Diversity & Cultural Awareness Report

Sample Report

3/7/2017

Introduction

An organization's success rests heavily on how well it harnesses the array of skills and experiences of its employees while they remain a part of its workforce. How good is it at fostering teamwork? Does it bring together people of diverse backgrounds and styles in order to enhance creativity, solve problems more effectively, and discover new approaches to old issues? The organization must do all these things if it wants to achieve its goals and hold on to its best and brightest workers.

Many researchers and industry experts believe that the organizations that excel at these things have six characteristics in common-six sets of actions or attitudes that form the foundation of a successful team of people who take pride in together achieving greater levels of success. The steps can be thought of as a series of competencies that are progressively acquired by individuals and the organization as a whole, illustrated by a pyramid. Starting at the base of the competency pyramid and moving up, these six factors are:

1. Organizations and their employees develop an awareness of the benefits that can flow from cultural diversity, and establish and maintain a climate of mutual trust. They also recognize that this welcoming and trusting climate helps them grow and derive strength from the knowledge, skills, and experience that different people bring to the organization.
2. Minority groups feel a part of and are included in the major decision-making processes of the organization. Their views and ideas are genuinely valued and seen to be important.
3. Different beliefs, stated views, actions, and reactions are fully understood and are naturally tolerated and accepted as part of the rich overall "tapestry" of human behavior.
4. Warmth, sincerity, and goodwill are extended to every individual and group without applying stereotypes, so that each person feels high levels of mutual empathy.
5. Groups, and the organization as a whole, need to adapt and change when bias or prejudice toward people who are different from the majority begin to hold back the organization or the work of individual employees.
6. Individuals, and the organization as a whole, need to persist in their efforts to recognize diversity and cultural awareness shortfalls, commit to increasing overall knowledge, and seek to reap the long-term benefits from people's differences, rather than insist on similarity.

The Diversity and Cultural Awareness assessment details these steps as competencies in the sense that they are required attitudinal and behavioral changes if the organization is to harness all the skills and experiences of its members. The assessment uses these steps on the competency pyramid to give an individual the opportunity to rate their personal performance, as well as to assess the performance of the organization around them. Although this is a subjective judgment, the gaps between individual scores, organization scores, and best-practice scores can be a rich basis for further follow-up and action. Each of the above steps is described in more detail on the following page.

YOUR SUMMARY SCORES

Personal ——— **Organization**

The Realm of Best Practice
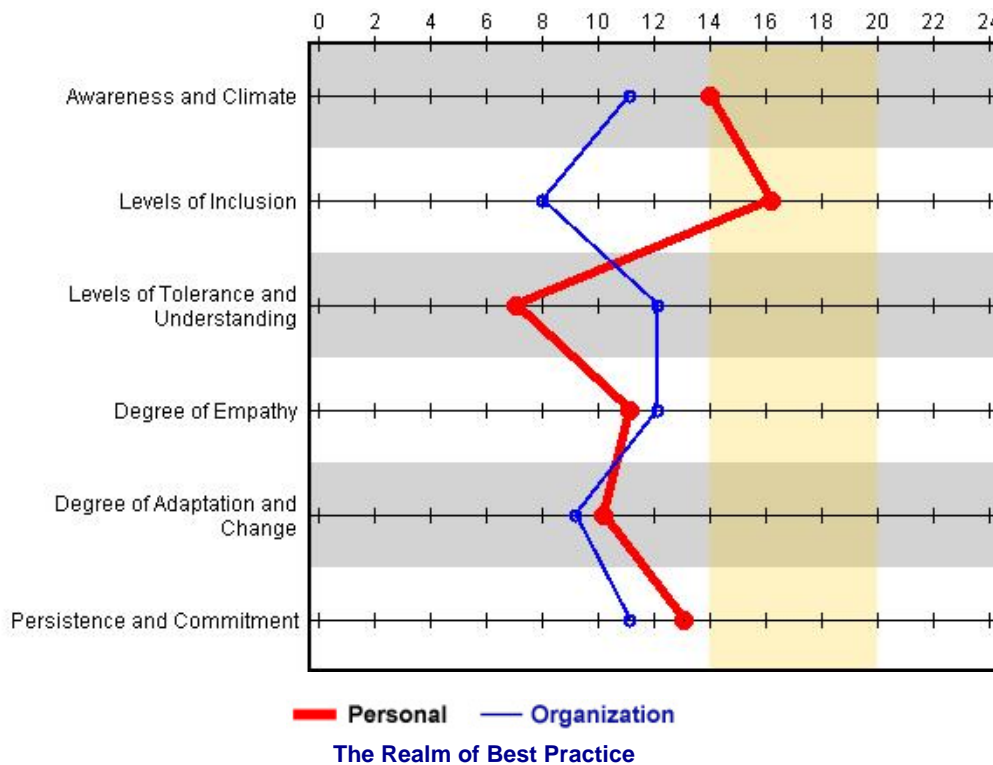
UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCORES

Now that your individual score has been plotted, you should be in a position to:

1. **Review your personal awareness and commitment levels in each of the six categories.**
2. **Review the relative performance of the organization in terms of your perception of its scores in each competency category.**
3. **Compare your score and the organizational score for each competency area and study the gap between the two in each category.**
4. **Determine your priorities (for yourself and for the organization) in terms of changing behavior or actions.**

The essential value of any measurement assessment is in the extent to which it provides a useful indication about a current situation and some guidance in terms of what an individual can do to change it for the better. The individual can then analyze the results and decide whether any adjustments or changes are necessary or desirable.

The items on the assessment, when scored, should provide a useful basis for such a review. To deepen or extend this further, ask two or three of your colleagues to complete the profile as well, to see whether or not they share your perception about cultural diversity (especially as far as the wider organization is concerned). By averaging their scores and plotting them on the grid, you will create an interesting comparison between your own and the organization's awareness and commitment, as well as the awareness and commitment that others perceive to exist.

Whatever your scores (and whether they are yours alone or enhanced by the views of others), consider developing a stronger commitment in those competency areas you are the weakest in.

THE SIX DIVERSITY & CULTURAL AWARENESS COMPETENCIES

1. Awareness and Climate
Any individual or organization that wants to bring about a greater appreciation of the prevailing levels of diversity (and derive direct benefits from it) needs to first build a strong foundation of awareness as a solid base of their "diversity pyramid." This foundation of awareness is created by trying to understand the different ways in which people or groups of people look, feel, believe, and act, and then becoming aware of the need to establish a climate of open, mutual trust. Diversity must be seen as a strength, not a weakness to be attacked.

2. Levels of Inclusion
Individuals and groups make many decisions on behalf of the organization each day. If the decision-making processes are controlled by only a few people or biased toward only one or two majority groups, the organization runs the risk of disenfranchising the groups in the minority, or of subordinating their interests and input. Inclusion requires that you not only give all individuals and groups an equal voice, but also that you make certain that every opinion is genuinely valued and considered worthy of equal consideration.

3. Levels of Tolerance and Understanding
Once awareness has been raised and people have been more equally included in organizational decision-making, there will be greater appreciation for the depth and breadth of people's diversity of beliefs, stated views, actions, and reactions. However, this does not necessarily lead to greater tolerance and/or understanding. Individuals and the organization as a whole need to reject intolerance of any kind and actively defend the right to offer a different view. More discussions need to be held concerning why people hold their particular views and perspectives.

4. Degree of Empathy
Empathy represents the highest level of understanding about another person's beliefs or viewpoint. It therefore reflects an individual's ability to put themselves in the shoes of another person and make a sincere and positive effort to appreciate their background or perspective-not judging or perceiving them according to stereotypes. Empathy is created by showing warm and genuine interest in the opinions of others and seeking to understand the unique underlying feelings and beliefs that might be influencing their words and/or actions.

5. Degree of Adaptation and Change
Most everyone can easily accommodate some level of cultural and general diversity in relation to our own perspective and even accept greater understanding of diversity on an occasional basis, but it is of little sustained value until cultural awareness fundamentally and permanently changes individuals and the organization as a whole. Such change is usually first reflected in policies, procedures, and principles, but must extend visibly to the day-to-day practices of every individual, so that these practices become the "normal" role models of behavior.

6. Persistence and Commitment
Every concerted effort to progress up through the diversity and cultural awareness competency pyramid does not necessarily lead to sustained success. Bias, prejudice, and discrimination will continue to prevail in less visible ways and occasionally undo much of the good work invested in changing attitudes. Individuals and organizations must maintain their commitment and persistence and no longer tolerate negative reactions from others about the new commitment. In addition, they must make active and ongoing cultural learning an indelible part of the workplace-it is through deeper education that we truly change ourselves.

