Florida International University

From the SelectedWorks of salma a hadeed

Fall October, 2013

Diversity Case Study

Salma A Hadeed, *Florida International University*

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/salma_hadeed/2/
Case Study #3

Salma Hadeed
Florida International University
Dr. Antonio Delgado, PhD
ADE 6260
Diversity brings new talent and creativity in an organization with ideas and beliefs from different backgrounds. Diversity includes race, culture, age, disabilities, ethnicity, socioeconomic backgrounds, gender and sexual orientation. Imagine the workplace as a melting pot that includes all of these diverse affiliations. One would think that where diversity exists, there would be an amicable relationship amongst employees; a creation of colorful ideas being thrown together, however this is not always the case. Even though diversity is looked at as a broad spectrum, this case study would be focusing on only one: sexual orientation in the workplace.

The famous Kinsey studies of male and female sexuality estimated that 13% of women have homosexual experiences, defined as sexual contact with a member of the same sex, or identify themselves as homosexual for at least 3 years (Kinsey, Pomoeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953). US studies reveal 10 to 14% of the US work-force is composed of non-heterosexual workers (Powers, 1996). This does not take into consideration the number of persons who are keeping their sexual identity from others. Keeping someone’s sexual identity hidden is usually the norm when they classify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender to name a few. Society has not moved forward in their thinking and as such, these persons keep their sexual orientation a secret. Persons tend to conceal their sexual orientation due to the stigmatization and discrimination associated with disclosure, with individuals more likely to conceal their sexual orientation when they have witnessed or experienced workplace discrimination (Moroow & Gill, 2003). Some other reasons why some persons may keep their sexual orientation a secret include rejection, degrading comments and sometimes even violence toward them in or out of work. This behavior can sometimes lead to low morale, mental or emotional issues and a lower level of performance by the individual.
Employees who remain in the corporate closet report lower levels of psychological well-being and life satisfaction as a result of covering up their stigmatizing identity (Button, 2001; Ellis & Riggle, 1995; Ragins & Cornwall, 2001). Because of the low productivity from these persons, opportunities would sometimes be missed.

Three examples why some employees keep their sexual orientation hidden from the public:

1. John at work is a key employee who has an amazing timecard, very polite and mannerly but cannot work well with his own peers because they are all married and he is afraid to tell them about his sexual orientation. Due to this, his performance has dropped and he lacks what it takes for him to move to supervisory level. John has now missed out on an opportunity because he did not want to be judged by his peers and be rejected by them.

2. In 1957, Frank Kameny was fired from his map service job after less than one year. He was certainly qualified for the position— he had a doctorate degree from Harvard and taught astrology at Georgetown University. What went wrong? His superiors found out he was gay. Even though the Supreme Court rejected his request for a hearing, demonstrations all over the United States took place and in 1975, the Civil Service Commission reversed its policy against all gays (Bauer & Kleiner, 2001).

3. In 1991 Cracker Barrel Old Country Store announced “an anti-gay employment policy that barred people who did not demonstrate normal heterosexual values (Galas, 1996). Cracker Barrel said it was responding to their customers’ preferences but the public did not believe them. Out of all the eleven employees that were fired, none were rehired even though they revoked its policy.
Given these three examples with all different background stories, it is clear as to why some shy away from telling the truth: stigmatism of not being ‘normal’ or by being gay.

Managers and employees need to be aware of some of these hidden talents that exist in their organization. Employees should not have to shy away from their job and their performance so as to not be seen or noticed by their peers who might think they are different.

All supervisors and managers should attend workshops where they are trained in dealing with staff who have decided to come out of the closet and who are being rejected by their peers. They should all attend proper training because sexual orientation is not something that is visible (Woods, 1993). Even though many companies have a strict ‘no tolerance’ to discrimination, it should be enforced. These workshops should include material on coming out programs for their employees, which would create a safe zone for them. It should also include role playing where different real life scenarios are portrayed and managers or supervisors have to mitigate between employees. Employees in the company should also attend workshops so that they can get a better understanding of same-sex relationships. This would assist in team member camaraderie which would aid in boosting teamwork and self-esteem.

Senior project researcher, Chris Creegan, highlighted the factors that helped people to come out, such as: the presence of an equal opportunities/diversity policy which included sexual orientation, signals from the organization that made individuals feel safer; the presence of an organizational LGBT group; getting involved in a trade union LGBT support network; the presence of LGBT colleagues and the presence of senior LGBT people (Wright, Colgan, Creegan & McKearney, 2006).

The presence of LGBT colleagues and the presence of senior LGBT people in the workplace would change the atmosphere of any organization. This announces to the employees
that there is no discrimination and that everyone should be who they are. It also indicates that regardless of an employees’ sexual orientation, they can move up the corporate ladder and become senior management. Because of this, employees would start performing in line with their true capacity and not shy away from their job at hand. Productivity would increase as well as their motivation to want to work.

Increased gay and lesbian visibility in society at large has lead major companies, such as Levi Strauss, Xerox, and AT&T, to develop special programs for workers in same-sex relationships (Stewart, 1991). The United States Army recently in the last few years indicated that all persons who were interested in serving the country could enlist regardless of their sexual orientation. This was a sudden change from a country that had a ‘no tolerance’ view toward gays and lesbians in their service. As this change came about, more persons were secure in themselves to not just join the service, but to do it proudly, without having to wonder if someone would realize their true identity.

Having been educated on sexual orientation, managers and employees should be more open to discussions concerning sexual orientation. All employees should be treated the same, regardless of sexual orientation. Managers should also ensure that the same treatment that heterosexuals receive (maternity leave, paternity leave, stress relating to family events) should be given to those of a different sexual orientation, who classify themselves as gay, or lesbians and such.
References


