Leading a Diverse Workforce

- Diversity is all about the differences that make every person unique, including age, gender, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, physical abilities, mental abilities, religious beliefs, and cultural customs and values.
  - These differentiating traits even include personality, skills, and tenure.

- Benefits of organizational diversity:
  - Strong reputation.
    - Organizations that value diversity are likely to earn a reputation as socially conscious, responsible, and inclusive places to work that are positive forces in their communities and industries.
  - Enhanced creativity.
    - Encouraging diversity brings greater creativity and originality to the decision-making process.
    - These qualities are less likely to exist in "cookie cutter" organizations where management implies that its workforce should look, think, and act as if each employee came from the same mold.
  - Reduced turnover.
    - Employee turnover is lower in organizations that encourage a diverse workforce.
    - Valuing diversity improves employee morale by promoting honest, open communication among all members of an organization, and it gives employees a sense of value, respect, and belonging.
  - Unique viewpoints.
    - Diverse employees offer a rich blend of worldviews, skills, talents, and perspectives that can help an organization become stronger and more representative while also reaching a wider customer base.
    - Diverse employees reflect society at large, giving the organization new insights and connections to diverse groups.
  - Higher earnings.
    - Studies show that companies with higher rates of diversity have greater profitability.
  - Greater performance.
    - Having different types of people on the same team can lead to new forms of problem solving, creative and inclusive solutions, and growth and development.
    - Racially diverse teams outperform non-diverse ones.

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- There are several ways organizations and supervisors can promote positive acceptance of and appreciation for diversity:
  - Create policies and procedures that help diverse groups succeed, advance, and feel respected.
  - Seek and acknowledge contributions and opinions from all employees.
  - Try to understand and respond to the needs of diverse groups.
  - Ensure all employees have equal access to organizational resources.
  - Help employees feel valued and accepted regardless of their individual or cultural diversity.
  - Understand, appreciate, and actively engage with the diversity of others.

- Top management can further foster and ensure diversity in their workplace by doing things like:
  - Provide diversity awareness and sensitivity training to managers at all levels.
  - Include and acknowledge diversity goals in supervisors' performance evaluations and incentive compensation.
  - Organize activities that include members of all individual and cultural groups in the workforce.
  - Emphasize the organization's position on and respect for diversity as outlined in the employee handbook and discussed during new employee orientation sessions.

- *Cultural awareness* is a person's understanding of the differences between themselves and people from other backgrounds, especially differences in attitudes and values. There are four ways to build cultural awareness in your workforce
  - Pay attention to how you act.
    - Notice how you speak to others and think about the messages you may be unconsciously sending with your words and body language.
  - Learn about other employees' cultures.
    - The more you educate yourself, the more understanding and tolerant you'll become.
  - Adjust your view.
    - Instead of expecting others to be more like you, accept others' differences and make an effort to accommodate them.
    - Be empathetic and sensitive to the needs of others.
  - Value cultural differences.
    - These differences make your employees unique, so take advantage of traits that can help you, your team, and your organization achieve its goals more effectively.

Leading a diverse workforce is a necessity for the overall success of your organization. As a leader, how do you encourage diversity in your organization?

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