On the following pages, you will find each of the above competencies elaborated on. Each competency includes general action steps to improve in the future, a graph that details the raw scores for yourself and the organization for individual questions, and detailed action/coaching guidelines for individual and organization scores that total less than 3 (improvement scope is indicated).

1. AWARENESS & CLIMATE

If you are serious about becoming more aware of the diversity of people around you and the wealth of cultural resources within your organization, you will understand the need to develop an open-minded attitude and an enthusiasm for the journey toward greater enlightenment, which is in itself valuable and worthwhile. This typically means that each individual will need to reflect on whether their prevailing attitudes are closedminded or limited-and what can be done to change this. The goal is to do your part to create a climate that is welcoming and trusting of diversity of belief, opinion, and action.

When workers actively talk about diversity and focus their minds on the strengths and the benefits that it can bring, they heighten awareness in general and change the organizational climate. They must draw attention to fear, trepidation, bias, discrimination, and prejudice at every opportunity when views and beliefs and people are different than what is reflected by the "majority."

The organization needs to help every individual at this fundamental level to understand the consequences should negative reactions to cultural diversity persist. Formal training can be mandated to help such individuals understand the role of their own upbringing, background, and personality, and to appraise their own beliefs, values, and customs relative to those of others. Such training can also involve people in early debate about how culture arises from the so-called "norms" that are created by such factors as:

- Racial background
- Country of origin
- Religious belief
- Type of work
- Family values
- Age group, generation
- Gender issues

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open, accepting climate:

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Make a concerted effort to spend more time reading about diversity and cultural issues so you increase your general knowledge about the subject.
2. Participate in discussions and meetings that focus on the prevailing culture and beliefs in the organization and the other cultures and beliefs that exist.
3. Involve yourself in diversity-awareness training, and actively participate in individual or group opportunities to learn more about your own culture and its characteristics.
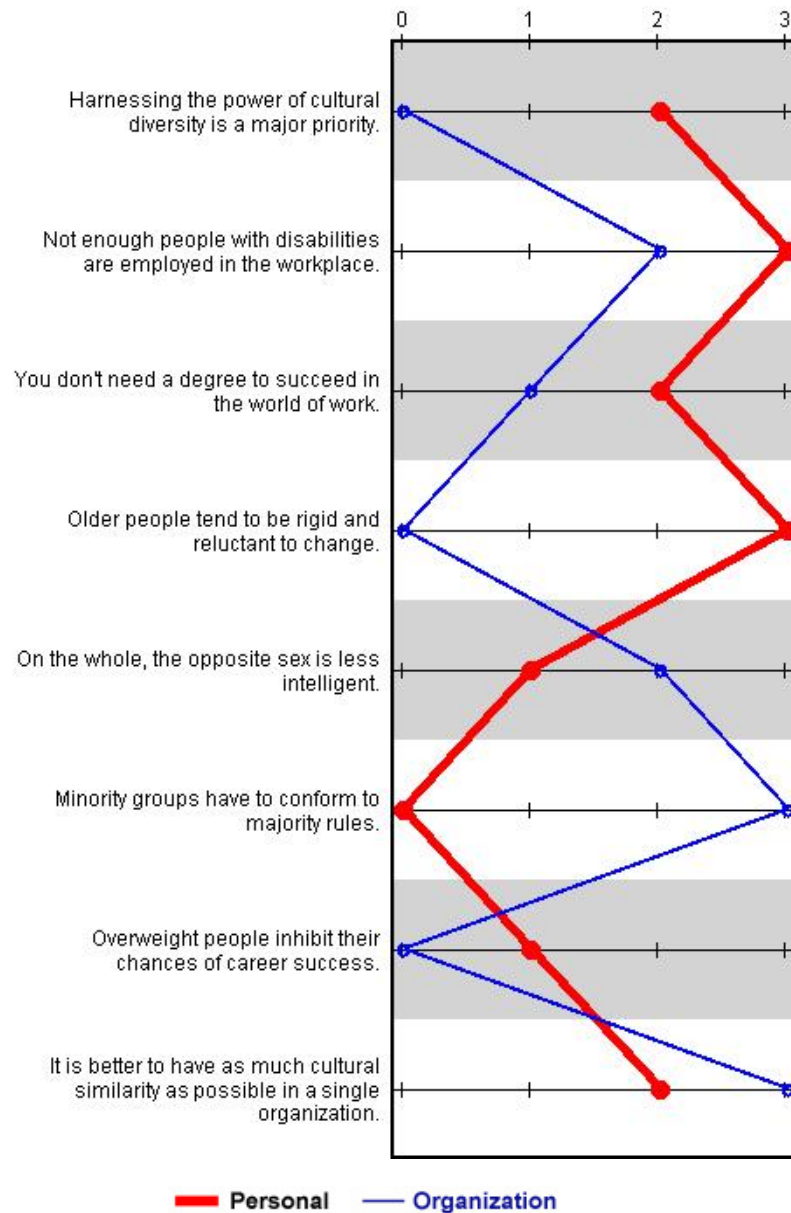
FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Take the organization's "cultural temperature" by conducting opinion surveys.
2. Find specific and visible ways to demonstrate that senior managers are committed to greater diversity.

Summary Scores

Individual: 14 out of a possible 24
Organization: 11 out of a possible 24

Service Leadership, Vision and Commitment SL-1

A clear vision exists of what service excellence should look like tips

In recent years, many organizations have invested enormous amounts of effort in making sure that they have a clear vision of the future that they would like to create (although the effort is not necessarily successful of course). In many cases these overall or general visions are very detailed and describe new markets, growth in revenues or profitability or even new cultures of performance that will be created with widespread employee input and commitment. However, although a corporate vision will also often mention customer satisfaction, they rarely describe what customer service excellence may look like in the future.

A service vision is specifically concerned with all the ways in which it is intended that customer service will be offered or given by the quality standards, delivery flexibility and commitment, service feedback and action targets and even general responsiveness standards to service requests.

An effective service vision is often built on a solid platform of real knowledge about customer needs and expectations. Best practice organizations therefore ensure that they utilize a wide range of customer listening channels that can help them to keep up to date on the shifting needs of different customers over the medium to long term.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Do I understand my own service shortfalls, limitations and difficulties at the moment and appreciate what needs to be done to improve them in the future?

2. Have I spent quality time in identifying key priority areas that need to be in my personal service excellence vision?

3. Do I really understand what standards of service my customers expect of me (internal or external ones) � how do I keep up to date?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. What mechanisms are in place to understand the service shortfalls, problems and challenges that are occurring across the enterprise and what do we need to do to improve over the long term?

2. What mechanisms or channels are in place to listen to customer needs and expectations on an on-going basis and to ensure that they are reflected in the service vision?

3. Has a clearly written service vision been developed that is based on real customer needs and disseminated to all individuals in the organization?

Service Leadership, Vision and Commitment SL-7

Role modeling consistently occurs to demonstrate what good customer commitment looks like

The traditional process of learning most often takes place through getting people to understand what they have to do and then put it into practice. In general, individuals are either told verbally about a particular subject or topic, or are expected to read about it before taking action of some sort. Although this is a common and largely successful learning process, a considerably quicker and more effective system is to adopt a role model approach (where it is possible and appropriate of course). Role modeling simply involves one person in practically demonstrating what they would like to see others doing. In other words, the role models act in a way that they would like to see other emulate.

In customer commitment terms, an organization may have already spent a lot of time in the traditional learning process of committing itself to service excellence (often in spoken words and in writing). However, they can help people to act upon these words much more quickly by role modeling the sort of behaviors that they would like to see adopted. For most organizations, this means that the senior managers or overall leaders need to become these service role models and therefore should be able to not only understand customer commitment but to make it plain in their actions for all to see and copy in their own way.

Best practice organizations ensure that they give every individual the skills and the competencies necessary to role model customer commitment behavior and actions and particularly concentrate this effort on senior managers in the enterprise.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Do I have sufficient skills and competencies to role model commitment to customers and to service in my general behavior and actions?

2. Do I spend quality time in role modeling customer commitment for others to observe and emulate in their own behavior?

3. To what extend do I go out of my way to show people how theoretical commitment to customers can be put into practice through my personal actions?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we designed a balanced learning transfer process with respect to service commitment in which our words are matched by the deeds that are demonstrated for people to emulate?

2. Have we provided people with sufficient skills and competencies to role model customer commitment (especially at senior management level)?

3. Do we hold supervisors and managers accountable for 'spreading the word' on customer commitment and regularly acting on their words or practicing what they preach?

2. LEVELS OF INCLUSION

Once everyone in the organization has a heightened awareness of cultural diversity, the organization is ready to look at the extent to which people are afforded fair and free involvement and inclusion in the major decisions that are made by the enterprise, or the collective processes that cause action to be taken. This typically involves a rigorous appraisal of whether or not all recognizable groups and individuals are included in key discussions, meetings, or collaborations, and that their opinions are given equal weight and are truly valued.

