Diversity on the Job: The Importance of Diversity and the Changing Workplace

Course Description: Imagine for a minute that you work in a place where everyone is the same. All of your coworkers are of the same ethnicity, gender, educational background, and socioeconomic standing. Would you be able to easily generate new ideas? Would the group have the ability to understand things from a different point of view? Without diversity in the workplace, organizations run the risk of becoming monocultural and only viewing things from a very limited perspective. The organization provides the structure for operation of the business and often defines the culture, but it's the individuals interacting within the organization who carry out the mission of the organization.

Rather than address the legal underpinnings and requirements related to diversity, this course focuses on how to leverage the diversity that exists within the organization. It defines diversity and dispels some common myths that surround the topic of diversity. The importance of diversity within the ever-changing workplace is described, including the impact of globalization. This course also discusses the barriers and challenges that must be overcome in order to create a diversified working environment. Materials designed to support blended learning activities aligned with this course are available from the Resources Page.

Course Goal: To recognize the role of diversity in an organization and the barriers that must often be overcome to leverage and embrace its benefits

Course Overview: Imagine an organization where everyone is the same. People have the same opinions. They're all close in age. Their backgrounds are similar. They even have the same political and religious beliefs. Would you want to work there?

Of course, such a company probably doesn't exist in real life. And even if it did, few people would want to work there.

Diversity makes things interesting. Interacting with people who offer fresh new perspectives can teach you how to broaden your horizons and find creative ways to solve problems.

A diverse workplace can even help you identify new markets, products, or business opportunities. Diverse groups are less likely to get stuck in routines and groupthink. In other words, diversity is good for business!

Because diversity is so important, understanding it is crucial, not just for the HR Department, but for anyone who works in a modern global company.
This course outlines the importance of diversity in the workplace:

- You'll discover how the concept of diversity is constantly changing and the resulting myths surrounding it.
- You'll also find out how diversity can benefit not only your organization, but you as an individual.
- Finally, the course discusses some of the challenges and barriers to diversity in the workplace and ways you can overcome them.

Developing diversity isn't always easy, but the benefits far outweigh the effort required. If your company wants to achieve success in the changing marketplace and explore new sources of competitive advantage, diversity should be one of its priorities.

Lesson 1 Diversity and the Changing Workplace

To recognize key characteristics of the concept of diversity on the job and recognize benefits, challenges and barriers to the development of diversity in the workplace identify key concepts related to diversity in the workplace

Test Question

Which are correct statements about diversity in the workplace?

- OPTION 1 (CORRECT): Workplace diversity includes invisible attributes such as your generation, sexual orientation, and marital status
- OPTION 2: In companies that foster workplace diversity, people from different backgrounds are encouraged to emphasize their differences
- OPTION 3: Diverse workplaces create an inclusive culture that values the contribution of only a few workers
- OPTION 4 (CORRECT): A huge part of workplace diversity is about avoiding monoculture and welcoming the different perspectives diversity provides
- OPTION 5 (CORRECT): Workplace diversity can provide business advantages

Test Question

Identify correct statements about diversity in the workplace.

- OPTION 1: The concept of workplace diversity includes only attributes that are visible, such as physical abilities and experience
- OPTION 2 (CORRECT): Workplace diversity is about encouraging and helping people from different backgrounds to work together effectively
OPTION 3 (CORRECT): To foster workplace diversity, companies should create a culture that values everyone’s contribution, not just the contribution of a few people or groups

OPTION 4: Workplace diversity means emphasizing monoculture and enhancing acceptance of only one or two perspectives

OPTION 5 (CORRECT): Workplace diversity can provide business advantages over peers who don't foster diversity

Learning Point 1: Myths about diversity

If you asked ten people what the word diversity means, you'd probably get ten different answers. That's because diversity is a concept that's constantly evolving. It's not easy to define, and everyone has a different idea of what diversity actually means.

You probably have your own ideas or assumptions about what diversity means. What comes to mind when you think about diversity in the workplace?

Because people have such different ideas about diversity, many myths and misunderstandings about it still exist. You may even have included some of these myths in your comments on the previous page. This topic will cover three of the most common myths: diversity is all about differences of race and gender, diversity is all about equal opportunities, and diversity is an HR issue.

Learning Point 2: Diversity: not just race and gender

The first myth – that diversity is all about race and gender – is perhaps the most pervasive.

Consider Bill, who manages the Accounting Department at his company. He takes special pride in the diversity of his group, which includes different ages, sexes, and cultural backgrounds.

CM: Bill, male, 50s, white

To Bill, these broad categories of gender and race are what diversity is all about. Do you agree?

Think about it – every day, you're constantly exposed to diversity, even if you don't realize it.
People can be diverse even in terms of invisible attributes. For instance, in any group you'll find different thoughts, values, social backgrounds, and levels of education.

Other invisible attributes contributing to diversity can include your generation, sexual orientation, marital status, political or religious beliefs, physical abilities, and life experience.

