 243 | 50.9 |
| Median age | 35.3 36.9 | |
| One Race | 274 595 678 97.6 297 045 856 | 97.7 |
| White | 211 460 626 75.1 228 182 410 | 75.0 |
| Black | 34 658 190 12.3 37 586 050 | 12.4 |
| American Indian & Alaska Natives | 2 475 956 0.9 2 443 422 | 0.8 |
| Asian | 10 242 998 3.6 13 413 976 | 4.4 |
| Native Hawaiian & others Pacific | 398 835 0.1 427 810 | 0.1 |
| Economics characteristics | | |
| Participating in labor force (16 years or over) | 138 820 935 63.9 157 465 113 | 65.9 |
| Median earnings male fulltime | n/a \$45 556 | |
| Median earnings female fulltime | n/a \$35 471 | |

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