Organizational decision-making usually takes place at many levels within a commercial enterprise, starting with the governing board or board of directors and the executive team, and extending to advisory groups, committees, task forces, and action teams. All of these groups should ideally represent as many people as they can across the enterprise-not reflect only one or two majority groups. Every decision-making team should reflect a balance of gender, religious or racial groups, age, and any other relevant common interests as much as this is possible.

Include a wide variety of people at all levels of organizational decision-making. It will help you avoid appearing to concentrate power in the hands of only a few. A balanced approach also provides representation of a wide range of interests in a direct way, and creates a greater sense of perceived fairness and honesty.

Be sure you avoid doing anything that smacks of tokenism. This structural inclusion policy should create useful role models for the various interest groups to emulate. In more informal circumstances, it can help you make sure that all decision-making is based on broad input and opinion in order to strengthen the decisions made and solicit wider support and commitment. It is especially important that you ask for this input before making the decisions.

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open climate:

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Reflect on whether or not you think that power is mainly vested in the hands of a majority group, and why.
2. Review the potential limitations of beliefs or the extent to which some groups are being excluded from organizational decision-making.
3. Look at the people represented at the decision-making meetings you attend and ask why some groups are not represented directly.
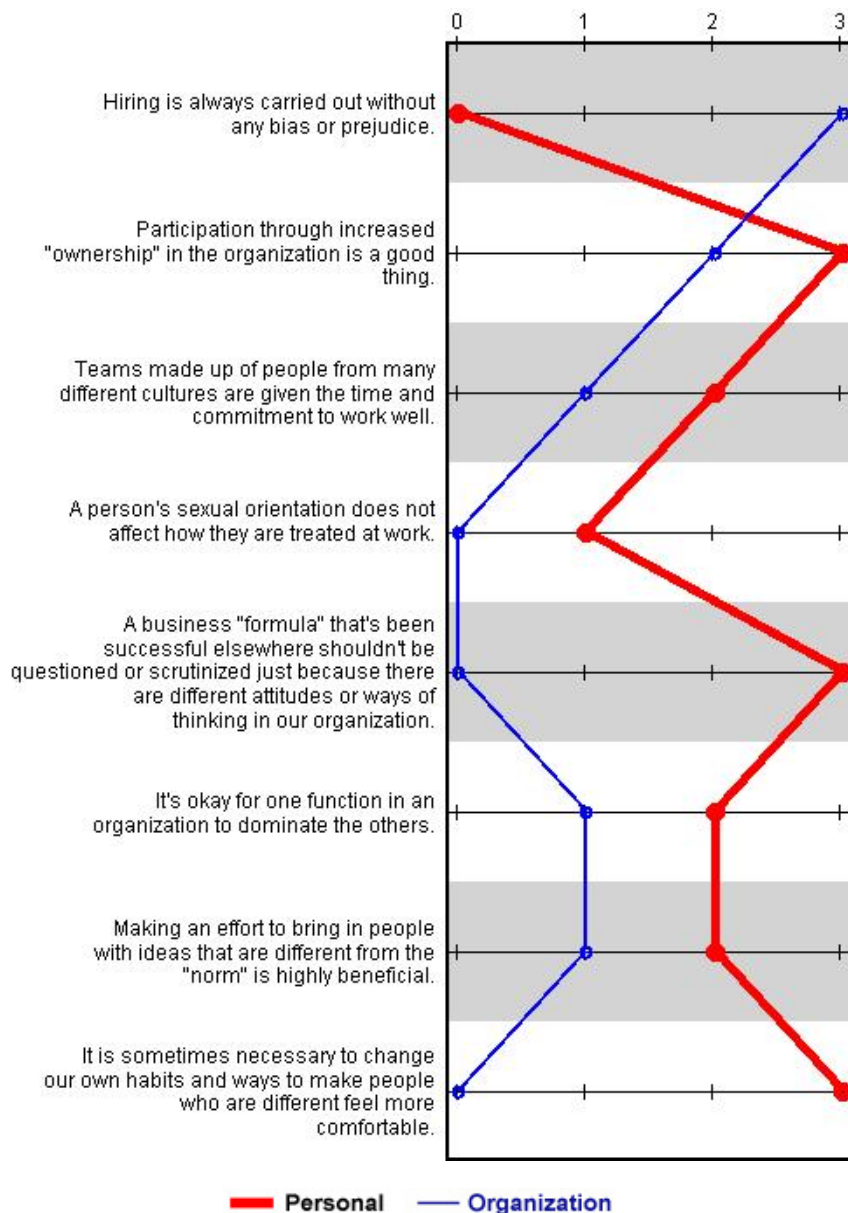
FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Look for representation from as many groups as possible in major meetings or in committees that make policy decisions.
2. Encourage all meeting planners to invite participation from individuals who represent different organizational interests.

Summary Scores

Individual: 16 out of a possible 24
Organization: 8 out of a possible 24

Feedback and the Voice of the Customer FVC-4

What customer are saying to frontline service staff is well understood

In most organizations only a small proportion of its employees actually talk to external customers on a regular basis. These are typically called 'customer facing' or frontline Staff. This means that this population inevitability has the most complete and up to date information about what customers are saying, and therefore have the capacity to keep the rest of the organization informed about any trends and changes in expectations or needs.

Unfortunately despite their important knowledge, the rest of the organization does not consult many frontline staff and feedback can therefore be missed, confused, or even ignored as a result. Consequently the organization can become overly dependent upon historical knowledge about customer feeling and may become progressively less responsive over time.

Best practice organizations ensure that the opinions and feedback from frontline staff about customer needs are treated extremely seriously and that more customer 'remote' employees are encouraged to maintain close contact in order to keep fully up-to-date.

As the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. How quickly can I identify the prevailing priority customer needs and expectations as they are communicated to frontline people and take account of this information in my day to day work?

2. How often do I engage in quality conversations with frontline or customer facing people in order to keep up to date about what customers are saying.

3. Am I willing to volunteer to assist with frontline work occasionally, in order to gain a direct appreciation of the sort of things that customers are saying?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we created an appropriate climate in which all non customer-facing employees are encouraged to talk to frontline staff and to use the information to give better service in the future?

2. Do supervisors and managers (including senior managers) participate in frontline work from time to time to expose them to the sort of feedback that customer facing staff are getting (e.g. working with sales and marketing front-liners, answering telephone calls from customers, dealing with complaints etc)?

3. Are the views and opinions of our frontline staff about changing customer needs and expectations incorporated into our strategic planning and decision-making processes?

3. LEVELS OF TOLERANCE & UNDERSTANDING

An organization that makes sure a wider representation of views is factored into overall decision-making isn't out of the clear: Levels of tolerance toward diversity and understanding about cultural differences might not have changed and might even have deteriorated. This isn't unusual; power bases of individuals and groups with past vested interest are changing and people aren't sure how they are expected to act in the "new world."

Research has demonstrated that levels of tolerance are related to the extent to which people can accept and live with a high level of general ambiguity or uncertainty. In other words, the more individuals can quietly and calmly accept that they don't fully understand why someone thinks or acts or looks differently (and they remain open-minded), the more comfortable they will be with cultural diversity.

In general, intolerant individuals are more aggressive, cynical, and authoritarian in their attitudes. They want people to conform to pre-set mental models of behavior and appearance. Differences of any kind are threats to this ordered world of certainty, and they are likely to overtly and covertly resist such differences.

You can break down intolerance and reject it by exposing people (or yourself) to different attitudes and beliefs, and through continuing education. Organizations must encourage their people to offer different perspectives, be different, and not conform to pre-set norms that have perhaps successfully prevailed in the past. Their leaders must value and show that they value this free-flow of ideas and self-expression.

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open climate:

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Read articles and books on other cultures and on the subject of diversity.
2. Set up systems and procedures by which widespread input is invited as a matter of course before decisions are made.
3. Calmly and quietly accept situations that you do not fully understand, and take more time drawing conclusions or making judgments.

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Encourage individuals to accept uncertainty as a normal reaction in some circumstances, and coach people to seek more information before making final decisions.
2. Put people of different backgrounds and cultures together as teams to complete a short-term task or project together.