When you consider the fact that there's more to people than just the way they look on the outside, it becomes clear why diversity means more than race and gender. Those invisible attributes contribute a great deal to the mix of ideas and perspectives in the workplace. So, when you think about your own workplace, do you now perceive it in a new light? It's probably a more diverse place than you thought!

**Learning Point 3: Diversity: not just equal opportunity**

Another myth about diversity is that it's all about equal opportunities. Yes, providing employment equity is one aspect of diversity in the workplace, but diversity encompasses more than just that.

What do you think are some other aspects of diversity in the workplace?

- **OPTION 1 (CORRECT):** Helping people from different backgrounds learn to work together effectively
- **OPTION 2 (CORRECT):** Fostering an inclusive culture that values the contribution of a workforce made of diverse individuals
- **OPTION 3 (CORRECT):** Avoiding monoculture and accepting, understanding, and adapting to differences
- **OPTION 4:** Realizing that equal opportunity programs are only in place because employers are required to use them
- **OPTION 5:** Assuming that all workers in an organization have similar needs and are working toward meeting those needs

Other aspects of diversity in the workplace include helping people from different backgrounds to work together effectively, fostering an inclusive culture that values the contribution of a workforce made of diverse individuals, and avoiding monoculture.

In companies that have developed diversity far beyond just equal opportunities, you'll notice three things: people from different backgrounds are helped and encouraged to work together; the contribution of a workforce made of diverse individuals is valued; and finally, monoculture is avoided and differences among individuals are understood, recognized, and accepted.
People are encouraged to work together

Diversity in the workplace entails finding ways to help people from different backgrounds – social or economic, for instance – be productive as a team.

Diverse contributions are valued

Workplaces must focus on creating a culture that values everyone's contribution, not just the contributions of a few people or groups.

Monoculture is avoided

Avoiding monoculture – which is characterized by homogeneity – is a huge part of diversity in the workplace. Very few companies could be successful without the different perspectives their diverse workforces provide.

The key thing to remember is that diversity is about focusing on the big picture, not just pieces of it. Think of it this way. Suppose you have a box of green balls. Now, add a few red balls, and perhaps three blue ones. The red and blue balls represent diversity, right? Well, not exactly. The diversity is actually represented by the entire mixture: green, red, and blue.

Diversity in the workplace is no different. Each person, as an individual, doesn't represent diversity.

Instead, the entire mixture of individuals – with their unique ideas and experiences – is the real diversity in an organization.

Learning Point 4: Diversity: not just an HR issue

Now move on to the final myth about diversity – that it's an HR issue. Many people, perhaps yourself included, think of HR when they hear the word diversity. However, the reality is that diversity isn't just an organizational issue created by the HR Department. It actually starts with you, as an individual. Being exposed to diversity broadens your perspectives and might even enhance your creativity and problem-solving abilities.

When people have different views and backgrounds, they often observe a problem from different perspectives. This can help broaden their views and the way they approach problems.

Select each employee for an example of how two people can approach a problem from different perspectives.
Victoria: "Recently, we had a new person join our team. William is fluent in Spanish, so he can take on clients that some of our English-speaking team members can't. When William joined the team, I felt like he was taking new clients away from the rest of us."

Taku: "When Victoria told me her concerns about William, I helped her see that he's actually an asset to our team. Before he arrived, we didn't have anyone who could speak Spanish – now we have someone who can increase our client base. Not only that, but William also has great networking skills and brought a large clientele with him to our company."

When Taku showed Victoria how William wasn't a hindrance but a benefit to the team, she saw the situation differently.

By viewing things from Taku's perspective, Victoria was able to broaden her viewpoint and realize that diversity can actually help her team flourish.

Some companies bypass the HR Department altogether by including diversity in their strategic vision. For example, consider a company that emphasizes and encourages differences instead of suppressing them. This allows fresh ideas to emerge. Instead of forcing everyone to think along the same lines, the company focuses on the varied perspectives that emerge when differences are celebrated. This approach provides the company with business advantages not enjoyed by its peers who don't foster diversity.

By clearing away the myths about diversity in the workplace, you'll be able to focus on the ways diversity can benefit your organization and you as an individual.

Now that you've learned about some of the myths surrounding diversity in the workplace, have your beliefs and assumptions changed?

Which statements about diversity in the workplace are correct?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): The concept of workplace diversity includes differences of thought and values

OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. Not all diversities are visible in the way that race and gender are. People can be diverse even in terms of invisible attributes, such as differences of thought and values.

OPTION 2 (CORRECT): Fostering workplace diversity encourages people from different backgrounds to work together effectively

OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. Fostering diversity in the workplace entails finding ways to help people from different
backgrounds – social or economic, for instance – be productive as a team.

OPTION 3 (CORRECT): Companies that foster workplace diversity work to create an inclusive culture that values the contribution of a diverse workforce

OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. Workplaces should focus on creating a culture that values everyone's contribution, not just the contribution of a few people.

OPTION 4: Workplace diversity is about encouraging monoculture

OPTION 4 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Actually, avoiding monoculture – which is characterized by homogeneity – is a huge part of diversity in the workplace. Very few companies could be successful without the different perspectives diversity provides.

