

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT & MANAGEMENT

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- Garg, Sambhav (2011): "Business Ethics" Paper presented at the Annual International Conference for the All India Management Association, New Delhi, India, 19-22 June.

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GENDER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: SUSTAINABLE PEOPLE MANAGEMENT IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

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ABSTRACT

The 21st C is witness to the stunning growth of Asian economies like India and China which are already being referred to as “Tiger Economies” of Asia. In India, demographers indicate that women and people of different cultures will represent over 50 percent of all new entrants to the workforce by 2020. This shift in demographics as well as the pressure from an ever expanding competitive global marketplace is now compelling organizations to rethink their models of business success. Organizations are willing to efficiently align their business tactics with present demographic realities to achieve sustainability while never losing their profitability. This study studies the effect diversity has on the performance of the organization. It reviews the progress made and the future prospects and potential profits for Indian businesses in leading today’s diverse workforce. It also includes a survey of managers from leading Indian firms from diverse industries. Based on these primary and secondary resources, it seeks to make the most of the strategic benefits of workplace diversity. Various types of Diversity Initiatives have been implemented by many organizations in the past few decades that efficiently utilized its benefits. One of them is gender diversity. Based on provenance and the stigma consciousness theories, women are more likely than men to charge retarded advancement to not only an internal factor, but especially to an external one of discrimination because of their understanding of the gender discrimination in the past at work. In the top 10 organizations surveyed to determine the extent to which women are part of the diverse workforce and included in the business growth prospect, certain findings indicate that working hours, safety related issues, family responsibilities and education as well as the aspirations and the perceptions of gender discrimination influence level of progression. The results don’t offer any particular proof of a victim-mentality, because mostly the women in the sample set are very similar to their male counterparts in terms of factors of work, but still report much higher levels of discrimination on the basis of gender. Organizations are now implementing initiatives that specifically focus on gender diversity in order to encourage women towards advancement in the workplace while at the same time making women feel appreciated and at an equal platform as their male counterparts. This study highlights some of the above mentioned initiatives and links it to the employee’s performance and thereby the organization’s performance.

KEYWORDS

Sustainability, diversity, gender discrimination, constraints of women.

INTRODUCTION

Diversity

In simple terms, diversity means difference. In an employment context, it means ensuring that organizations retain and recruit the best person from the widest possible talent pool regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, race, religion or disability.

Diverse workplace

Valuing and managing diversity at workplace is gradually acquiring paramount importance in the organizations. Diverse workforce leads to a clear competitive advantage. With a diverse range of employees, it becomes easy to understand the needs of a wide range of customers, and interact with a broad client base. Ingraining diversity of thought throughout an organization requires proper recognition and nurturing of talent – wherever it may be.

Inclusion

The inclusion area is concerned with the affinity network which helps employees celebrate commonalities, overcome differences and create synergies based on the complementarities of talent. It is the degree to which the organization continuously fosters flexibility and choice and attends to diversity. People feel connected to each other and to the organization and its goals. Employees are valued and their ideas are taken into account and used. Current employees feel that they belong and prospective employees are attracted to the organization. People partner successfully within and across departments

LITERATURE REVIEW/BACKGROUND

Diversity and inclusion: a formula for success

Diversity and inclusion at the workplace aim at “including everyone and excluding no one”. In simple terms, it creates a safe environment where each individual is recognized and respected for the characteristics that make him/her unique. In today’s world, all organizations deal with or will at some point deal with a diverse work force. Organizations need to develop a management process that builds on the individual differences of their workforce for the benefit of the organization. Many organizations believe diversity is the key to attracting, retaining and motivating talented people, and a critical differentiator in work place

environment. Diversity acts as the fuel of creativity and innovation. A diverse and inclusive workforce fosters creativity, guides business strategies and drives innovation. Multiple voices lead to new products, new ideas, and new services, and encourage out-of-the-box thinking.

Challenges

At the same point, embedding diversity also imposes certain inevitable challenges like communication gap, intercultural conflicts, unlawful discrimination etc. Thus to foster innovation through diversity, it's of paramount importance to reshape the organization and its policies in such a way that it not only supports but also promotes diversity. A diverse population that feels welcome and respected will always allow for creation of new approaches or different ideas to doing things.

Our study aims at determining the impact on an organization when it decides to implement diversity program into its workplace culture, proactive steps to ensure diversity initiatives are seen as opportunities to improve the overall productivity of the company and its employees in an unbiased manner. It also aims at determining competitive advantages diversity at workplace brings to an organization

Inclusion strategy

Hiring decisions are made by recruitment heads and middle management. They have to be educated on the benefits of diversity, the need to be inclusive of people with generational diversity and disabilities.

