

Developing Multicultural Organizations

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New Views of Social Change

The recent resurgence of racism and of other forms of social injustice in our cities and towns, colleges and universities, and offices and plants, has renewed interest and generated new insights into both past and present social dynamics. At least five important learnings can be attributed to these renewed concerns:

- The individual consciousness-raising strategy has had only limited success in making significant improvement in the workplace environment for those recently given access, such as women, racial minorities, or handicapped persons.
- Lasting social justice change in the workplace requires direct and comprehensive change effort focused on the organization as a system. The system must be developed so that it can provide support for the enhancement and use of social diversity in the workplace.
- Traditional organization development efforts have not made the kind of impact on social oppression in the workplace that its founders had hoped.
- A number of recent demographic analyses tell us that our national and global populations are undergoing dramatic demographic changes. Based on information that challenges assumptions of an eternal White male workforce, many organizations have begun to develop new recruitment, development and incentive programs that appeal to a workforce with a wide range of cultural values, needs and goals.
- Evidence is beginning to show that there is a direct relationship between the quantity and quality of the product or service an organization delivers and the ability of that organization to provide a just working environment for all its employees.

Multicultural Organization Development presently includes a fairly broad range of visions, definitions, assumptions, strategies, techniques, terminologies, goals and objectives. They include people working under such titles as Managing Diversity, Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity, racism and sexism awareness training and cross-cultural training. From these areas of concern, four themes appear as they define their goals:

- social and cultural representation of perspectives, world views, life styles, language and management styles;
- valuing and capitalizing on differences as a means toward effectiveness and growth; promoting the full use of available human resources towards its mission, internal operations and external interface with the environment;
- eliminating racism and sexism; and
- diversity of stakeholders, involving members of all cultural groups as equal partners in the enterprise and reflecting a commitment to the empowerment of all people.

A Definition of A Multicultural Organization

These themes have been integrated by Jackson and Hardiman (1981) into the following definition, which may also serve as a guide for multicultural organization development practitioners.

A multicultural organization:

- reflects the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and product or service;
- acts on a commitment to eradicate social oppression in all forms within the organization;
- includes the members of diverse cultural and social groups as full participants, especially in decisions that shape the organization; and
- follows through on broader external social responsibilities, including support of efforts to eliminate all forms of

social oppression and to educate others in multicultural perspectives.

Levels in Multicultural Development

Jackson and Hardiman (1981) have developed a model that describes three levels and six stages in the multicultural development process. The stages are sequential. Experiencing the learnings and limitations of each stage contributes to the ability of the organization to move to the next stage. An organization may demonstrate indicators of one, some, or all of the stages in its separate divisions or departments.

LEVEL ONE

*1. Multicultural
Level - Exclusionary Organization*

Stage One: The Exclusionary Organization

The Exclusionary Organization is devoted to maintaining dominance of one group over other groups based on race, gender, culture, or other social identity characteristics. Familiar manifestations of such organizations are exclusionary membership policies and hiring practices.

Stage Two: The Club

The Club describes the organization that stops short of explicitly advocating anything like White male supremacy, but does seek to establish and maintain the privilege of those who have traditionally held social power. This is done by developing and maintaining missions, policies, norms and procedures seen as "correct" from their perspective. The Club allows a limited number of members from oppressed groups such as women and racial minorities, provided that they have the "right" perspective and credentials.

LEVEL TWO

2. Compliance Organization - removing discrimination

Stage Three: The Compliance Organization

The Compliance Organization is committed to removing some of the discrimination inherent in the "club" by providing access to women and minorities. However, it seeks to accomplish this objective without disturbing the structure, mission and culture of the organization. The organization is careful not to create "too many waves" or to offend or challenge its employees' or customers' racist, sexist, or anti-semitic attitudes or behaviors.