Summary Scores

Individual: 7 out of a possible 24
Organization: 12 out of a possible 24
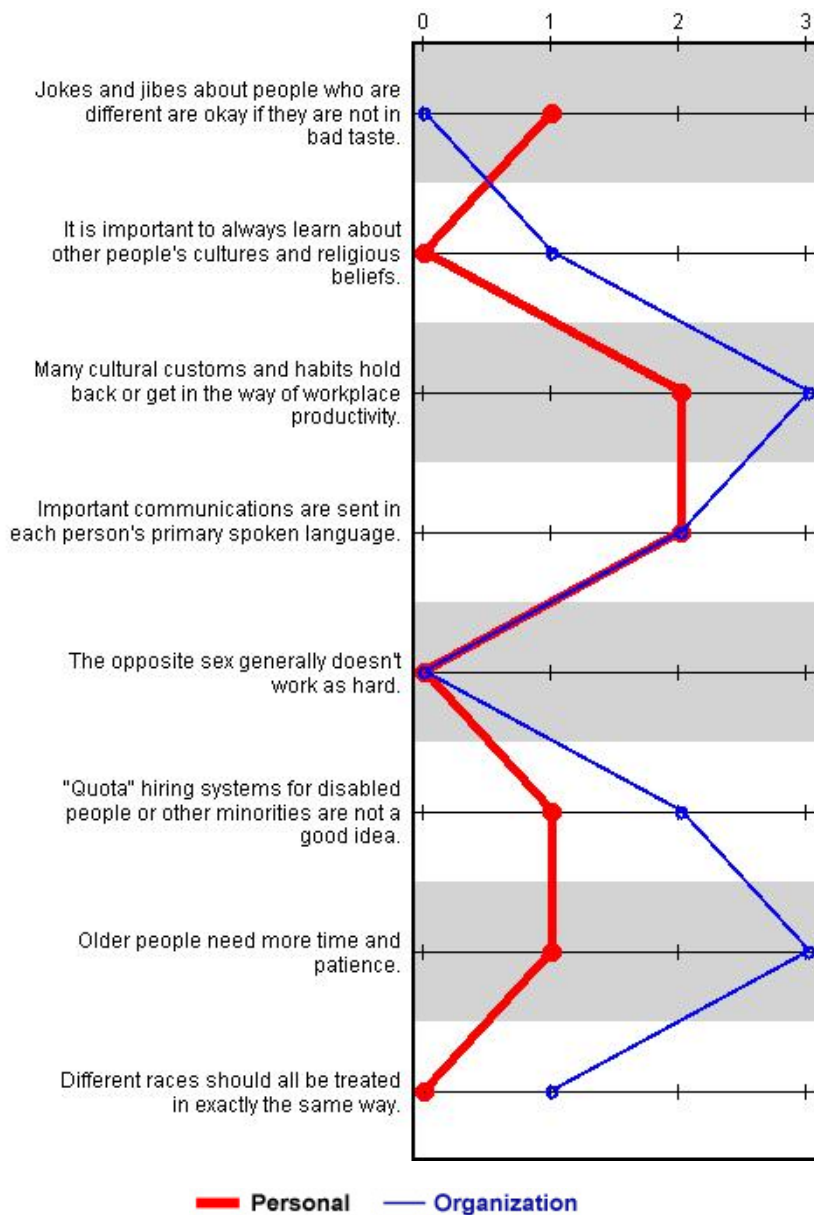
Service Standards SS-1

Customers well understand the standards of service that we strive to achieve

Whatever the kind or type of enterprise, it is always easy to set standards in a vacuum or with little in the way of external opinion or feedback. In other words, we can set very high standards in cost effectiveness, service, or excellent quality for our customers internally but they mean nothing unless we tell the customers what we are aiming to achieve and get them to make a judgment as to whether or not we are succeeding in meeting these targets.

Best practice organizations publicize all of their service standards to all individuals in their enterprise at all levels. In addition they ensure that all their suppliers know exactly what is required and the targets they are aiming to achieve. Last, but not least, they openly inform their customers (usually in writing) of each standard that they can expect, and make sure that they make it easy for their customers to regularly tell them how they are doing.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. I am personally clear about the standards of service that I should be achieving to meet and exceed customer's expectations and are they written down in clear and unequivocal language?

2. Have I communicated my customer service targets and standards to my internal staff, suppliers and/or external customers so that they are fully aware of what they can expect from me (and so that I feel accountable to achieve this performance)?

3. Do I maintain a regular dialogue with my internal or external customers to ensure that I gain feedback on my performance against my personal or team service standards?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we invested quality time in developing a comprehensive range of service standards that will help us to consistently deliver what our customers want and expect from us?

2. Have we widely published or service standards and targets internally to all employees, to our suppliers, and to our customers, so that they are fully aware of what we intend?

3. To what extent are we systematically maintaining an effective system to monitor our actual performance against our standards, as it is assessed directly by our customers?

Service Standards SS-2

Customer service excellence is a prime part of the job description

Although the vast majority of commercial enterprises will see customer service to be important at a global level, this is often little better than paying more 'lipservice' to the concept of striving to meet customer needs rather than being committed to doing anything about it. In other words, unless every individual sees service excellence to be a standard part of their job description and are pulling together broadly in the same direction, customers are unlikely to get much more than average performance.

Writing service excellence standards into job descriptions should not be treated as a cosmetic exercise or a task to be done lightly. Every job is a unique role in the overall supply chain and therefore provides service to its internal and external customers in individual ways. Each job description therefore needs to incorporate two or three specific responsibilities that describe the service outcomes that the role it is expected to achieve.

Best practice organizations ensure that all employees invest quality time in reviewing their job descriptions and making sure that service excellence is described in tangible accountabilities. They also ensure that these individual service responsibilities are shared, so that the whole team can minimize overlaps and close any gaps that might exist.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Does my job description include specific service outcomes that my role is expected to achieve?

2. Are the service expectations of my job spelled out in detail in the written accountabilities of my job description?

3. Have I talked with my fellow team members to ensure that they understand what I am responsible for achieving in service terms and equally, I understand their responsibilities?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we ensured that individual's role descriptions are dynamic and contain specific commitments to service excellence for their internal and external customers?

2. Have we ensured that individuals know how to write clear and well written accountability statements to describe their service commitments?

3. Have we established an effective role review process to ensure that all the major customer service needs are met and to minimize overlap and duplication of effort?

Service Standards SS-5

What should be done to serve customers well is clear and precise

In many organizations, customer service excellence is promoted as a general 'call to arms' with little in the way of specific goals or strategies. Put another way, a vision statement, slogan, letter from the CEO or glossy brochure/booklet is seen to be sufficient emphasis and employees are then left to follow their own path. Unfortunately, such approaches rarely work as a way to promote serious effort to serve customers well, and more tangible steps therefore need to be taken.

Best practice organizations often invest a considerable amount of time in determining what customer service excellence should look like (or to what people should aspire) for every product or service that they provide. This includes the development of detailed descriptions of standards and processes and the setting of clear and precise targets that should be attained. This clarity (created at a strategic level) then helps every department, team and individual to know exactly what is required of them to give service excellence. Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Am I clear about the specific strategies, goals and tactics that the enterprise may have on how service excellence should be created in tangible ways?

2. Have I developed a clear and precise plan to serve my own internal and external customers well (according to their standards of good performance)?

3. Have I properly assessed different customer service needs that may exist for each product or service provision area or channel?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we fleshed out 'an overall' service vision to include specific strategies, goals, processes and steps to spell out exactly how to serve our customers well?

2. To what extent have we properly differentiated the service expectations that exist for different products or services that we provide (where necessary and appropriate)?

3. Have we published clear and precise service expectations and targets to which all employees can aspire in the future?

Service Standards SS-8

The difference between poor, average, and excellent service is always very clear
Organizations often talk about customers in very broad terms with little or no clarification of the overall levels of achievement that would be considered to be good, average, or poor. Because we 'can only manage what we can measure', unless we calibrate the level of service that we want to achieve, confusion and misunderstand is likely to reign.

Relative service excellence should be determined by a careful review of all of the product or service 'lines' offered by a particular enterprise and by developing detailed written statements that describe poor, average, and excellent service (as far as the customer is concerned) for each area. Best practice organizations do this by gathering groups of people together at all levels to help them to develop these descriptive statements (so as to be able to then disseminate more widely to all employees) They also check directly with customers to ensure that the internally drawn differences between poor, average, and excellent service are completely clear and realistic.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Do I appreciate what poor, average, and excellent service looks like for each of the products and/or service that my team or I offer to (internal or external) customers?

2. Do I specifically understand what I have to do to lift poor to average service, or average to excellent service in terms of tangible steps and actions that I can take?

3. Have I checked my understanding of poor, average, and excellent service delivery with my colleagues to test for consistency?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we invested sufficient time and effort in identifying poor, average, and excellent service levels for each and every major product or service line that our organization provides to our customers?

2. Are differences between poor, average, and excellent service written down in clear in unequivocal terms to ensure the most widespread clarity amongst all employees?

3. Are relatively standards of service regularly discussed (formally and informally) to ensure that a common understanding exists about service excellence and how to attain it?

