

Leveraging Subject Matter Experts Expertise to Address Organizational Challenges

When does an organization need to move beyond internal resources for a potential or existing issue related to differences? At some point in time, every organization is faced with challenges that require subject matter experts, whether this is in areas involving legal, financial, marketing, advertising, or human resources expertise. Once an issue has surfaced in the area of EEOC, Diversity/ Inclusion it is important to respond quickly before what may appear to be a minor incident escalates into a bigger problem. In addition, internal resources are often so busy with their day-to-day responsibilities, that it is difficult to take on new projects in a timely manner.

Query: How do you deal with the challenges of a workforce that has become increasingly diverse in terms of nationalities, as well as resentment from U.S. employees toward outsourcing?

Story: A telecommunications company had a large IT Division (9,000 employees) that had become increasingly diverse in terms of non-U.S. born employees. They had also outsourced a substantial amount of work to India. Human Resources was overwhelmed by the number of managers asking for help in dealing with a variety of challenges based on cultural differences that were affecting communications, relationships and results. At stake was the IT Division's ability to successfully execute a project involving the most significant new technology in the Company's history within an aggressive timeline. This emerging issue provided a strong business case for bringing in outside resources.

Solution: Working with internal consultants, Pope & Associates created a 1-day customized and "blended" training program (using two modules of our award-winning EDGE e-learning program as pre-work) that was implemented for all director-level and up managers. By increasing their understanding of key cultural differences based on nationality, the managers were able to recognize many of the subtle dynamics that were going on among their teams. For example, one manager acknowledged that he had recognized a "shift" in his management style in recent years. He described himself as the type of manager who liked to get out of his office and walk around a lot, engaging in conversations with staff about their work. Initially, he had convinced himself that he had stopped doing this because he was just too busy. At the end of the training, he admitted that this change was because many of the staff were now from different countries and communicating with them was uncomfortable for him because of language barriers. Others recognized that there was an underlying resentment among many employees because so many jobs had been outsourced to India and China, and that they needed to more proactively communicate with their teams about the need to work on this

project 24 hours around the clock in order to meet their deadline. Rather than avoiding these issues, they began to share what they had learned about cultural differences with their teams AND ask what they needed from them to be more effective with their global co-workers. Not only did the organization meet their deadline, they beat it by more than six months – savings millions of dollars and getting their new technology to the marketplace ahead of their competitors!

Query: How do you establish the “business case” in organizations that don’t deal directly with consumers?

Solution: With data: Demographic changes predict a shortage of workers as the Baby Boomers exit the workforce, and many organizations are already struggling with age-related issues as well as generational differences. The pool of candidates will become increasingly diverse in terms of race/ethnicity and nationality as well. If an organization wants to compete effectively for the “best and the brightest,” they need to begin to understand what is important to those potential candidates now. Also, many of these types of organizations produce raw materials, and their customers are often those companies that do sell directly to consumers. As these consumer-focused companies recognize the importance of diversity for their organization, they also begin to ask very pointed questions of their suppliers as most of the large corporations are instituting aggressive tier 2 supplier diversity goals.

Building the Business Case for Using External Subject Matter Experts

Executives need to have a solid business case to justify committing financial and human resources to address a challenge OR an opportunity. If you have identified a situation that you perceive is having a bottom-line impact on the organization for either reason, you need to create a business case. First, it needs to succinctly describe the problem or the opportunity. Then, it needs to identify the related costs of the problem, or calculate the benefits of addressing the “missed opportunities.” Reliable data, research about what competitors are doing and detailed examples from within your own organization are necessary to drive the point home. It is important to remember that most executives are extremely busy and often don’t see the organization in the “same way” as others, as we all tend to view things from our own unique vantage point. Executives are more likely to listen to a problem or an opportunity if it is presented to them in terms of the cost/benefit ratio.

What do you have to lose?

Join us in our first online campaign to assist your organization in recognizing a situation that represents a hidden cost or missed opportunity. This contest answers the question, “How are differences among our employees, customers or potential customers impacting the success of our organization?” See what others are grappling with and upload your business case for an opportunity to win a free online course that will assist your organization in addressing this issue or opportunity. We will work with the winning organization to create a free 15-20 e-learning program that can be used to educate others in your work

environment and improve your organization’s effectiveness. And, even if you don’t win the free course, you now have a solid Business Case that you can use internally to gain support for addressing the challenge or opportunity that you have identified!

WE RESPECT YOUR NEED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY – ENTRIES NEED ONLY DESCRIBE THE INDUSTRY THAT YOU ARE IN, NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES TARGETED FOR THE E-LEARNING SOLUTION, ALONG WITH YOUR BUSINESS CASE.

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