Managers approach staffing in a very simplistic manner- they want to hire people who would require the least amount of training and investment and would show up for work with the least effort

Each generation has its own characteristics like work/life balance, how they approach work and employee loyalty. These characteristics vary greatly. Unawareness can cause conflict among teams and departments, hindering productivity and morale in the workplace.

Hiring a disabled employee requires a manager to deal with issues like self-disclosure to colleagues, technological barriers and other employees' reactions, attitudes and perceptions

Communication gap

Bridging communication gap is becomes an inevitable challenge at workplaces when individuals have different communication styles at the workplace. When communicating important decisions, it becomes difficult to keep all the employees "in-the-loop", as preference for communication style differs for everyone.

CREATING A COMMON GROUND

Many organizations take a variety of tactics to engage the kinds of diverse populations they hope to bring on board. For example, AT&T and Mattel enlist their employee groups to act as company ambassadors. These groups reach out to talent by attending conferences, community events, and external job fairs.

Ignoring diversity issues costs time, efficiency, and money. Some of the consequences can include unhealthy tensions; loss of productivity because of increased conflict; inability to attract and retain talented people of all kinds; complaints and legal actions; and inability to retain valuable employees, resulting in lost investments in recruitment and training.

Dow's Global Respect and Responsibility Policy- stipulates that an employee works in an environment that is free from any kind of inappropriate or unprofessional behavior or any form of unlawful discrimination

Accenture's two major gender sensitization training programs – "Leading a Diverse Workforce" and "Being Gender Sensitive" focuses on understanding psychological differences between men and women and the implications on the work environment and personal lives. "Vaahini," provides a platform for their employees to share learnings and experiences, and to discuss growth prospects thereby enabling them to drive the organizational change.

The Infosys Women's Inclusivity Network (IWIN) creates a gender-sensitive and inclusive work environment for women employees and develop them for managerial and leadership roles.

MAKING DIVERSITY WORK

Anjana Nathwani studied that leveraging gender diversity and creating an environment conducive to constructive employee interactions and improved employee morale must become ultimate goals. Gender equality improves national productivity and competitiveness. And companies supporting diversity perform better and enhance creativity and innovation

It is also recommended that organizations should try to develop new and innovative methods of training employees so generations can effectively communicate with each other, transmit corporate knowledge, and create an environment of understanding and acceptance.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

1. To study diversity in the organization.
2. To understand the impact of diversity on the performance of the organizations' workforce.
3. To understand the strategic HR practices used in the organization to encourage diversity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The experience survey method was used. According to this method, people who had practical experience in the area under consideration were considered as respondents. A questionnaire was given to every respondent in this research.

SIZE OF THE SAMPLE

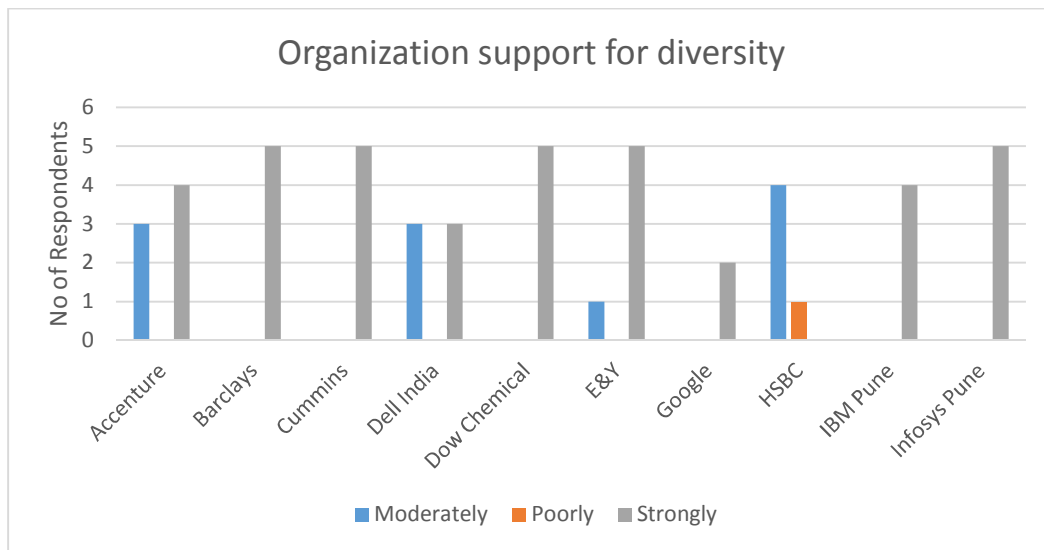
In all, following 10 organizations were considered:

IBM
Google
Dow Chemicals
Barclays
Accenture
HSBC
Dell
Cummins
Ernst and Young
Infosys