The compliance organization usually attempts to change its organizational racial and gender profile by actively recruiting and hiring more racial minorities and women at the bottom of the organization. On occasion, they will hire or promote "token" racial minorities or women into management positions, usually staff positions. When the exception is made to place a woman, racial minority, or member of any other oppressed social group in a line position it is important that this person be a "team player" and that s/he be a "qualified" applicant. A "qualified team player" does not openly challenge the organization's mission and practices, and is usually 150% competent to do the job.

Stage Four: The Affirmative Action Organization

The Affirmative Action Organization is also committed to eliminating the discriminatory practices and inherent

"riggedness" of The Club by actively recruiting and promoting women, racial minorities and members of other social groups typically denied access to our organizations. Moreover, the affirmative action organization takes an active role in supporting the growth and development of these new employees and initiating programs that increase their chances of success and mobility. All employees are encouraged to think and behave in a non-oppressive manner, and the organization may conduct racism and sexism awareness programs toward this end.

This organization's view of diversity also includes the disabled, Latinos, Asians/Asian American-Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, the elderly, and other socially oppressed groups.

Although the affirmative action organization is committed to increasing access for members of diverse groups and increasing the chances that they will succeed by removing those hostile attitudes and behaviors, all members of this organization are still required to conform to the norms and practices derived from the dominant group's world view.

LEVEL THREE

*3. Redefining Organization - Multicultural
Transition - Benefits of Diversity*

Stage Five: The Redefining Organization

The Redefining Organization is a system in transition. This organization is not satisfied with being just "anti-racist" or "anti-sexist." It is committed to examining all of its activities for their impact on all members' ability to participate in and contribute to the growth and success of the organization.

The redefining organization begins to question the limitations of the cultural perspective as it is manifest in its mission, structure, management, technology, psycho-social dynamics and product or service. It seeks to explore the significance and potential benefits of a diverse multicultural workforce. This organization actively engages in visioning, planning and problem-solving activities directed toward the realization of a multicultural organization.

The redefining organization is committed to developing and implementing policies and practices that distribute power among all of the diverse groups in the organization. The redefining organization searches for alternative modes of organizing that guarantee the inclusion, participation and empowerment of all its members.

Stage Six: The Multicultural Organization

The multicultural organization reflects the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and product or service; it acts on a commitment to eradicate social oppression in all forms within the organization; the multicultural organization includes the members of diverse cultural and social groups as full participants, especially in decisions that shape the organization; and it follows through on broader external social responsibilities, including support of efforts to eliminate all forms of social oppression and to educate others in multicultural perspectives.

Table One.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATION CHANGE

	Exclusionary	The Club	Compliance	Affirmative Action	Redefining	Multicultural
Target of Change	—	Upper level management or members of oppressed groups	Personnel and other systems and mechanisms	System: • structures • rewards • relationships • climate	System: • mission • values • structures	System and environment
Interventions	—	Management training Support and CR groups	EEO audits EEO training goal setting and action planning "Minority" training	Performance appraisal systems Racism and "isms" Career development programs	Visioning and strategic planning Skills for managing differences MC team building	Ecological planning MC autonomous teams and self-management systems
Skills	—	Confronting and interrupting offensive behavior	Law and policy analysis Education Bargaining	MCO systems diagnosis Intergroup relations	Value clarification Conflict management skills	Synergistic problem solving Alternative work structures

APPLICATIONS

Multicultural Organization Development is the process of assisting an organization in moving from its present level and stage of development to become a fully multicultural organization. Multicultural Organization Development uses organization change technology and principles to help eliminate or diminish the negative impact of an organization's monocultural characteristics and to develop and strengthen the multicultural characteristics of each stage.

The role of the Multicultural Organization Development change agent is:

- to assist in assessing the present stage of multicultural development;
- to help organization members make choices about the level they want to achieve;
- to assist in change efforts within the context of organizational goals and limitations; and
- to help organization members envision and assess risk and possibilities in becoming a fully multicultural organization.

The Multicultural Organization Development model can assist internal and external change agents to diagnose and plan for social change in organizations. For example, Table 1 presents three specific dimensions of organization change to be considered in Multicultural Organization Development efforts: target of change, appropriate interventions, and skills needed at each stage of the change effort.