4. DEGREE OF EMPATHY

Grudging or reluctant acceptance of workplace diversity that lacks true warmth and sincerity is not good enough, but it is a beginning. To move to the next level in the cultural awareness pyramid, individuals and the organization as a whole need to demonstrate open and genuine sensitivity to the needs of all kinds of "different" people, whatever their background, appearance, or beliefs. They need to find many ways to empathize with them.

One of the greatest barriers to genuine empathy toward people who are perceived to be "different" is social stereotyping. Stereotyping is the process of ascribing or assigning particular behavioral traits to individuals on the basis of their apparent connection to or membership in a group. The stereotype might or might not be accurate, but in any case, it acts as a mental "filter" through which judgments can be made.

Stereotypes are typically used as a shorthand way to conveniently categorize people or to "simplify" individual reactions or determine how "the world" operates in general. People use stereotypes to describe race, religion, country of origin, gender, education, weight, height, age, accent, and many other categories.

Stereotypes will continue to prevail as long as people can avoid close associations with different people and groups (or they are arbitrarily kept apart). Higher levels of personal familiarity help us appreciate unique perceptions and beliefs and point out the limitations of stereotypical thinking. By increasing involvement and proximity, an individual's unique identity is highlighted and similarities (rather than differences) of reaction and feeling are consequently more recognizable and accepted.

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open climate:

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Eat lunch with at least one person of "difference" each week or month and find out how they feel about their involvement in the decision-making process.
2. Offer to directly help minority groups in the general community.
3. Think about the accuracy of your own mental stereotypes concerning people around you who come from different backgrounds or cultures.
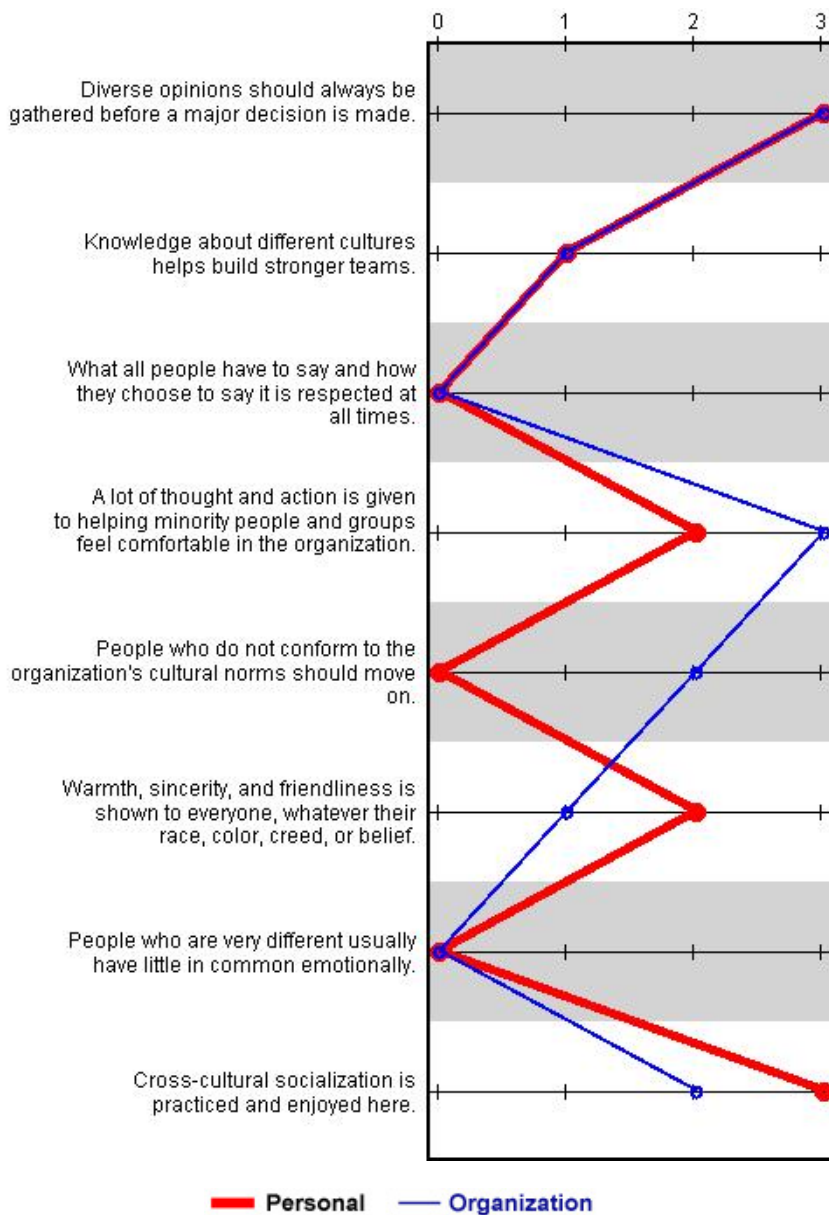
FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Become more vigilant about changing existing stereotypes that limit or restrict us from healthy interaction and communication. Discuss this with friends or colleagues.
2. Find ways and means to publicly reward and recognize behaviors and actions that are positive and helpful to the effort to become a more openminded and diverse workplace.

Summary Scores

Individual: 11 out of a possible 24
Organization: 12 out of a possible 24

Empowerment for Service ES-2

Front-line/customer contact people are given as much support and resources as they need to do their job
In small organizations, most individuals are likely to have some contact with external customers and can equally offer the support and resources that are needed to provide the service that is required. However, as an organization grows, lines of authority are typically drawn and a smaller and smaller proportion of individuals are designated as 'front-line' customer contact people.

Although this is often a sensible and necessary change to help eliminate duplication and overlap of effort, great care needs to be taken to ensure that customer contact people are given enough independence to do their jobs properly. In other words, if a front-liner's freedom to act or authority is almost entirely removed (causing them to have to constantly check with supervisors) their ability to respond immediately to customer needs is likely to be inhibited or unnecessarily constrained.

Best practice organizations carefully review the range of decisions that frontliners are likely to be required to take and make sure that most of the resources and authority that they need to perform their role are in place, and that support is readily accessible (and does not have a negative impact on customer service)

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Do I have the necessary authority, resources and support to do my job efficiently and effectively without having to refer to my supervisor a lot of the time for decisions?

2. Have I clearly communicated what other support or resources would be useful or beneficial to give better service to my customers (internal and external)?

3. Do I fully understand how much authority I have to make decisions without referral and does this need adjustment in the light of the expectations of me to do my job well?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we carefully reviewed the general level of authority, resources and support that is needed by front-line people in each key area of the enterprise?

2. Have we specifically surveyed front-line customer contact people to assess what extra support or resources that they may need (if any)?

3. Are our delegations of authority well balanced and appropriate giving us appropriate control but giving front-liners sufficient freedom to give
customers excellent service?

Empowerment for Service ES-3

Training in customer service excellence is available and regularly attended

Some people seem to be almost born with the innate ability to know exactly what to do in order to give excellent customer service in a wide range of situations or circumstances. Such individuals often have excellent interpersonal skills and can establish good empathy with other people very quickly. Unfortunately, the majority of people do not seem to be blessed with such innate skills and therefore, have to rely upon learning about what it takes to offer and maintain high levels of service excellence.

Although learning can be informally offered (via one to one coaching or engaging in short conversations with people) most customer service learning occurs via more formal training approaches (presentations, courses, workshops, etc). This means that such learning events need to be carefully designed, tested for their effectiveness and regularly attended by the people that need the training the most.

Best practice organizations make sure that customer service training is available in a variety of ways and make it highly accessible to front-line people and anyone else that would benefit from it.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Have I carefully assessed my personal knowledge, skills and abilities in the area of customer service and identified any gaps that may need to be filled?

2. Do I ensure that I keep my service skills up-to-date and fresh by talking to others about service, knowledge, skills and behaviors that can be adopted and applied?

3. Do I ensure that I attend any presentations, courses or workshops on customer service to keep my knowledge up to the required level (or ask for such events to be organized when they do not exist)?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Do we conduct a regular learning needs analysis to understand what informal and formal training events or interventions would be beneficial to lift customer service knowledge or skills?

2. Have we designed a variety of customer service training options that can keep individual skills and knowledge up to date?

3. Do we make our customers service training events widely available and encourage individuals to attend and benefit?

Empowerment for Service ES-5

There is a strong commitment to and accountability for doing whatever it takes to meet customer needs
The organization that is truly committed to and accountable for customer service needs to understand that many of its rules - about what people do and how they behave - will often inhibit their goal to put the customer and their expectations first. To overcome this problem, best practice organizations switch their thinking from 'Stick with the rules first', to 'Put customers' needs first, and rules second' - this means that the accountability is to the customer and not to the internal rules of the enterprise.