DATA ANALYSIS

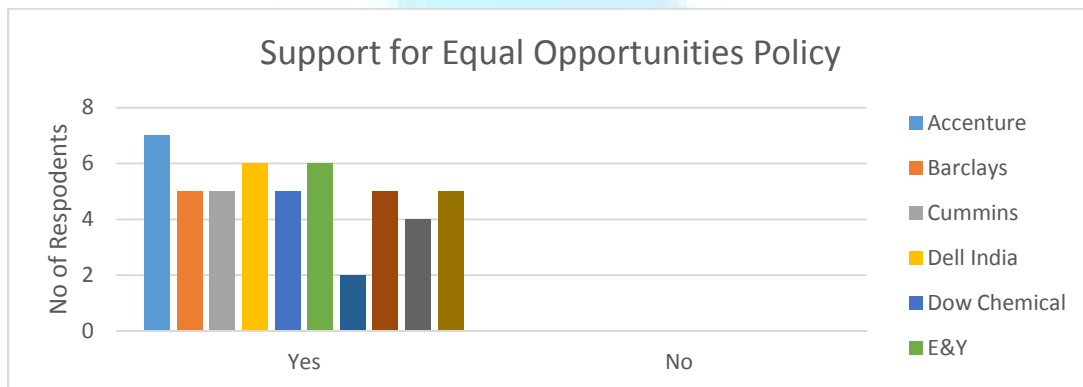
The following findings were collected through the survey:

1. IS YOUR COMPANY SUPPORTIVE OF DIVERSITY?



74% of the respondents said that their organization supports diversity strongly followed by 26% saying their organization supports diversity moderately.

2. DOES YOUR WORKPLACE HAVE A DIVERSITY AND/OR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY?

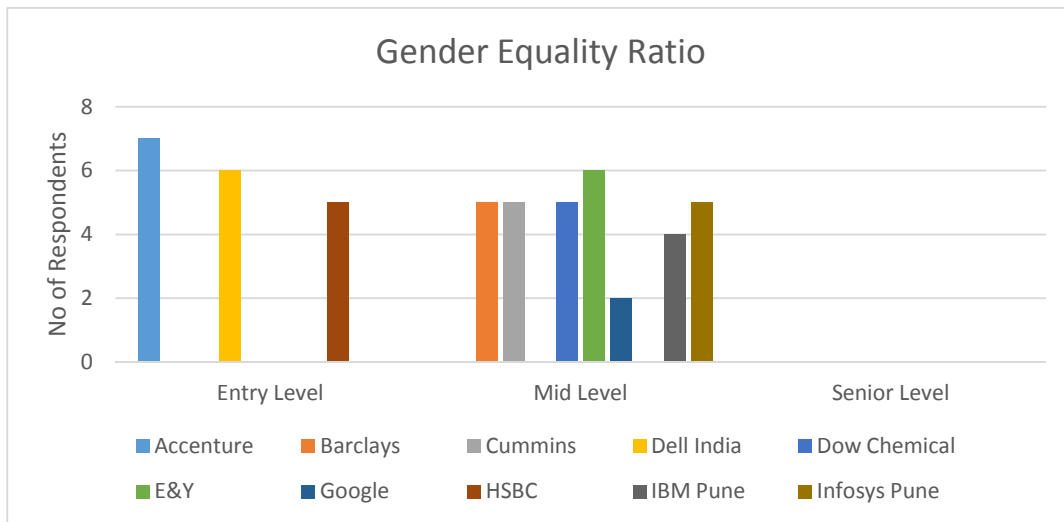


All the companies surveyed followed diversity/or equal opportunity policies.

3. SPECIFIC WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND/OR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

