

“The Perfect Diversity Storm” – A Diversity Ambush or Set Up

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I have seen some troubling trends lately – who hasn't? DTG continues to be crazy busy. We have landed twenty new clients this year not despite these trends but because of these trends.

When you put these trends together – the intersection, like a powerful combination of different storms - it can make for a perfect disaster.

The trends I am seeing:

- Human Resource departments have been slashed (and their oversight diminished)
- Organizations have cut back all training (leaving the less skilled with no skills)
- There is no emphasis on development, growth and opportunities for your talented professionals (too long term oriented – everything is focused on this quarter)
- New hires are not receiving their full orientation or on-boarding as before (setting them up to fail in the name of saving money)
 - o Could be as simple as introducing them to their whole team or department
 - o Mentor and buddy systems have been scrapped (too busy to mentor or I only mentor people like myself)
 - o Age diversity issues are going through the roof – people leaving
- Managers under pressure to perform more with less “acting out”
 - o “You should be happy to have a job”... and are treating their subordinates horribly because they feel “they have license”
 - o Managers and supervisors “believing they are diversity management naturals” when their direct reports think just the opposite and are suffering
 - o Managers disregard training because they feel diversity training is a “soft skill” when these folks can barely manage people like themselves let alone people that are different
 - o The only people who call diversity training “soft skill training” are the people who don't possess these skills and/or care not to possess these skills
- Too many new managers and supervisors (not all of them) are promoted and set up to fail
 - o Promoted because they were the “smartest or hardest working” but have no formal background in supervision or management
 - o Have not been sent to training for their new roles (before or after the promotion)
 - o Don't want to go to training even if it is offered

- Interpersonal relations or employee relations issues have not trended down but rather “ticked up” with the stress of the tight labor force and marketplace and overall economic issues (human resource issues festering)
 - o We are seeing hostile work place claims going up
 - o We are seeing more sexual harassment specifically when some thought this was in decline
 - o Unfortunately race, age, religious, and other forms of misunderstanding, exclusion, etc., are rearing their head in the workplace
- Current events “stoking the fire” – President Obama, terrorism, wars, school violence, supreme court vacancy, values wars in the media, etc., have been a magnet of conflict potential conversations in the workplace “churning up” outrage
 - o I have more “hang man’s noose incident” clients than in my entire career
 - o I have more “benign neglect” clients than I want to mention – “I thought you were going to do something about him/her or that!”
- More lawsuits and more threats of lawsuits – Courtrooms are not closed during an economic downturn

Am I missing anything? I am sure I am but it can get depressing.

DO NOT cut back your human resource function to the point where they are rendered completely ineffective. Continue to roll out training, put out new policy, communicate, get out in front of your employees and tell them we are still committed to your long term success and development.

The best organizations don’t measure annual training per person in the number of hours or days but really measure them in the number of weeks.

Questions to ponder:

Do you have a diversity strategy and plan?

Have you woven diversity competencies into your new hire orientation, your management development training and most importantly your performance appraisal process?

Do you see troubling human resource issues but you are trying to ignore them or avoid them in the hopes that these issues just “go away by themselves.” When they don’t – they just fester.

Are you setting your employees up – all of them – to succeed or fail?

It is always smarter (and less expensive) to be proactive and not reactive. Now is not the time to hide and bury your human resource head in the sand. The best organizations – in good times and bad times – are constantly focusing on how to make their talented employees feel valued, included, respected and ensure that they are

performing at a high level. There is no substitute for “back to basics” human resource management.

Mauricio Velásquez, MBA, is President and CEO of the Diversity Training Group. Mauricio has personally trained over a half million executives, managers, supervisors, and, employees from hundreds of companies over his nearly 20 year career. Mauricio has trained in every state but North Dakota and his life and work has taken him to nearly 70 countries. DTG continues to thrive in this volatile time because we provide the specific and custom solutions to your problems.

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