Of course all organizations needs some policies or procedures to ensure that tasks are performed well, efficiently, safely, etc. However, many policies or procedures actively seek to limit the authority of individuals (particularly at the lower base levels of the pyramid). While this can be a sensible and prudent approach in many circumstances, it is appropriate to review all the prevailing rules and regulations to test their consistency with a commitment to put the customers first.

By its very nature, to focus on the customer is to accept some 'customization' of the product or service being offered. Customization is the reverse of standardization or sticking to the standards, rules or policies that should always apply. Hence, customer accountable organizations need to relax the rules to allow front-liners, in particular, to satisfy their customers when an interaction occurs.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Do I follow the organization rules first (or in most circumstances) and customer needs second, or do I truly put my customer needs ahead of other priorities?

2. Am I willing to sensibly bend or flex organizational procedures to give customers better service?

3. Am I flexible enough in my attitude to tailor or customize a solution to lift customer satisfaction levels?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we designed the organizational structure or hierarchy to ensure that individuals are committed and accountable to putting their customers first as far as this is reasonably possible?

2. Have we given individuals the room and authority to do whatever they determine that it takes to meet customer needs?

3. Have we ensured that accountability for meeting customer needs is built into the job descriptions of all individuals and is something that we measure or appraise when reviewing performance?

Empowerment for Service ES-7

Product or service knowledge is high

Every enterprise (no matter what its business or purpose) has products or services that it provides. Not only commercial businesses provide tangible products and services (like the goods sold in a shop or seats on a plane) but other types of organization also provide goods and services. For example, hospitals provide drugs and patient care services, emergency service departments provide fast response to fires and other incidents, a local council provides road or footpath construction or repairs and a police force provides a range of protection services. In fact, most organizations supply not just one but a highly complex array of products and/or services to its customer base. As a result, it becomes critical that every individual can describe the products and/or services (or maintain a high degree of familiarity) with what is provided under what is often described as the overall umbrella or 'brand' name of the enterprise.

Best practice organizations ensure that product and service awareness is high by making clear and simple descriptions or statements available at all levels and by actively conducting awareness briefings or training to help individuals and teams to maintain a high level of general familiarity.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Do I have a high level of confidence and awareness about the products and/or services that are provided (to internal or external customers) by my team?

2. Am I confident that I can broadly describe the main or key products or services that are provided by my entire organization?

3. To what extent do I play an active part in making sure that my knowledge is up to date on new products and/or services?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. How simply and clearly do we describe each of the significant products and/or services that we provide to help educate every individual within the enterprise?

2. Do we actively undertake product and/or service awareness coaching, guidance or training for all employees?

3. Do we have an efficient and effective process to ensure that every individual can keep quickly up to date with new products and or services that are brought into existence?

5. DEGREE OF ADAPTATION & CHANGE

You will have to approach the idea of cultural diversity informally at first. A relatively slow and patient build-up of awareness allows the organization to come to terms with shifts in attitudes concerning the involvement of groups that previously had little or no involvement in so-called "mainstream" enterprise processes. However, at an appropriate point, leaders need to signal the organization's formal commitment to supporting diversity at every level and to bringing about structural adaptation and change to past practices.

The tools available to an organization to formerly change or to adapt on a permanent basis typically involve written policies, procedures, standards, and rules that will govern how people are expected to work together to achieve appropriate and acceptable results to the level or standards of performance required. These tools can be used for a range of processes and systems, including:

- The way that people are hired
- Objective-setting and appraisal
- Promotion and career development
- Communication processes
- Rewards and recognition
- Training and development

Policies and procedures can be amended or entirely rewritten to promote and support greater acceptance of cultural diversity (and tolerance of difference) as a primary organizational requirement, and one that will be rewarded in a variety of ways. However, it should be recognized that changes in policy are unlikely to be enough to ensure long-term adaptation and change. Everyone has to commit to implementing any policy so that changes take place in ways that are practical, meaningful, and visible for all to see. If this is also supported by visible behavior on the part of managers, their actions will serve as powerful and positive models for others to emulate.

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open climate:

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Form or serve on a committee that reviews policies designed to help promote greater diversity.
2. Volunteer to work with groups or cultures unfamiliar to you.
3. Start to learn a new language.

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Review all the major policies and procedures of the organization to help encourage greater cultural diversity and awareness.
2. Make a point of publicizing one major policy change and the actions that you intend to take immediately as a result. Follow through and follow up.

Summary Scores

Individual: 10 out of a possible 24
Organization: 9 out of a possible 24
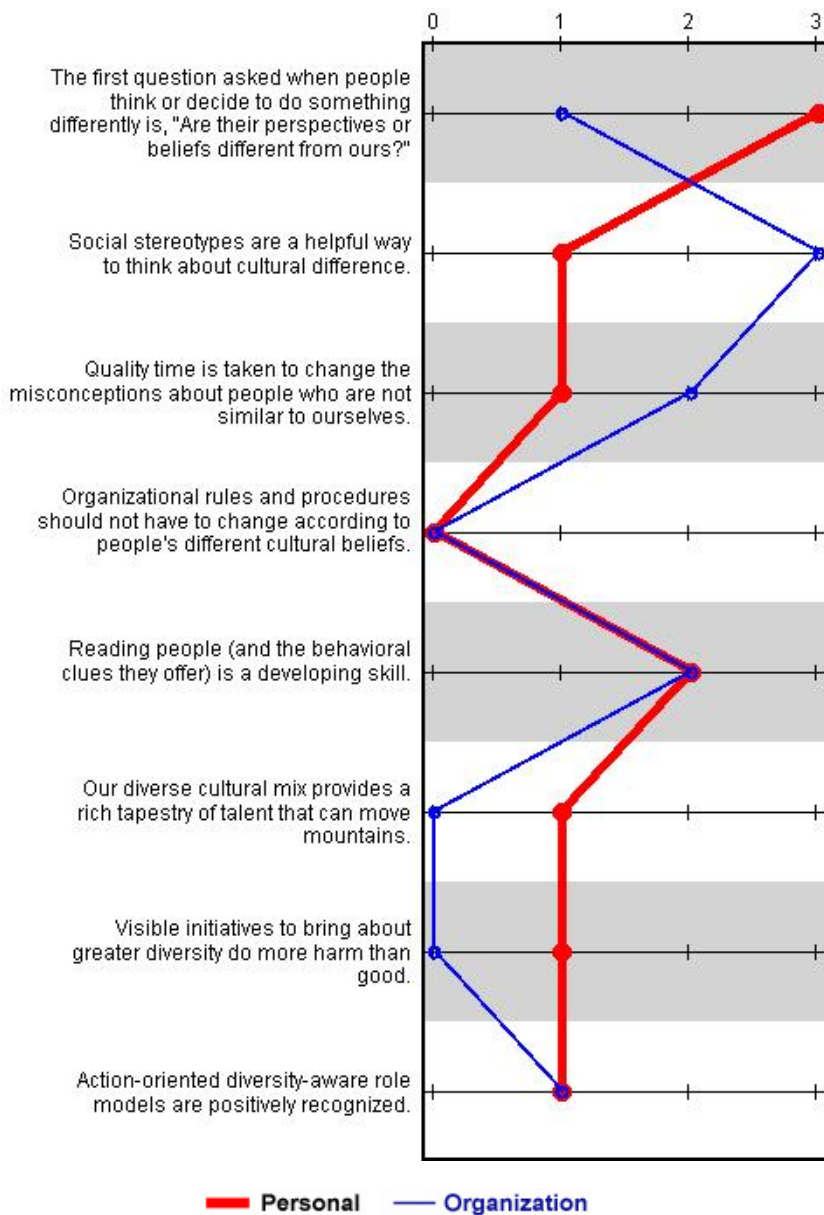
Customer Serving Processes and Systems CSP-4

There is a process for actively seeking information to help continually improve service quality
During the course of any concerted effort to improve or streamline organizational processes to increase customer satisfaction, circumstances will change. The changes will result from a number of very normal situations. Suppliers will change, customers will change their minds, employees will transfer to different teams and even technology will offer new options (to name but a few). Teams therefore needs to constantly review the processes under their control (or partly under their control) and look for new and different ways to continually improve.

To take a particular example, a team of people working in a retail store may survey their customers and find that they should improve the time it takes to pay at the till. In these circumstances, the team may focus on putting on more cashiers or checkout counters, or look at making available better technology such as bar coding to speed up the payment process (as well as deliver some other benefits at the same time). However, not only will customer expectations alter from time to time, but they will have other expectations that may often assume a greater importance to their 'Better store' product choice or more special offers for example, may become the new priority. Best practice organizations therefore look to stay constantly abreast of these potential changes (many of which will only be subtle shifts in emphasis) and keep seeking new information.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Do I always know where to go or to whom I could speak to get the information that I need to help improve overall service quality in some fashion or form?

