Administration, Globalization, & Multiculturalism Implications for

Participation Rates Among Dow Employees, Retirees, and Dependents

Section 1: Administration, Globalization, & Multiculturalism Aspects of the MSA 698 Issue

This paper is a continuation of a series of studies examining the issue of participation in the wellness programs at Dow Chemical Company. The lack of participation in the wellness centers is a problem for the organization because the participation rate of Dow employees is designed to improve the health of the employees, and vital for the return on invested funds into the program. The wellness centers and programs are also designed to help the organization have employees who require less sick days and are able to be more productive in the workplace.

This paper examines the diverse demographics of Dow Chemical Company and the leadership skills that are needed to communicate to the diverse group of employees. These diverse leadership skills are needed in the wellness center employees, the department managers, and the top managers of the company. It is important for all of these influential employees to have the skills to communicate to a diverse group of people. Different cultures, age groups, and genders will be motivated to participate in the wellness centers by different factors. Knowing these factors will help increase participation rates in the wellness centers.

The subsequent sections present a review of related literature regarding multiculturalism and diversity-conscious leaders followed by other related information. This paper answers important questions regarding these topics. Those questions are:

1. What demographics make up Dow Chemical Company’s employees?
2. What are the typical demographic characteristics of the employees who participate in the wellness centers?
3. How can leaders use diversity-conscious skills to communicate to the diverse group of employees to motivate the majority of employees to participate in the wellness centers?

4. What ethnical traditions or barriers prevent employees from participating in the wellness centers?

Section 2: Brief Review of the Literature

There are differences in demographics throughout many companies, especially companies that are large in size and have a wide range of employment opportunities. There are differences in age, gender, race, and cultural backgrounds which all play a role in decision making and thought processing. The way leaders communicate with their diverse group of employees can influence how those employees act and feel towards the organization and important issues or programs the organization is promoting. It is important to be able to communicate effectively with all employees of the organization.

Employees of different backgrounds and beliefs are motivated by different factors to stay loyal to an organization and continue to work for the organization. Understanding employees’ motivations to stay with an organization is an important skill to have as a leader of a diverse group of employees. There are many tools that leaders can use to become aware of these motivating factors and increase employee retention among their organization. Some of these tools include career advancement learning opportunities, mentoring employees, networking with co-workers, creating a supportive and welcoming work environment, and enabling a work-life and home-life balance for the employees (Musser, 2001). Other factors that influence employee retention are good benefits and pay, work that is suited towards employee interests and passions,
decent working conditions, job security, appreciation for employees’ efforts and performance, and opportunities for advancement or promotions within the organization (Musser, 2001).

An employee’s age also affects their motivation to remain in the company. There are several generations in the working world who have different interests and work-values, and respond best to different types of management styles. Generation Y employees, who were born from 1980 to 2000, also referred to as millennials, are found to respond best to supportive leadership styles and work environments which are supportive of team atmospheres and corporate social responsibility (Hillman, Wharff, & Dent, 2013). Generation X employees, born from 1964 to 1980, are found to respond best to leadership styles that are supportive and allow for flexibility as well as autonomy. Baby boomers, born from 1946 to 1964, are found to respond best to leadership styles that enable individualism and self-expression (Hillman, Wharff, & Dent, 2013).

Leaders cannot continually lead with the type of inconsistency it would require to please all of the generations. The General Management Practices Model was developed to help overcome these issues of generational work-value differences. The model suggests tasks that would be appropriate for each generational group of employees to best fit their working styles. All generations of employees should be provided with a clear mission and vision for the organization, receive mentoring, and use team-based problem solving methods. Generation Y employees should be assigned multitasking projects, have increased performance feedback, and tasks involving social media. It is suggested that Generation X employees and Baby Boomers be assigned face-to-face tasks (Hillman, Wharff, & Dent, 2013).

The diversity of culture brings different sets of unique skills and assets to the organization, which makes retaining culturally diverse employees an important skill for leaders.
to acquire. Employees of different ages and background bring different talents, experiences, languages, and perspectives to an organization. These skills can help increase productivity, customer service, and group projects. Minority groups within a company need to feel that their opinions are respected and valued within the organization. Minorities also need to have equal opportunities for advancement and be compensated equally based on knowledge and experience (Ward-Johnson, 2007).