OPTION 5: Workplace diversity puts companies on an equal playing field with their peers who don't encourage diversity

OPTION 5 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. When companies include diversity in their strategic vision it can provide them with business advantages not enjoyed by peers who don't foster diversity.

Learning Point 5: Summary

Because people have such different ideas about diversity, many myths and misunderstandings about it still exist: that diversity is all about race and gender, that diversity is all about equal opportunities, and that diversity is an HR issue.

By clearing away the myths about diversity in the workplace, you'll be able to focus on the ways diversity can benefit your organization and you as an individual.

How Diversity Benefits Organizations and Employees

Identify the benefits enjoyed by companies that value diversity as a desirable characteristic of their organization

Which are potential benefits for companies that develop diversity in the workplace?
OPTION 1 (CORRECT): Companies enjoy higher retention rates since employees are more appreciative of individual differences and similarities
OPTION 2 (CORRECT): A broader range of talents means fresh perspectives that can help a company succeed
OPTION 3 (CORRECT): Employees may be able to handle conflict better than those in groups where diversity isn’t evident
OPTION 4 (CORRECT): Companies can improve their image and be viewed as desirable places to work
OPTION 5: A broader range of talent means companies can increase their sales numbers
OPTION 6: Employees are more apt to be friends with each other in diverse companies

Identify potential benefits to companies that develop diversity in the workplace.

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): Improved employee retention, low turnover, and improved performance
OPTION 2 (CORRECT): Making use of employees’ creativity and tapping into a broad range of talents
OPTION 3 (CORRECT): Increased ability on the part of employees to productively deal with conflict
OPTION 4 (CORRECT): Improved company image
OPTION 5: Fewer number of sick days taken by employees
OPTION 6: Less work required on the part of managers to keep team projects running smoothly

Learning Point 1: How organizations deal with diversity

Recognize the benefits of working for an organization that embraces and leverages diversity in its workforce

Think about your workplace for a moment. The people you work with probably come from different backgrounds and have different opinions and beliefs. How does each individual add value to your company? What perspectives do you and your colleagues contribute as a result of your diversity? And how does having a diverse workforce impact your company?

Globalization has resulted in modern workplaces being increasingly diverse. Social groups and ethnicities that were traditionally excluded from some types of roles have increasingly entered the labor market or taken on new roles.
To respond to these global changes, both managers and employees are having to become more aware of the value of embracing diversity in the workplace.

But why should your company care about diversity? Does investing in diversity really have an impact on your organization?

In short, yes it does. Many companies are starting to realize the benefits of embracing diversity. The ways they address diversity vary greatly from company to company, but they typically fall into four broad categories: welcome aboard, fit in, don't rock the boat, and help us achieve our goals.

Select each of the different ways companies address diversity to learn more about it.

**Welcome aboard**

This is the most common way companies address diversity and is what many people think of when they hear the word. Essentially, it involves inclusion – having employees from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, races, and genders.

**Fit in**

This approach involves denying that differences exist. Companies demonstrate this when they assure employees that differences are meaningless – the only thing that matters is performance.

This way of dealing with diversity is based on the belief that, over time, employees who are in the minority will eventually learn to become more like those who are in the majority.

**Don't rock the boat**

When companies use this approach, they encourage people to suppress their differences. Sometimes they'll isolate people with differences – for instance, by creating groups comprised of employees from the same racial group or culture. Other companies may also work at building relationships between different people and groups, but they encourage them to find similarities and minimize their differences.

This approach involves tolerating differences – basically allowing them to exist without either valuing or demeaning them.

**Help us achieve our goals**

This approach involves employees working together toward mutual goals. It's the ideal way for companies to address diversity, but it's a relatively new concept for many companies. With this approach, the company encourages employees to understand,
accept, and value differences.

This takes some effort on everyone’s part, but accommodating diversity in its entirety can go farther than any of the other methods toward helping a company achieve its goals.

Victoria's company has recently changed the way it deals with diversity. In the past, managers insisted that every employee was the same, regardless of background. But now, managers welcome differences, realizing that each individual has unique talents to offer.

Is this the ideal way for Victoria's company to deal with diversity?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): Yes
OPTION 2: No

Actually, Victoria's company is encouraging employees to help it achieve its goals by helping them understand and accept differences. It's the ideal way for companies to address diversity, but is a relatively new concept for many companies.

Learning Point 2: Benefits of developing diversity

Companies may use many different methods to deal with diversity. But no matter which method your company may use, developing diversity should be at the top of your corporate agenda. By effectively leveraging the differences among employees and developing diversity, your company can benefit in four areas:

- Employee retention, which includes low turnover, increased productivity, job satisfaction
- Creativity, by making the best use of employees' abilities and tapping into a broader range of talents
- Conflict management, by increasing the ability to handle conflicts productively, and
- Corporate image, with the aim of developing a reputation as a desirable place to work

Almost every company has dealt with employee turnover at one time or another. The first benefit of developing diversity is improved **employee retention**, which translates into low turnover and improved performance.
When your company develops and practices diversity, employees tend to be more appreciative and respectful of individual differences and similarities. They feel they're given equal opportunities and are valued and treated with respect and fairness. And they appreciate benefits and initiatives meant to promote diversity. The result? Higher morale, more job satisfaction, and increased productivity.