2. Is useful information on current service performance available, simple to interpret and easily accessible?

3. Is customer research and data (from surveys, complaints and other sources) widely circulated and made available in order to provide useful information to help improve future service quality?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. To what extent has a clear process been designed to make information of all sorts available to employees to help them to improve service quality (based on facts and data about performance not guesses and assumptions)?

2. Is a structured communication process in place to help individuals and teams to put forward ideas about how service quality may be lifted or improved?

3. Have we designed efficient and effective feedback processes and systems to ensure that customer service performance data is widely understood and action to correct any shortfalls can take place as often as necessary?

Customer Serving Processes and Systems CSP-6

Customer service performance is tracked and measured over time
Because customer service satisfaction is an outcome that is made up of a wide variety of factors that combine to create an overall impression of good performance, it is easy to think that it is extremely difficult to track or measure. In fact, service performance is a mix of both subjective and objective elements but both can be readily measured with a little care and effort. Objective service performance is typically tracked by looking at measures of wastage, product returns, on-time delivery or order cycle time, etc. More subjective measures are typically tracked by looking at indicators of complaints or compliments. Satisfaction opinion survey ratings or customer focus group feedback.

Best practice organizations ensure that both subjective and objective measures are carefully designed. They also look to design tracking processes that can be used consistently over time, giving them the opportunity to look at comparative performance and therefore, make sure that they are constantly improving.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Have I carefully reviewed the ways in which my own personal service (or my immediate team) can be measured or tracked over time?

2. To what extent have a range of specific performance measures been identified and discussed to track both objective and subjective service performance in the eyes of our internal or external customers?

3. Have we done enough to ensure that the major service measure that we employ can be used again and again to monitor our progressive performance?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we invested sufficient effort in identifying the major processes that must operate effectively and efficiently to service our customers well and considered how these might be best measured?

2. Have we distinguished a core selection of objective and subjective measures of service performance and educated individuals and teams so that they can be adapted and used on a local basis?

3. Have we designed a clear and simple process by which we can collate service performance at a team or department level (both by objective and subjective measures) and track overall enterprise service performance over time (to make sure that we are heading in the right direction)?

Customer Serving Processes and Systems CSP-7

Customers can gain easy and friendly access to meet their needs in many and different ways
Although organizations vary widely in the ways in which they provide their products and/or services to their respective markets, every enterprise has to find ways in which to ensure that customer access to what they need is simple, unencumbered and without unnecessary barriers.

Friendly and easy access to the organization sounds relatively straight forward as a step for any enterprise. However, a remarkably high proportion of organizations succeed in making it difficult for their customers to deal with them. This may be by only allowing one or two channels by which to talk to them or arrange products and/or services to be delivered, not having a web-site (or one that nobody maintains) or even to have unhelpful or unfriendly people to which customers have to talk (in some cases even unfriendly machines or computers before eventually talking to a real voice).

Best practice organizations think about their customer base and mix and design as many access channels as they think would be useful to meet a variety of potential customer needs. They aim to take account of particular niches or segments of the market (through direct feedback) that like to deal with the organization in specific ways and try to smooth the path for two way communication as much as they can.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. To what extent have I assessed the ease with which my internal or external customers can make contact with me or the team or gain ready access in order to quickly get what they want?

2. Have I directly thought about and designed a range of ways in which access to products, services or information can occur and ensure that internal or external customers get a friendly response whatever channel is chosen?

3. Have I adequately publicized the ways in which others can gain access to myself and/or the team?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. To what extent has the enterprise wide strategy for customer access channels been adequately discussed and agreed upon?

2. Are our customer access channels well designed, clear, easy to use and do they give warm and friendly service experience every time?

3. Are there new customer access channels that we should be adding according to general customer needs or to help particular niches or segments of the market?

Customer Serving Processes and Systems CSP-8

There is a sound system in place for ensuring that the same customer problem does not keep re-occurring
From time to time, customer problems, difficulties and complaints will inevitably occur. Whilst we would like to minimize such occurrences, it is often more important to ensure that the problems are well understood and can be prevented from happening again if at all possible.

The only way in which most organizations can stop customer problems from reoccurring is to have a sound system in place to analyze the problems when they arise in the first place. For the most part, this involves designing an effective tracking process that achieves two main ends. Firstly, the frequency of similar complaints and problems needs to be recorded so as to quickly recognize the same issue seems to be re-surfacing in different guises. Secondly, the system needs to allow for the time and the ability to analyze the problem carefully and recommend structural solutions that help get to the root causes of the issue.

Best practice organizations make sure that all customer problems and issues are properly collated and that people are responsible for analyzing why the problems are occurring. In addition, they aim to develop strategies and solutions that will not only fix the problem in the short term but help to avoid any re-occurrence for the same or other customers.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Do I know what problems, difficulties, issues or complaints tend to occur most frequently for customers when they deal with our enterprise?

2. Is a good system in place to collate and analyze on-going problems that customers' experience and to look at addressing the root causes of the issues, so as to fix it once and for all.

3. Do I share my experiences of customer complaints with work colleagues from other teams and actively discuss ways in which we might adopt better processes to eliminate the problem.

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we designed a sound process to collate the wide variety of problems and difficulties that customers' experience when dealing with our enterprise so as to analyze any patterns or trends?

2. Do we sufficiently emphasize the need to find the root causes of customer problems rather than accept quick fixes that allow the problem to occur again?

3. Have we established an effective communication process to share experiences of customer complaints or difficulties and to quickly spot where a potentially recurring issue may be emerging?

6. PERSISTENCE & COMMITMENT

Successful organizations get that way and stay that way because of enduring conviction and commitment. A widespread cultural change of any sort takes considerable time, energy, and commitment. It makes enormous demands on the organization to achieve a permanent and sustainable level of success. However, it can lead to some difficult conflicts and negative impacts that will undermine the overall goal to establish cultural diversity as a valuable organizational strength. In such situations, the organization needs to maintain the courage of its convictions and persist in its objectives, despite opposition or discomfort.

The ultimate success of any effort to bring about widespread acceptance of diversity requires that you adopt two long-term planning strategies: One, focus on a model or a methodology for resolving conflict positively at all levels- perhaps widespread training and individual coaching, but more importantly, communicating a commitment to integrative or "win/win" resolutions, rather than "win/lose" encounters that can create ill will and resentment.

Secondly, attack subtle or obvious bias, prejudice, and discrimination that might have been driven "underground" because individuals see that it is now more openly difficult to resist diversity. The organization must develop a much more "assertive" intolerance toward people and groups that continue to demonstrate negative reactions: Apply more serious sanctions than were used in the past. Selectively remove such individuals from positions of authority and influence (and possibly from the enterprise as a whole).

In the final analysis, organizations cannot afford to be complacent if they want to create a comfortably diverse culture. They must continue to commit to educating people and advocate the benefits of the goal in relentless fashion.

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open climate:

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Regularly raise diversity and cultural awareness as a topic of discussion in meetings and forums.
2. Test all major decisions made by you or the organization to ensure that they are not discriminatory in any way.
3. Work harder at finding win/win solutions that benefit as many people with differing interests as you can.
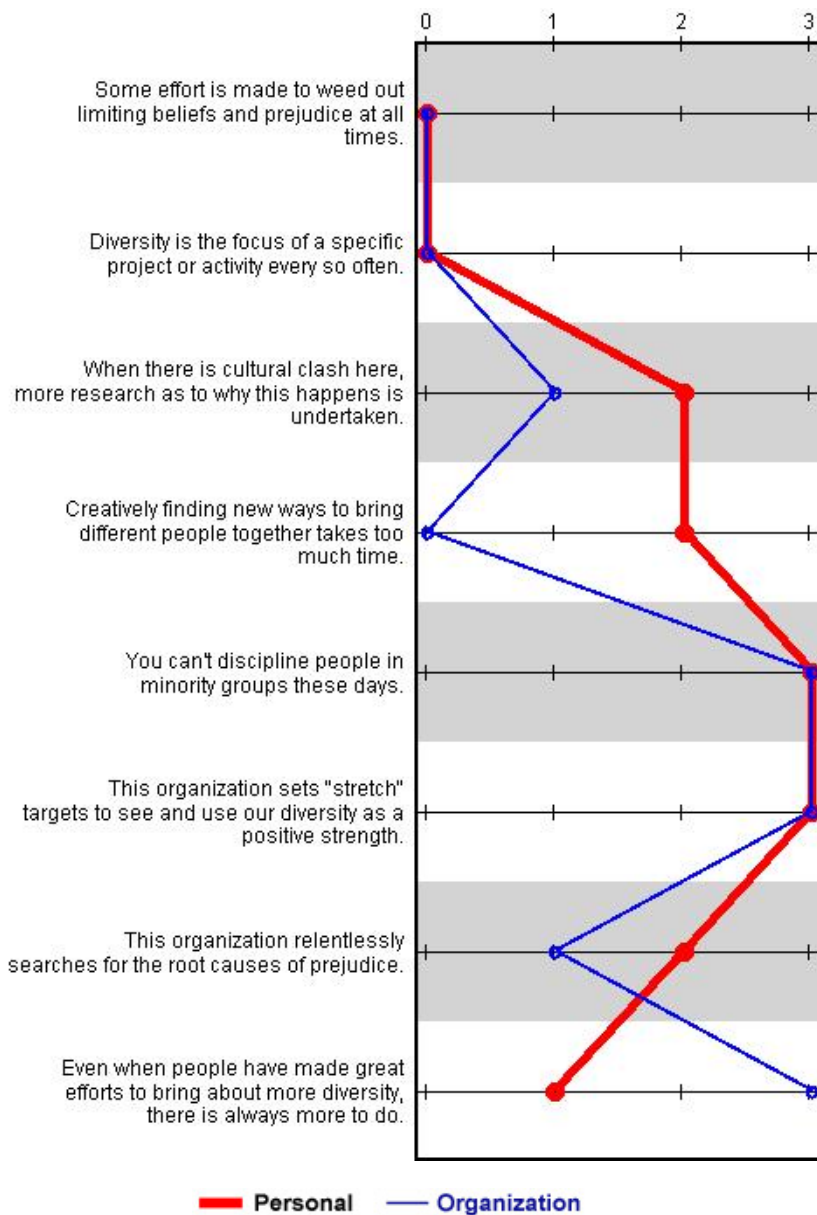
FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Invoke sanctions on individuals and groups that continue to discriminate.
2. Offer conflict resolution training and coaching to all those who would benefit from it.

Summary Scores

Individual: 13 out of a possible 24
Organization: 11 out of a possible 24

Rewards and Recognition for Service Excellence RRS-1

Performance excellence in serving customers is highly valued

Despite the fact that customers may value the intrinsic quality of a product or service provided by a particular enterprise, the vast majority of customer survey data and feedback suggests that it is personal service that customers value the most. This is not surprising when you stop to consider that it is personal interaction and communication that mainly distinguishes one organization from another (and sometimes it is the only differentiator!)

If any enterprise seriously wants to maintain or raise customer satisfaction levels, it is the performance of its people that is most important (and is likely to pay the greatest dividend). Consequently, any outstanding or excellent effort on the part of individuals and/or teams of people needs to be not only privately valued, but publicly recognized or appreciated.

Best practice organizations make sure that front line/customer facing staff are highly appreciated and applauded for their on-going efforts. In addition, any individual that goes the extra mile for the customer is openly recognized for their efforts and given genuine support and encouragement.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Am I sufficiently appreciative of people around me who give excellent customer service or perform outstanding work for and on behalf of the customer?

2. Do I treat front line/customer facing staff with the respect that they deserve for their on-going efforts to serve customers well?

3. Do I go out of my way to thank colleagues or team-mates when they have done some outstanding work that has helped to lift customer satisfaction levels.

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Do we regard our front line/customer facing staff as being extremely important in our effort to meet and exceed customer needs and regularly appreciate their performance efforts?

2. Do we publicly recognize the outstanding performance efforts of individuals and teams when they do something special for our customers?

3. Have we established a strong culture in which performance excellence in serving customers is likely to yield as much if not more appreciation than any other performance than people may demonstrate?

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Rewards and Recognition for Service Excellence RRS-2

Tangible rewards are available for going the extra mile for the customer
Despite the fact that many organizations have highly fixed reward systems that do not necessarily differentiate between individuals that achieve outstanding service results from any other person, unless some reward mechanism is in place for service excellence, people are unlikely to be as motivated to give of their best as they might. Put another way, the more that individuals see that going the extra mile for the customer has a tangible benefit, the greater the chance of them putting in the additional effort.

Of course, tangible rewards do not have to be monetary ones (although this is a perfectly reasonable option). Rewards can be also given in so-called 'hard' ways in terms of interesting new assignments, promotions or indirect benefits (like time off or gifts of various kinds) or given in so-called 'soft' ways in terms of public presentations of thanks, recognition certificates and special freedoms within the enterprise.

Best practice organizations carefully design their recognition strategies to ensure that customer service effort and results are rewarded in a variety of ways and act as real and tangible motivator to everyone to give of their best.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Have I given sufficient thought to the ways in which individuals and colleagues on the team can feel recognized and tangibly rewarded for their service efforts and good results?

2. Do I go out of my way to make available a variety of rewards that can motivate team members to aim for higher service goals?

3. Are the benefits or returns that individuals can expect for putting in the extra mile for the customer sufficiently attractive to justify people's efforts?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Is our overall reward system designed to be able to accommodate high levels of service, effort or achievement from individuals or teams?

2. Does outstanding performance in customer service attract the best or greatest reward and recognition benefits and therefore inspires effort in this area?

3. How much creative effort have we expended to offer a range of different tangible rewards for outstanding service or for any individual that goes above and beyond what is expected of them to satisfy customer needs?

ARewards and Recognition for Service Excellence RRS-4

Face to face personal appreciation for service excellence is often shown

If individuals go out of their way to give excellent service to customers, and the effort goes unnoticed or unremarked upon, the chances of the behavior being repeated is lessened. Over time, people may feel that there is no benefit or return for their effort and put in only the bare minimum time. The inevitable outcome is that customer service suffers (at least to some degree).

The simplest and most obvious way to overcome this unwanted outcome is to give deserving people the praise and appreciation that they should be getting. Ideally, this should be done on a face to face basis where genuine warmth and sincerity can be generated and the appreciation can be highly personalized.

Best practice organizations encourage all supervisors and managers to go out of their way to appreciate the service efforts of individuals and not to let opportunities go by to recognize and celebrate even small service 'wins'. In addition, they aim to minimize the use of remote or impersonal appreciation methods (like letters or e-mails) as a substitute for personal thanks.

Ask the following questions

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Am I conscious of the outstanding service efforts of people that are around me (or is it invisible or hidden from my view most of the time)?

2. Am I willing to go out of my way to show my appreciation for outstanding service efforts on a personal, face to face basis?

3. Do I put time aside to recognize the best service efforts of individuals around me or the team as a whole?

FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Have we done enough to create a positive culture in which service excellence is recognized as the primary means of appreciation?

2. Do we hold supervisors and managers accountable for quickly and genuinely appreciating service effort on a personal basis (and not let them hide behind impersonal systems and approaches, wherever possible)?

3. Where collective service effort has been high or good results are achieved, do we show organization wide appreciation in tangible ways to encourage people further?

Summary

This report has suggested that better appreciation of diversity, or other cultures in general, is a progressive journey for both the organization and the individual. We have suggested that this essentially involves coming to appreciate as much as you can about yourself and your own views and attitudes before looking to better appreciate those views and attitudes of those that you see to be different.

Although it has not been stated explicitly, we have been describing this journey in a step-by-step fashion, building on a solid foundation or base awareness of the diversity issues within the enterprise; of course, these are steps that many organizations may not get beyond. Ultimately, we have suggested that successful enterprises will make widespread changes to organizational culture and individual attitudes towards being more open and far less tolerant of any kind of discrimination, prejudice, and bias.

The six steps or stages do not have hard or fixed boundaries, and can be merged into one another or skipped altogether. However, for the most part, they reasonably reflect the stages that most committed organizations and individuals experience as they look to improve over time.

As we said at the outset, the ambitious aim has been to talk about how we bring about better human understanding, tolerance, and appreciation of other people, even when they are different to ourselves. Hopefully, we have provided some food for thought about how this might be done for each participant.

"Diversity involves a broad range of human uniqueness: personality, work style, perception, attitudes, values, lifestyle, work ethic, world view, communication style, and much more. Valuing diversity means appreciating and encouraging people to be who they really are, helping them to develop their full potential, and utilizing their special talents, skills, ideas, and creativity".

My Contract For Change

1. My personal goals to manage diversity awareness more effectively in the future are :
    a) _____
    b) _____
    c) _____

2. As a result I will make more time to achieve the goals by giving less priority to:
    a) _____
    b) _____
    c) _____

3. Each week I will record my progress by: _____
_____
_____

4. My support person(s) will be: _____
_____
_____

5. My support person(s) will help me by: _____
_____
_____

6. I will use the following methods to maintain my momentum and learn along the way:
    a) _____
    b) _____
    c) _____

7. I will reward myself for achieving my milestones by: _____
_____
_____

8. My end reward will be: _____
_____
_____

Signed _____ **Dated** _____