Although employees’ background and cultures may differ vastly, some fundamental human behaviors and motives may not be all that different. The job mastery principle, feedback principle, role principle, and appreciation principle have all been reported as universally similar motivational factors across different jobs and cultures (Van Auken, 1993). The job mastery principle found that all employees have a desire to feel successful and productive, and therefore desire to master skills which make them successful in their positions. The feedback principle found that employees who are achievement oriented like to know how they are performing and ways to improve their performance. The role principle, where each employee has a specific role and unique tasks within the group which they are responsible for. The appreciation principle notices employees need to feel their work is acknowledged and useful to the organization. Recognizing these basic needs help supervisors understand and lead culturally diverse work groups (Van Auken, 1993).

Exercise and health related behaviors are viewed differently across different social classes. There are many social pressures within a community to align with the social norms of that group. The working class was not found to support the participation of exercise, while in the middle class, exercise and healthy behaviors are more widely accepted as social norms (Spotswood & Tapp, 2010). There are social marketing behaviors that have been used with little
effect on increasing participation in exercise or health related activities. Focusing on public behaviors such as weight-gain were more susceptible to socio-cultural influence, which brought responses that implied they couldn’t change their behaviors because of their culture and it was out of their control. To break through these social norms and elicit change among the community, intervention methods of introducing socially accepted physical activities such as participating in sports were more socially accepted among the working class society (Spotswodd & Tapp, 2010). When using interventions to engage minorities in physical activity, the perceptions of the activities are important to consider to tailor the interventions and promotions of physical activities to the targeted group (Koshoedo, Paul-Ebhoimhen, et al., 2015).

There are many tools and skills that leaders can use to understand and motivate a diverse group of employees, which can help increase employees’ dedication to the organization. Dedication to the organization can help increase participation rates in organizational funded projects and investments, such as wellness facilities. Mentoring employees, providing job advancement opportunities, a welcoming and friendly work environment, and creating a home-life and work-life balance can help employees connect and communicate with employees of different ages and cultural backgrounds. The General Management Practices Model could also be used to find the best ways to communicate or promote the importance of the wellness centers to employees. Generation Y may be reached best through social media or internet-based communication regarding the wellness centers, while Generation X and the Baby Boomers may benefit more from face-to-face communication. Leading culturally diverse work groups can also be as simple as concentrating on basic human needs. By placing importance on participating in wellness centers to make the employees and the organization more successful and productive, their basic human desires to succeed may help play a role in motivating them to participate.
Reshaping intervention methods to the targeted social group can help increase participation rates in exercise and healthy behaviors even with social norms that do not align with these activities.

Section 3: Brief Description of MSA 604 Organizational Data Collection Efforts

For this report, organizational data was collected through informal interviews and personal observations. The informal interviews include interviews with Mike Butzu, the director of the wellness centers, as well as Cassandra Lake, a full-time employee of the wellness center. Informal interviews were also conducted with former personal training clients: Andrea Fenton and Chen Yu. Personal observations were taken from the time working at the wellness centers. There were many different roles to observe from, including teaching group fitness classes, working at the different facilities, attending different group fitness classes, and speaking with current and former Dow employees as well as their family members who are also members of the wellness facilities. Information in this report was also collected from the Dow Chemical Company’s website that is open to the public. Due to security and privacy reasons, the employee demographic metrics as well as other metrics regarding specifics of the organization are not made available to the public. For these reasons, personal observations and informal interviews are relied on for a majority of the information presented in the subsequent sections.

Section 4: Impact of Demographics on Participation in the Wellness Facilities

The employees who utilize the wellness facilities are typically employees who are already active individuals. There are other employees who became active once they were given the opportunity to use the wellness centers. There is also a wide age range of members in the facilities. Some of the members are dependents or spouses of the employees. Dependents have to be at least 16 years of age to come to the wellness centers unaccompanied. Dow retirees are allowed and encouraged to participate in the wellness centers as well.
In an informal interview with Andrea Fenton, a former personal training client, she explained why she started using the wellness facilities and her perspectives of exercise and of those employees who do participate. Fenton started participating in the wellness facilities when she was offered the opportunity to have free personal training sessions with a health and fitness intern. She explains that she did not feel comfortable using the facilities on her own, because she did not know how to properly use the equipment. Having the opportunity to get free guidance helped persuade her to participate in the wellness facilities, even after her free training sessions ended. From Fenton’s experience and communication with other employees, the majority of participants in the wellness centers have a general understanding of exercise and are more likely to use the wellness centers if they have previous health and fitness experiences (Fenton, personal communication, 2017).

During an informal interview with Mike Butzu, the director of the wellness facilities, he explained the demographics of the members who participate in the wellness centers. Many of the members of the wellness facilities have less physically demanding jobs. There are more employees who participate from the departments of human resources, environment, health and safety, finance, and legal, which are more office-based positions (Butzu, personal communication, 2017).