Target of Change

As we move from a monocultural to a nondiscriminator and later to a multicultural level in multicultural organization development, the strategy for organizational change shifts from targeting change at the individual level, to targeting change at the systems level, to targeting change at the interface between organization and environment.

An effective intervention at the Club Stage is to increase awareness of racism and sexism through educational and training programs (an individual level intervention). Establishing mechanisms that tie rewards to support for the affirmative action agenda is an effective intervention in the affirmative action organization (a systems level intervention). An appropriate strategy in the multicultural stage is to align internal mechanisms, mission, relations with the environment and the multicultural agenda of an organization (a macrosystems level intervention).

Interventions

The further we move in the continuum towards developing a multicultural organization the more need there is to use innovative strategies and new forms of intervening with organizations (racism and sexism workshops alone will not do). An example is the use of the action research model to set up multiracial-multigender diagnostic teams which are representative of the diversity encountered in the organization. The task of the teams is to diagnose, problem solve, develop action plans, and to support the implementation and evaluation of affirmative action change goals. The intervention is usually facilitated by an outside consultant (Alderfer, et al, 1980).

“There is a direct relationship between the quantity and quality of an organization’s service or product and that organization’s ability to provide a just working environment.”

In the redefining and multicultural stages, interventions should stress working in diverse teams to develop multicultural visions and goals, design and implement alternative organization structures, and develop strategic plans which consider the impact of the socio-political environment on the organization. Innovative organization change interventions which are relevant in the multicultural stage, but are not so commonly used in multicultural change efforts are:

- *Ecological diagnosis and planning:*
Focusing attention on internal dynamics and planning within the context of critical external events and boundaries related to the mission of the organization (Brown and Covey, 1986).
- *Alternative work structures:*
Implementing flat structures and other forms of organizing work which increase participation, control and ownership of all organizational members. These include matrix and parallel organizations (Stein and Kanter, 1980); worker councils and cooperatives (Bernstein, 1980); autonomous work groups (Trist, 1977); action learning groups (Morgan and Ramirez, 1983).

- *Ideological negotiations:*

Resolving conflicts of interests among organization members by directly or indirectly addressing value and ideological differences (Brown and Brown, 1983).

- *Strategic management:*

Aligning the components of an organization, its mission and strategies, its structures, and human resources — technically, politically and culturally — to achieve organizational effectiveness (Tichy, 1983).

- *Multicultural team building:*

Addressing task and relationship issues by paying special attention to cultural differences (Halverson, 1986).

Skills

The knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to implement change also vary according to different levels and stages of multicultural change. Change agents working in monocultural organizations need thorough knowledge of EEO/AA guidelines and discriminatory practices: at the multicultural stage they need to know about and be able to work with alternative cultural systems. Appropriate skills for a monocultural organization include bargaining, negotiation and the coercive use of power. In a multicultural organization conflict management skills need to include synergistic problem solving, value clarification, consensus building and other collaborative strategies for managing differences.

“Individual consciousness-raising has had only limited success in improving the workplace environment.”

Roles and Strategies

The roles and strategies of change agents also vary according to the stage in the multicultural development process. For example, during the initial stages of development from “monocultural” to “nondiscriminatory,” the change agent plays different roles: provocateur and politico in the exclusionary and club stages; evaluator and action researcher in the affirmative action stage. When the organization is at the redefining or multicultural stages, the change agent functions more as a collaborator and committed participant, exploring, experimenting and problem solving in multidisciplinary change teams.

Diagnostic Clues

Different stages in the multicultural development model suggest specific diagnostic indicators to help assess the organizational stage in the multicultural development process. For example, what is the status of members of socially oppressed groups in the organization? Are they treated as tokens (club stage), invited guests (compliance stage) or as legitimate members of the organization with diverse cultural perspectives (multicultural stage)?