One of the ways a company can promote diversity is to ensure that it's family friendly.

Family friendliness allows equal opportunities for people with families so that employees can make work compatible with their own private lives without sacrificing opportunities for career progression.

Jorge is a single father who is climbing the corporate ladder. Follow along as he speaks with his manager Victor.

JORGE: Hi Victor. Would it be alright if I leave early tomorrow? I need to take my daughter to an appointment.

VICTOR: Sure Jorge, that's no problem at all.

JORGE: Thanks Victor. I really appreciate your being flexible.

VICTOR: Well, we're serious about giving employees the flexibility they need. Whether it's occasionally working from home, or leaving early sometimes, I hope you know we'll accommodate you the best we can.

JORGE: And that's just one of the reasons I love working here!

Jorge is very satisfied with his company, which fosters diversity by giving single parents the same opportunities as everyone else. Jorge plans to work there for a long time. This benefits his company because it won’t lose a valuable employee like Jorge – it's a win-win situation.

The second benefit to companies that develop diversity is that they can **make the best use of employees' creativity and tap into a broader range of talents**. Your company might be uncertain about whether diversity will actually benefit it because the outcome can't be predicted. However, developing diversity can have several different outcomes.

What do you think are potential outcomes of developing diversity?

- **OPTION 1 (CORRECT):** Increased creativity
- **OPTION 2 (CORRECT):** Better problem solving
- **OPTION 3 (CORRECT):** Improved ability to identify and define new markets or products
- **OPTION 4 (CORRECT):** Fresh perspectives
Potential outcomes of developing diversity include increased creativity, better problem solving, and improved ability to identify and define new markets or products, and fresh perspectives.

It makes sense that a group of people from a wide range of backgrounds would have increased creativity and problem-solving skills. There's also a greater chance that new markets and products will be identified. And a broader range of talents means fresh perspectives that can help your company succeed.

For example, a magazine publisher is trying to increase its circulation numbers. A diverse staff of writers would be more likely to have enough interesting ideas to make the magazine a success than a more homogenous staff. The magazine publisher should consider tapping into a wide range of talents to appeal to the broadest audience possible.

How can your company use diversity to increase group creativity?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): By making use of a wide pool of talent

OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This is the correct option. Your company should make the best use of employees' abilities and tap into a broader range of talents. A group of people from a wide range of backgrounds will have increased creativity and problem-solving skills.

OPTION 2: By ensuring the group is made up entirely of people with visible differences

OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. When a group is made up entirely of people with more visible differences, such as gender and age, the group's creativity can be hindered.

OPTION 3: By asking for input from only one or two group members

OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. To increase group creativity, the group should be made up of people from a wide range of backgrounds. A broader range of talents means fresh perspectives that can help your company succeed.
Moving on, the third way companies benefit from developing diversity is that employees have an **increased ability to handle intellectual conflict productively**. As with creativity, visible diversity tends to cause people to be able to handle conflict better than those in groups where diversity isn't evident.

That's because visible differences are a cue to group members that conflict is likely to happen, which means they're more prepared to deal with divergences.

Over time, the group learns to handle conflict better than a more homogenous group, because people aren't surprised when differences of opinion emerge.

Imagine that three teams are working on the same project. One is comprised of five men, one is comprised of five women, and the other is comprised of a mixture of men and women.

It's possible that the team made up of both genders may expect some conflict. Men and women can have different ideas and do things differently.

Because the team members are prepared for conflict, they won't be surprised when differences emerge. They may have a better chance of dealing with the conflict productively than the groups made up entirely of the same gender.

**Why do teams with a high level of diversity have an increased ability to handle conflict productively?**

**OPTION 1 (CORRECT):** Team members are more prepared to deal with divergences that emerge

**OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK:** This is the correct option. In groups where diversity is more visible, people may see differences as a cue that conflict is likely to happen, which means they can be more prepared to deal with divergences.

**OPTION 2:** The conflict takes team members by surprise and their main concern is eliminating the conflict

**OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK:** This option is incorrect. A group with a high level of diversity can learn to handle conflict better than a more homogenous group because people aren't surprised when differences of opinion emerge.

**OPTION 3:** Teams with a high level of diversity don't experience conflict
OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. All groups experience conflict at one time or another. But in groups where diversity is more visible, people tend to be able to handle conflict better because visible differences are a cue to group members that conflict can happen. They're more prepared to deal with divergences.

OPTION 4: Team members are too focused on overcoming their differences to have many conflicts

OPTION 4 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. In groups where diversity is more visible, people tend to be able to handle conflict better than those in groups where diversity isn't evident. The visible differences are a cue that conflict can happen, which means they're more prepared to deal with divergences.

Reflect Learner

A final benefit of developing diversity is that it can positively impact your company's corporate image. How do you think a company's image can be enhanced by diversity?

