Diversity, Inclusion, and Your Human Resource Department
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Kathleen Nalty, a civil rights lawyer for the Department of Justice, has one large issue with American workplaces today-- companies do not understand diversity or how it benefits organizations. Researchers have found that diverse groups of people outperform groups of homogeneous individuals. Additionally, diverse companies tend to be more profitable as well.

There are many benefits to workplace diversity. Diversity can include factors such as race, age, gender, cultural background and more. All of these factors in employees contribute to a workplace that is better off in the long run for a number of reasons. First, employees with diverse backgrounds have a wide variety of talents, skills, and experiences which creates an environment where employees grow through interactions and develop ideas as a team. Next, good employees want to work for diverse companies that promote equity. Companies that are upfront with their values and beliefs attract more talented candidates for vacancies, and they are able to retain those employees, as well. Finally, employee performance improves in a positive, inclusive environment. In such an environment and through equality and encouragement, employees from all backgrounds have confidence in their abilities and seek to achieve their best.

It’s easy to see how workplace diversity benefits organizations, but how does a company’s human resource department tie in? Often times, human resources is the first department to promote diversity training and practices. This is due, in part, to the fact that many human resource functions are affected by workplace diversity. Some of these functions include recruiting, training, record keeping, and expertise requirements. Additionally, workplace diversity affects a number of organizational aspects on the whole, including the development of interpersonal relationships, employee relationships, and the interaction between supervisors and employees.

Many organizations are improving hiring practices, leading to higher diversity in the workplace. However, increasing diversity in the workplace does not mean every employee is integrated into the company culture. Each company must be able to evaluate their organization and develop specific processes for inclusion. Some of these specific processes include varied work schedules, incentives, and growth opportunities that give employees choices, affirmation, and motivation.

Being able to take a step back and evaluate the organization that you work for is a great first step, but what should companies be looking for? Are there red flags that HR professionals should identify?

This is one of the goals of the race conference “Race in The Heartland” coming to Dubuque in October of 2019. The Human Rights Commission along with other organizations are coming together to educate the Midwest on issues of racial inequalities in housing, education, and employment. Part of the conference seeks to address common issues that HR professionals
deal with on a day to day basis in order to help companies in the Midwest form inclusive environments. The two day conference will include breakout sessions that will count towards additional training requirements for HR professionals. Some of these breakout sessions include discriminatory hiring practices, diversifying your workplace, coded racism in the workplace, and the relationship between race and labor.

For more information on the conference, or to register members of your organization, visit raceintheheartland.org. If you would like more information about human resource training at the conference, please visit www.raceintheheartland.org and click on Workplace on the home page.

Sources:
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