Another important diagnostic dimension is the learning climate in the organization. Compliance stage organizations often find themselves "reinventing the wheel" or complaining about "how we tried that before and it did not work." At this stage there is a need to develop processes and mechanisms to institutionalize changes. In the affirmative action stage, members show a mixture of confusion and insights about the dynamics of social oppression and change in organizations; they often feel puzzled and conflicted about the degree of "progress" they have achieved in becoming "multicultural." In this case, collective mechanisms for increasing organizational learning need to be developed — the non-discriminatory practices and gains made so far must be maintained. In the redefining stage, organization members sometimes feel frustrated and "at the end" of their learning capacity. Change agents can help redefine the learning task in terms of a new stage of multicultural development so that members can redirect their energy and celebrate their accomplishments.

Conditions Which Support Change

Different stages of multicultural development suggest different conditions which support change. Conditions that support change in the monocultural stages tend to be external environmental demands, such as political decisions, litigation, or legislative decrees. On the other hand, conditions that support change in the multicultural stages are more encompassing: paradigm shifts, alternative world views, commitment from top management, interracial coalitions, a critical mass of organizational members with a change agenda, and world-wide socio-political changes.

Values and Assumptions

In multicultural organization development, attention must be paid to the fit between the change agent values and the multicultural organization development change process. In addition to being clear about the possibilities and the stages in multicultural organizational change, we must also be clear about the values we bring to the change process. We have found that the different assumptions and values change agents hold about the nature of society and the need for change greatly influence how multicultural organization development is defined and implemented. Different assumptions reflect different visions, which in turn define possibilities and challenges in the multicultural change effort. An example of such different sets of assumptions and their impact is discussed and summarized in Table 2.

Table Two
CHANGE AGENT ASSUMPTIONS

	Monocultural	Non-discriminatory	Multicultural
Nature of Society	Harmonious Similar interests Needs to improve but basically OK		Conflict Different interests Oppressive; Alienating; Needs Radical Change
Oppression Liberation Model	Dominance Assimilation	Desegregation Integregation	Pluralism Diversity
Self Interest in Change	Survival and social acceptability	Adaptation and full use of human resources	Equity; Empowerment; Collective Growth
Values and Ideology	Basic rights of individual Best person is rewarded Efficiency and economic survival		Interdependence Ecological survival Development of human and societal potential

Change Agent Assumptions

Consider a change agent who believes that society is basically harmonious, where people have basically similar interests, and that though in need of reform, society is basically good and sane. Change is conceived as a slow, evolutionary process in which modifications are gradually introduced; their effectiveness and appropriateness are assessed through time. Values this change agent holds dear are basic individual rights, reward for the "best person," efficiency, and economic survival. A change agent with this world view is likely to hold the nondiscriminatory level of multicultural organization development as the vision of the future, since this type of organization embodies individualistic values and guarantees equal opportunities for all. This change agent will define the organizational change goal as: to integrate members of diverse groups in order to better use their resources, increase organizational effectiveness, and contribute to a better society.

“Change agents can help redefine the learning task in terms of a new stage of multicultural development.”

On the other hand, consider a change agent who believes that society is basically alienating and depriving for many members. Conflict of interests have not been adequately resolved, and fundamental changes are needed to address the problems that threaten the survival of humanity. Values this change agent holds dear are: interdependence, equitable distribution of resources, ecological and global survival, and the realization of human potential. This change agent is likely to see the need for a new and different type of organization, representative of different cultural models in the world, with new and maybe unexplored structures which support equitable distribution of resources and the self-realization of

all its members. The vision of a change agent, the vision of a multicultural organization implies a paradigm shift: it involves having a radically different vision of an organization from that which is now dominant in our society, that is, hierarchical, profit and product centered. The organizational change goal in this case is: to transform the organization in order to enhance human diversity, social justice, and the realization of a humane society.

Summary

Multicultural organization development can make important contributions to increasing organizational productivity and quality of work life. Multicultural organization development can also serve to bridge the gap between work and the organizing activity, social change and the socially responsible organizations of the future.

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