You may have said that diversity makes your company more desirable. Companies that work at developing diversity are often known as being employers of choice. Because they have a wide range of talent, they're frequently listed among the top ten or twenty employers. This, in turn, helps them attract even more talent, since people are drawn to companies that are known for being great employers.

Developing diversity can take time and effort, and your company might be unsure if it's worthwhile.

However, by putting in the work and making diversity a priority, your organization can enjoy enormous gains and reap the benefits you learned about in this topic.

But your company isn't the only one that benefits from diversity. You, as an individual, can benefit as well. When your company develops diversity, you'll be exposed to new ideas. This means you'll likely become more open minded and learn how to think outside the box.
What are the potential benefits to a company that develops diversity in the workplace?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): Employees are more productive and have higher job satisfaction

OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. One of the benefits of developing diversity is improved employee retention, which translates into low turnover, improved performance, and higher job satisfaction.

OPTION 2 (CORRECT): The company can tap into a broader range of talents

OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. Companies that develop diversity can make the best use of employees' abilities and tap into a broader range of talents. A group of people from a wide range of backgrounds will have increased creativity and problem-solving skills, which benefits the company.

OPTION 3 (CORRECT): Employees are more prepared for conflict to emerge and are better able to deal with it

OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. In groups where diversity is more visible, people tend to be able to handle conflict better than those in groups where diversity isn't evident. Visible differences can be a cue to group members that conflict can happen, which means they're more prepared to deal with divergences.

OPTION 4 (CORRECT): The company has a better chance of being viewed as a desirable place to work

OPTION 4 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. Companies that work at developing diversity are often known as being employers of choice. Because they have a wide range of talent, they're frequently listed among the top ten or twenty employers.

OPTION 5: The company doesn't have to worry about following employment standards since it's hiring a diverse workforce

OPTION 5 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Regardless of whether or not a company encourages diversity, it still needs to follow employment standards
OPTION 6: Employees never have to deal with conflict because it rarely emerges where diversity is present

OPTION 6 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Conflict can't always be avoided but can be managed or diminished over time as group members learn about each other's differences.

In what ways do you think working in a diverse organization would benefit you as an employee?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): You'll be exposed to new ideas

OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. Diversity can expose you to new ideas that may result in different ways of solving business problems.

OPTION 2 (CORRECT): You'll be able to think outside the box

OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. Being exposed to different ideas, cultures, and points of view can help you think outside the box instead of doing things the same way you've always done them.

OPTION 3 (CORRECT): You'll become more open minded

OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. Working in a diverse environment can help you become more open minded and understanding of the value all people bring to an organization.

OPTION 4: You'll be able to let others do the creative work

OPTION 4 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Although a diverse workforce often brings about more creativity, you'll still have to put in your share of work to be seen as a team player.

OPTION 5: You'll have a better chance of being promoted

OPTION 5 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Whether your company encourages diversity or not, the only way to be promoted is through hard work.
Learning Point 3: Summary

To respond to modern global changes, managers have become more aware of the value of embracing diversity in the workplace. Many companies are starting to realize the benefits of embracing diversity.

Effectively developing diversity can benefit your company in four areas. The first benefit is improved employee retention, which translates into low turnover and improved performance. The second benefit is that your company can make the best use of employees' creativity and tap into a broader range of talents. The third benefit is that employees have an increased ability to handle intellectual conflict productively. Finally, the fourth benefit is that diversity can positively impact your company's corporate image.

Recognize the implications of the principal barriers to diversity in the workplace

You work at a company that wants to foster diversity but is encountering barriers and challenges.

Managers in your company are frustrated because they've found that diversity has been causing prejudice and stereotypes to emerge.

How can prejudice and stereotypes hinder your company's efforts at developing diversity?

- OPTION 1 (CORRECT): They can lead to discrimination and unequal opportunities on the part of some managers and employees
- OPTION 2: They can cause people to stop noticing differences
- OPTION 3: They can lead to some employees feeling like they're being passed over for promotions
- OPTION 4: They can lead to too much interest in coworkers' personal lives

As part of its diversity initiative, your company hires people from different cultures, who tend to have different expectations.

How could this hinder diversity?

- OPTION 1 (CORRECT): Cultural expectations can make it difficult for group members to communicate effectively and understand each other
OPTION 2 (CORRECT): When expectations among group members differ, it can have a negative impact on the group's cohesion

OPTION 3: Different cultural backgrounds can make it hard for employees who want to accept the dominant culture

OPTION 4: When people are curious about coworkers' backgrounds, it can negatively impact their relationships

Even after working through some of the barriers to diversity, your company finds that some resistance remains.

What are some reasons why your organization may encounter resistance to developing diversity?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): Some employees feel that there's no need to change because the company is successful just the way it is

OPTION 2 (CORRECT): Some executives have a difficult time understanding the financial benefits of diversity

OPTION 3: Some employees feel they'll lose their jobs if the company diversifies too much

OPTION 4: Many executives don't have the time to do the work required to develop diversity

You work at a company that's trying to develop diversity but is encountering barriers and challenges along the way.

