

DIVERSITY IN AN UNDERPERFORMING COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Introduction

This paper will analyze an underperforming community program as it relates to diversity among its employees. It will also recommend strategies for providing ongoing training for sensitivity, inclusion and cultural awareness between management and employees.

Background

The Beacon Center is a homeless advocacy organization that has undergone several leadership changes. Incepted in 1980, Martha Green, its founder and first administrator, was a tireless advocate for the homeless who developed a very successful organization. Her tactics drew critics from clients and the community. In the case of the clients; Martha required them to be proactive as participants in her advocacy on their behalf. Other community advocates thought her style is too aggressive, although they did agree that Martha got results. (Hutchinson, 2015).

Under Martha's leadership, clients of the Beacon Center were asked to participate as members of the community in various employment activities. This served as a means of being proactive in their movement toward ending their homelessness. As the creator of the Center, Martha upheld a strict but compassionate approach to serving her clients as a means of nurturing them back into the community.

Impact on Employees of the Beacon Center

The Argyris & Schon theory (1974) suggests that:

“ The central issue of administration is to provide means for individual self-realization that are consonant with organizational effectiveness.”

Diversity in management did not really occur until after Martha’s retirement in 2000. In the instance of this environment and a two time turnover in management after Martha’s retirement which contributed to creating a more diverse employee dynamic is key to facilitating the work that Martha established.

As its leader, Martha believed it her job to serve as the main person responsible for the outcome of the mission of the Center, so as to preserve the energy of her staff for serving clients. Isolating employees from a say or participation in activities focused on general operations gained the Center a negative reputation from other social service and city agencies. As the central operator (Martha) serving a diverse culture of homeless people through a diverse culture of staff (hypothetical), put Martha in almost an oligarcial position of leadership, wherein she was not concerned about her detractors because she got the results she wanted to achieve for her clients.

Plan For Facilitating More Diversity

In the instance of an agency wherein management hierarchy have their own set concepts and beliefs about about who to serve first, Martha's predecessor did not fair well in establishing a more diverse culture. Helen was much more oriented toward accepting "outside opinions". She believed that gaining advice and ideas from the city and social services agencies that had gone against Martha to be a first step in gaining their trust. But at what cost of the staff as they served the clientele? Some of Helen's concepts such as assigning her staff to convince the homeless to stay out of local parks and business districts, sand to be less demand for clients, eem counter to goals of the agency.

In creating a more diverse employee culture, and as a facilitator in assisting this organization in moving forward in its work, (the author) of this essay suggests the following goals:

- **GOAL 1:** To enhance and encourage participation of Beacon Center management in cultural awareness and sensitivity training relating to serving diverse employees.

- **GOAL 2:** Enhance the accessibility of communication between management and these diverse groups.
- **GOAL 3:** Increase the participation by diverse groups in Beacon Center activities.
- **GOAL 4:** Promote understanding of the importance of diversity among employees and management.

OUTCOME: To gain better awareness of interpersonal relationships and communications between diverse employees and management, to be better able to serve the Beacon Center clientele.

Unfortunately, Helen's management approach did more damage to her staff than good. When a staff member resigned, Helen chose to hire a replacement without discussing anything with other staff or the Board of Directors. She left the organization several years into her tenure and was replaced by two other directors, who also lasted a short time.

Conclusion

Roderick is currently the Center's director and has been able to retain his position for 12 years. Creating an open and friendly discourse between himself, staff, BOD and other stakeholders, Roderick has been able to achieve inclusiveness and diversity within his staff. Establish collaborative work efforts (Goals 2 and 3) Roderick has been able to gain new fiscal support to help expand healthcare coverage options for the Center's clients. Roderick recognized the need for cultivating a more diverse staff, being transparent in communications as well as employing ideas and concepts from staff, to be able to serve with more accountability to its clients. (Goal 4 - Outcome).

In realizing a collaborative spirit that serves the good of the whole, Roderick has guided the Center to better facilitate relationships between all of its stakeholders.

References:

Hutchinson, Elizabeth, D. (2015), *Dimensions of Human Behavior, 5th Edition, Beacon Center Case Study*, pgs 629-633.

file:///home/chronos/u-8476b5ade338c00f6f47a788d07a6e938048f4d6/Downloads/book%20of%20hbse%20(1).pdf

Argyris & Schon Theory definition: <http://www.aral.com.au/resources/argyris.html>