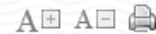


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Embracing diversity in the workplace: Why is it important?

by Abel Riototar | 09 Sep 2019



As workforce demographics continue to shift, workplace diversity increasingly becomes more of a business need than a slogan that companies wave to show their commitment to embracing differences and to serve new customers.

“Embracing diversity matters for reasons beyond fairness and equal opportunity,” consultancy Corporate Dojo founder and people management specialist Karen Gately told MPA.

“The impact of diversity on the bottom-line performance of any business and prosperity of any nation provide compelling reason for change.”

According to Gately, workplaces that uphold diversity reaps the following benefits:

Fairness. Providing people from all walks of life with fair and equal opportunity in all stages of their career demonstrates integrity.

2. **Leverage what's possible.** Greater heights can be attained when diverse groups of people come together, while lost opportunities result in "sameness" of perspective and approaches.
3. **Superior organisational performance.** According to the to the Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency, "research suggests that organisations that respect and value the diversity brought by both women and men are better able to attract and retain high performers and improve operational performance".
4. **Leverage the breadth and depth of a typically tight labour market.** Women fighting for their position in the business world, young people bemoaning the lack of job opportunities available for them and older workers whose hard-earned skills are being overlooked are just some of the group of people facing prejudice from narrow-minded employers who don't recognise and are failing to tap their talents.
5. **Culture cook up days.** Inviting people to share food from their culture with their colleagues is really a spectacular thing, and "the range of cuisine on offer in a diverse workplace is awesome," Gately said.

Operate with respect

People who shun diversity suffer from unconscious biases, avoidance of complexity and ignorance and prejudice, according to Gately.

"Many people are unaware that some of the beliefs they hold influence the decisions they make on certain groups of people," she said. "Some leaders simply hold discriminatory beliefs on certain groups and make little effort to change their thinking."

Her advice to company leaders confronted by a staff who's having problems embracing diversity is to make it very clear to him or her that everyone in the team is expected to operate with respect and decency, and that includes being open to working with a diverse range of colleagues.

"Challenge limiting beliefs and discriminatory mindsets. Coach people to shift their thinking but hold them firmly accountable if they refuse to see the issue and change," she said.

"Never tolerate narrow minded attitudes and unlawful discriminatory practices. Not only does that create legal risk, it will unquestionably undermine the strength of your teams' spirit and ability to thrive."

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