Almost immediately, managers find that prejudice and stereotypes are emerging in the workplace.

How can prejudice and stereotypes hinder your company's efforts at developing diversity?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): They can lead to discrimination and unequal opportunities even though people think they're being fair

OPTION 2: They can lead to managers trying too hard to treat everyone equally

OPTION 3: They can cause traditionally advantaged employees to run into even more barriers as they try to further their careers

OPTION 4: They can lead to some employees getting all the opportunities for career development
Your company is made up of many people from different cultures, who tend to have different expectations.

How could this hinder diversity?

   OPTION 1 (CORRECT): It can lead to different expectations about management styles, work rules, and appropriate behavior, making it hard for group members to understand each other
   OPTION 2 (CORRECT): Different expectations among group members can have a negative impact on the group's cohesion
   OPTION 3: It can lead to managers becoming angry at employees when they don't follow the company's cultural norms
   OPTION 4: Different cultural backgrounds can make it difficult for anyone to know what the company's norms actually are

Your company has managed to work through some of the barriers to diversity. However, some resistance still remains.

What are some reasons why your organization may encounter resistance to developing diversity?

   OPTION 1 (CORRECT): Some employees believe the company's culture should stay the same, even if the current structure might not be working
   OPTION 2 (CORRECT): Certain executives can't understand how diversity can offer measurable financial gain
   OPTION 3: Many executives are worried that if too much new talent joins the company, their deficiencies will become evident
   OPTION 4: Employees are too busy with their own projects and deadlines to pay much attention to the company's diversity efforts

Learning Point 1: Barriers to diversity

Diversity can be a tough issue for organizations to deal with. Although many companies want to foster diversity, they often encounter barriers and challenges along the way to establishing and developing diversity in the workplace.
What do you think are some challenges your own company might need to overcome in order to foster diversity?

Every company is different, but most encounter a few common barriers to diversity. Your answer might have included some of these: all types of prejudice and stereotypes, cultural expectations, jealousy and defensiveness, and resistance to change.

The first barrier to diversity involves prejudice and stereotypes, which can lead to discrimination and unequal opportunities. Prejudices of all types are still the biggest barrier to most companies’ efforts to develop diversity. Most people, perhaps yourself included, think they’re fair. You don’t consciously judge people based on race, age, or gender. But prejudice is often unconscious, which is why it’s so difficult to overcome.

So what exactly is prejudice? Essentially, it’s perpetuating negative stereotypes instead of accepting differences.

Prejudice within the workplace is especially challenging because it can cause barriers to develop for some employees. It can separate information from the people who need it most and prevent them from obtaining the resources they require to get ahead in their careers. Many find it difficult to balance career with family life, and a lack of skills can make it hard to get the promotions they want. And diversity can create fault lines that divide groups instead of encouraging them to embrace differences.

Lack of resources - Many employees struggle to get the experience and development opportunities needed to compete for senior positions.

Balancing career and family - It can be difficult for some employees to find a balance between their work and personal lives. This is especially true for women and men who are the primary caregivers for their children.

Lack of skills - It’s common for some employees and managers to lack certain skills – political or corporate skills, for instance. This can make them feel uncomfortable, which hinders their chances of success.

Fault lines - In general, people are more comfortable dealing with others who are similar to them. A diverse workforce can enhance creativity, but it can also create fault lines that split a group into subgroups. For instance, a group made up of three men in their twenties and three men in their sixties may encounter more conflict than a group made up of men of similar ages.

So what can you, as an individual, do to overcome prejudice and stereotypes? Well, for one thing, you can become aware of your own biases, assumptions, and social and racial prejudices.
By questioning yourself, you can figure out if you're acting on assumptions or facts.

Maria and Victor are employees of the same sporting goods company. When their company began to develop diversity, they both realized they held unconscious prejudices.

Select the employees to learn more about their prejudices.

Maria: "When my company hired George and he was placed on my team, I was really annoyed. He looks like he's about 70 years old, and I wondered how anyone so old could possibly do a good job. But George is one of our most productive team members, and I realized I held a prejudice that older people don't make good employees. I was wrong."

Victor: "I've always said I believe that men and women should be equal, but when my company hired a woman to run my department, I realized I didn't actually believe it at all! I was angry at first – why couldn't they have hired a man who could actually do the job? But Layla is an amazing manager, and I'm trying not to stereotype people anymore."

Now, recall what you've learned about prejudice and stereotypes.

How can prejudice hinder diversity?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): It can be the basis for discrimination and unequal opportunities

OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This is the correct option. Prejudice can hinder diversity because it can cause people to discriminate based on their stereotypes about certain groups. This can lead to unequal opportunities being provided to the groups being discriminated against.

OPTION 2: It can cause people to become ambivalent about differences

OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Actually, prejudice causes people to view differences as deficiencies, not become ambivalent about them. This can hinder a company's diversity efforts.

OPTION 3: It can mean extra barriers for all employees

OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Prejudice
is especially challenging because it can create even more barriers for some employees who are part of a minority group.

