



Creating a diverse work environment

Tapping into the Advantages of Workplace Diversity

Building a diverse workforce can be the best thing you do for your business. Despite the familiarity of the term, the fact remains that many small business owners don't know what true diversity entails-or, for that matter, understand the full benefits of having a broad employee base.

Fresh perspectives, customer connections

Even in today's business world, many people still equate diversity with race. That isn't the case. Diversity includes a variety of elements, such as ethnicity, gender, and age, and other factors like work and life experiences. It includes single parents, seniors, special needs individuals, gay people, urban residents, Latinos, immigrants, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and the list goes on.

As a small business owner, make sure your understanding of diversity is, well, diverse so that you don't overlook the benefits. Hiring employees from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences ensures a fresh scope of ideas for your business. In addition, it helps to have a workforce that reflects the diversity that exists among your clients and customers.

"Look at the community or communities you serve. It's likely that you cater to people from all sorts of backgrounds," says Rita Bailey, co-author of "Destination Profit: Creating People-Profit Opportunities in Your Organization."

Take stock and move forward

To evaluate diversity in your own workforce, take a closer look. Look carefully-an employee who speaks several languages is a boon to building and working with a varied customer base. "Look at your community, customers, vendors and others". "Where are you lacking? Are there any particularly obvious gaps?"

The evaluation process should also involve measuring the mix of factors that are important to sustain a diverse and inclusive workforce. "Sustaining the gains adds to stability and the capability of becoming a culturally competent organization".

Another important step is making sure that your advertising reflects your interest in a diverse workplace. "The message you want to get across is 'We really want you'. "Build the sort of relationships in your community that will attract the people that you want." After all, one of the primary goals of diversity is to serve the community and customers with whom you work.

Opportunities for growth

Creating a diverse, inclusive and culturally competent workforce is a large part of the equation, but it's not all. Because some employees may not have exposure to people who are different from themselves, it's important to create an atmosphere of openness-and an opportunity for learning.

Creating a diverse workforce opens up opportunities for growth-for your team and for your business. With a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences from which to draw, a diverse team will ensure the success of your business.