Cassandra Lake, a full-time employee in the wellness center, shared her perspectives on the members of the wellness centers. She explained that the employees she sees use the facility are physically fit employees and retirees. She explained that the retirees enjoy the wellness facilities because of the social aspects they can participate in when then come to the facilities. There are kitchen and lounge areas that many retirees gather in after their workouts to read the
newspaper, watch the news on the televisions, and enjoy the free coffee available to them (Lake, personal communication, 2017).

Section 5: Diversity-Conscious Leadership Skills for Communicating

There are several ways to improve the leadership skill at Dow Chemical Company to develop diversity-conscious leadership skills. These skills are important when leading a wide range of employees. There are six areas of development that leaders can use to develop their diversity consciousness skills. These skills are examining one’s self and their worlds, expanding one’s knowledge of others and their words, stepping outside of one’s self, gauging the level of the playing field, checking up on one’s self, and following through (Bucher, 2015, p. 101). By using these six diversity-consciousness leadership development tools Dow Chemical Company’s management can increase communication with their diverse group of employees.

First, the leaders should examine and learn about themselves by looking at their own culture’s background and values. Next, the leaders should expand their knowledge of the cultures and backgrounds of the employees who work for them. Understanding their employees’ cultures will help them understand their employees’ values and motivating factors. These factors may influence their participation in the wellness centers. Stepping outside of themselves will help the leaders understand their employees’ perspectives on different issues or topics at work. Gauging the level of the playing field will help leaders understand the social inequalities and issues that may be affecting their employees from participating in the wellness centers. Finally, the leaders should check up on themselves and follow through with their intentions of becoming diversity-conscious leaders in attempts to better understand and lead their employees. Butzu (2017), commented that these steps would be very useful in the organization to help reach employees at a
personal level, and engage them in the different wellness programs offered (Butzu, personal communication, 2017).

**Section 6: Personal and Cultural Barriers**

Different social classes and employees of different departments of Dow have different perceptions on exercise and engaging in healthy behaviors. During an informal interview with a previous personal training client, Chen Yu, he explains his perspectives on exercise as well as personal and cultural barriers he faces and other employees in his department face that keep them from participating in the wellness facilities. Many people in his department do not participate in the wellness facilities because they did not grow up with formal exercise as a part of their daily routines, and view physically demanding jobs as a form of exercise. Yu went on to mention that many of the employees to not use proper form when lifting objects at work and risk injury, and would benefit from learning proper weightlifting techniques (Yu, personal communication, 2017).

Butzu (2017), also explained that employees who are in the departments of construction, production, maintenance, which are more physically active and demanding positions are less likely to participate because of the demands of their positions (Butzu, personal communication, 2017). He also brought up the social issues some of those employees have with the new wellness center. The new wellness center is in a high-end building with several up-scale businesses. He mentioned that many of the blue-collar employees have work uniforms that get dirty throughout the day, and has heard from several that they do not feel comfortable or welcomed in their uniforms in an up-scaled facility where many others come dressed in suits (Butzu, personal communication, 2017).
Section 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

After reviewing related literature and conducting informal interviews with Dow Chemical Company Employees and employees of the wellness facilities, the specific questions regarding the cultural and age diversity of employees and the diversity-conscious leadership at Dow Chemical Company have been answered. The employees at Dow are diverse in age, gender, and cultures. The typical employees who participate in the wellness centers are retirees, active and physically fit employees, and white-collar employees who feel comfortable in the wellness center setting. There are many diversity-conscious tools and skills that can be used by Dow leaders to help reach their diverse group of employees which are reviewed in the subsequent section.

Recommendations

There are different tools and techniques to use in order to engage and retain a diverse group of employees and increase participation in the wellness facilities. Creating a friendly work environment where employees of all ages and cultural backgrounds feel that their opinions are valued and respected is an important part of leading a diverse group of employees. Leaders can focus on their employees’ basic human needs of wanting to feel successful and productive by placing an importance on engaging in healthy behaviors and participating in the wellness centers. The leaders should also engage in mentoring their employees to better understand their perspectives on health and fitness, and any personal or cultural barriers they may face that keeps them from participating. The leaders would also benefit from utilizing the steps to becoming diversity-conscious leaders. Using these steps and recommendations can help Dow Chemical
Company grow as diversity-conscious leaders and connect with their employees to better understand ways to motivate them to participate in the wellness facilities.
References