OPTION 4: It can lead to employees who are part of minority groups getting all the desirable management positions

OPTION 4 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Some employees who are part of minority groups struggle to get the experience and development opportunities needed to compete for senior positions, which can hinder a company's efforts to develop diversity.

Learning Point 3: Cultural expectations

The second barrier to diversity involves cultural expectations. In general, people who come from different cultural backgrounds have different expectations about management styles, work rules, and even appropriate behavior. When expectations among group members differ, it can have a negative impact on the group's cohesion.

It's crucial that a group can communicate effectively about values, objectives, and tasks. But cultural expectations can make it difficult for group members to come to any sort of agreement about these issues, and this can eventually destroy the team.

If your company wants to avoid these negative consequences, it must figure out a way to manage cultural differences. This is where the challenge lies. Often, some employees find their ideas and opinions dismissed in favor of the more dominant point of view.

To be successful, your company needs to determine how to create a model of success that incorporates diversity instead of forcing all employees to fit into traditional ideas and visions. Even though many employees tend to accept the dominant culture, it's important that your company find a way to incorporate the cultural differences.

Now think about your own role in overcoming cultural expectations. How would you rate your ability to deal with cultural differences?

RATE OPTION 1: I'm never sure how to relate to people from different cultures

OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: Many people aren't sure how to relate to people from different cultures, especially if they've only been exposed to homogenous groups. But taking the time to learn more about your coworkers can
help you communicate better, which improves your team's cohesion.

RATE OPTION 2: I'm somewhat friendly with people from different cultures

OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: To overcome cultural expectations, it's important to try to learn more about your coworkers. Knowing why people think the way they do, for instance, can be helpful when it comes time to make team decisions – you won't be so quick to blame differences of opinion solely on cultural differences.

RATE OPTION 3: I love finding out about people from different cultures

OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: Asking questions to learn more about people from different backgrounds is one of the best ways to overcome cultural expectations. When you know more about why people think or behave the way they do, you'll be better able to communicate and work through disagreements.

As an individual, you can take actions to overcome cultural expectations. You can improve your intercultural literacy by getting to know your colleagues' cultures and differences.

By talking about expectations openly, you replace judgments with curiosity. This will help you connect with your coworkers and better understand their behavior.

Now you know that people from different cultures tend to have different expectations in terms of authority, work rules, and behavior.

How can this hinder diversity?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): It can create problems of communication and understanding within the organization

OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. Cultural expectations can make it difficult for group members to communicate effectively and understand each other, and this can eventually destroy the team.

OPTION 2 (CORRECT): It can negatively affect the cohesion of workgroups

OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. When
expectations among group members differ, it can have a negative impact on the
group's cohesion.

OPTION 3: It can lead to a company forcing all employees to accept the
dominant culture

OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Even
though many employees tend to accept the dominant culture, this shouldn't be by
force on the part of the company

OPTION 4: It can create fault lines that divide teams

OPTION 4 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Actually,
prejudice and stereotypes – not cultural expectations – create fault lines that can
divide teams.

Now think about your own role in overcoming cultural expectations. How would you rate
your ability to deal with cultural differences? Rate yourself using the scale

RATE OPTION 1: I'm never sure how to relate to people from different cultures

OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: Many people aren't sure how to
relate to people from different cultures, especially if they've only been exposed to
homogenous groups. But taking the time to learn more about your coworkers can
help you communicate better, which improves your team's cohesion.

RATE OPTION 2: I'm somewhat friendly with people from different cultures

OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: To overcome cultural expectations,
it's important to try to learn more about your coworkers. Knowing why people
think the way they do, for instance, can be helpful when it comes time to make
team decisions – you won't be so quick to blame differences of opinion solely on
cultural differences.

RATE OPTION 3: I love finding out about people from different cultures

OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: Asking questions to learn more
about people from different backgrounds is one of the best ways to overcome
cultural expectations. When you know more about why people think or behave
the way they do, you'll be better able to communicate and work through
disagreements.
As an individual, you can take actions to overcome cultural expectations. You can improve your intercultural literacy by getting to know your colleagues' cultures and differences.

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OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Even though many employees tend to accept the dominant culture, this shouldn't be by force on the part of the company.

OPTION 4: It can create fault lines that divide teams

OPTION 4 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Actually, prejudice and stereotypes – not cultural expectations – create fault lines that can divide teams.
Learning Point 4: Jealousy and defensiveness

People often feel threatened when they think their advantages will be taken away. That's why the third barrier to diversity is jealousy and defensiveness. If your company doesn't encourage and embrace diversity properly, employees who have traditionally been advantaged might feel that these advantages are being threatened.

For example, employees who have traditionally been handed promotions might feel resentful that they now have to compete for those jobs. This can lead to jealousy and defensiveness – both of which can negatively impact your team's productivity.

Jealousy and defensiveness are most likely to become issues when diversity is forced. If employees are made to work with people they normally wouldn't socialize with, they may feel they need to change their behavior – which, over time, leads to resentment.

It can be difficult for you, as an individual, to overcome this barrier. It's natural to be jealous or defensive when you feel threatened. But by becoming a "diversity advocate," you can get past these negative feelings. Try bridging differences and building understanding, or discussing diversity openly. Instead of viewing diversity as negative, try to find the positive aspects.

How can jealousy and defensiveness be a barrier to a company trying to develop diversity?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): Employees who have traditionally been advantaged might feel threatened

OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This is the correct option. Employees who may have traditionally been handed promotions might feel resentful that they now have to compete for those jobs. This can lead to jealousy and defensiveness, which can negatively impact a company.

OPTION 2: The company will have to give promotions based on seniority to avoid jealousy

OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Regardless of whether a company is developing diversity, promotions should be given on merit, not to try to avoid jealousy.

OPTION 3: Some employees will have to stop competing for jobs

OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Diversity
means that everyone in a company should have the same opportunities. Anyone with the required skills can compete for jobs, whether they're traditionally advantaged employees or not.

**Learning Point 5: Resistance**

No matter how much enthusiasm your company has for diversity and how much effort it puts into developing diversity, it might still encounter **resistance**, which is the final barrier to diversity. Resistance can happen for two reasons: some people feel there's no need to change, while others just can't understand the benefits of developing diversity.

No need to change - It's common for some employees, especially executives, to feel that there's no need to change because the company is successful just the way it is. They believe the culture should stay the same, even if the current structure might not be working.

It can be difficult to overcome this resistance, but it's worthwhile to put in the effort. Those in opposition need to be convinced that the traditional way of doing things isn't going to help the company get ahead – even if things seem to be going along just fine.

Can't understand the benefits - Some executives have a difficult time understanding the benefits of diversity. They tend to think in terms of profit versus social responsibility – and profit wins out. It's not that they don't believe in social and ethical responsibilities, it's just that they can't see how diversity can offer measurable financial gain. This means resistance to investing in diversity initiatives because the benefits of doing so are vague.

Overcoming this obstacle is possible, but only when the organization has clearly defined its objectives with regard to diversity. The company must show executives how the expected payoffs of developing diversity are worth achieving.

In Taku's company, which is a large software developer, managers have always been Caucasian males in their fifties or sixties. No one has ever questioned this – and up until now, it seems to have worked just fine. But in the past year, things have changed. Profits have been falling, and the company's key software product hasn't been doing well on the market.

Follow along as Taku and his supervisor, Julia, discuss the problem.

TAKU: I just came from the sales meeting. Did you know our profits have dropped 42% in the last year?

JULIA: Really? 42%? What is management planning on doing about it?
TAKU: Well, from what I understand, not much! They seem to think things will turn around next quarter, but I'm not so sure.

JULIA: That's the problem in this company. Management thinks things should stay the same, even though the economy is changing. We need to stay relevant!

TAKU: I couldn't agree more. When was the last time we came out with a new product? Or used a different marketing strategy?

JULIA: Not since I've been working here. Things haven't changed much in the four years since I joined the company.

TAKU: Well, unless things do change, I fear we'll be searching for new jobs in the very near future!

Taku and Julia are experiencing resistance in their company. Managers don't want to change the way things are done, even though the company's profits are suffering. But if things don't change, their company probably won't survive.

Overcoming resistance might seem like an impossible task for you as an individual. But think about how you learn to accept any change – you focus on the benefits. If you focus on the benefits of diversity instead of thinking of all the reasons it might not work, you'll probably find the resistance becomes less of an issue over time.

Overcoming the barriers to diversity isn't always easy. In fact, it can seem like an insurmountable task that's not worth the work required.

But if your company puts in the effort and overcomes these challenges, it can reap the benefits of a diverse workforce

Why do some organizations experience resistance to developing diversity?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT): Some employees think they don't need to change as they're already successful

OPTION 1 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. It's common for some employees to feel there's no need to change because the company is successful just the way it is. They believe the culture should stay the same, even if the current structure might not be working.

OPTION 2 (CORRECT): Some employees find it hard to understand the financial payoffs of implementing and developing diversity in the workplace
OPTION 2 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is correct. Some employees, including some executives, have a difficult time understanding the benefits of diversity. They tend to think in terms of profit versus social responsibility – and profit wins out. This means resistance to investing in diversity initiatives because the benefits of doing so are vague.

OPTION 3: Some employees are resentful of newcomers who compete for available jobs

OPTION 3 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Actually, resentment leads to a different barrier to diversity – jealousy and defensiveness – not resistance.

OPTION 4: Some employees think that developing diversity is too much work

OPTION 4 CHOICE-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: This option is incorrect. Although some employees might feel like diversity takes too much work, this isn't one of the causes of resistance.

Diversity is a tough issue for many organizations to deal with. Companies want to foster diversity, but they often encounter barriers and challenges along the way to establishing and developing diversity in the workplace.

The most common barriers to diversity are prejudice and stereotypes, cultural expectations, jealousy and defensiveness, and resistance to change. Overcoming these barriers will help your organization become a leader in its industry.