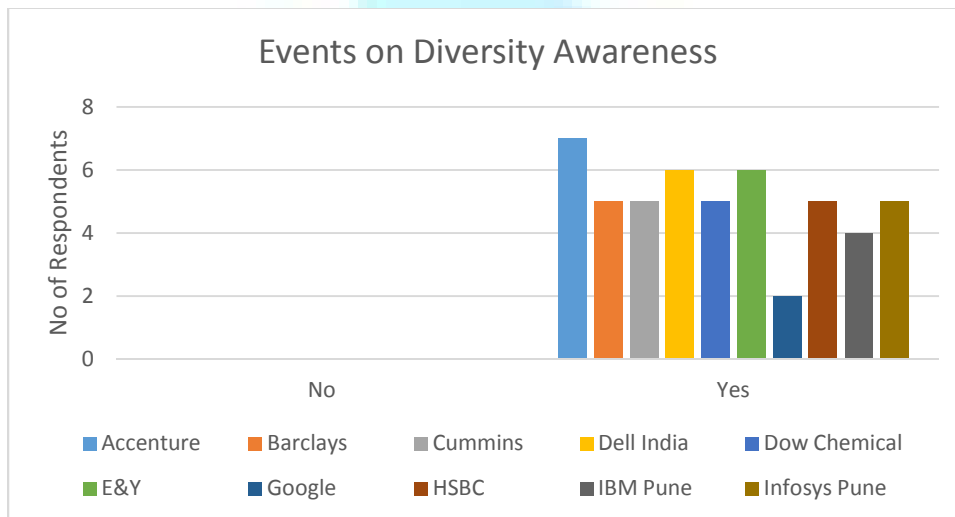
S.No	ORGANISATION	POLICIES
1	Accenture	Vaahini Developing High Performing Women
2	Barclays	Equality and Diversity Policies
3	Dow Chemicals	Diversity and Inclusion Training Program Disability Employee Network Global Respect and Responsibility Policy
4	Ernst & Young	Access Abilities Diversity and Inclusion Policy
5	Google	Transgender Inclusive Benefits Hispanic Googler Network (HGN)
6	HSBC	Equal Opportunities Employer Diversity Committee
7	Infosys Pune	Infyability Infosys Women's Inclusivity Network InStep Program for Interns
8	Cummins	Courses on Treatment of Others Diversity Training Open Door Policy
9	Dell India	Equal Opportunities Employer Policy
10	IBM Pune	International Women's Day Take Your Kids to Work Day

4. WHICH LEVEL HAS THE HIGHEST GENDER EQUALITY RATIO? (WHICH LEVEL HAS MORE WOMEN EMPLOYEES COMPARATIVELY?)



From the figure above, it can be said that 70% of the companies show highest gender equality ratio in entry level.

5. DOES YOUR COMPANY CONDUCT EVENTS/SEMINARS ABOUT DIVERSITY AWARENESS?

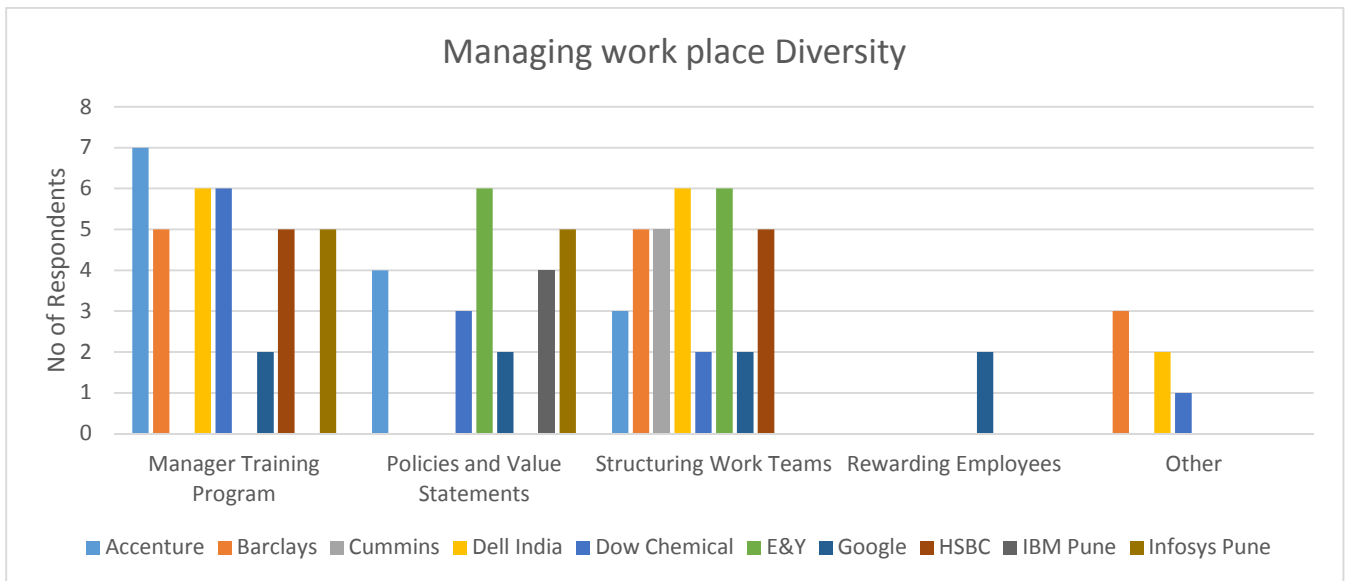


It was observed that all the companies surveyed believed in conducting seminars and events for creating diversity awareness among employees.

6. SPECIFIC PROGRAMS CONDUCTED FOR DIVERSITY AWARENESS

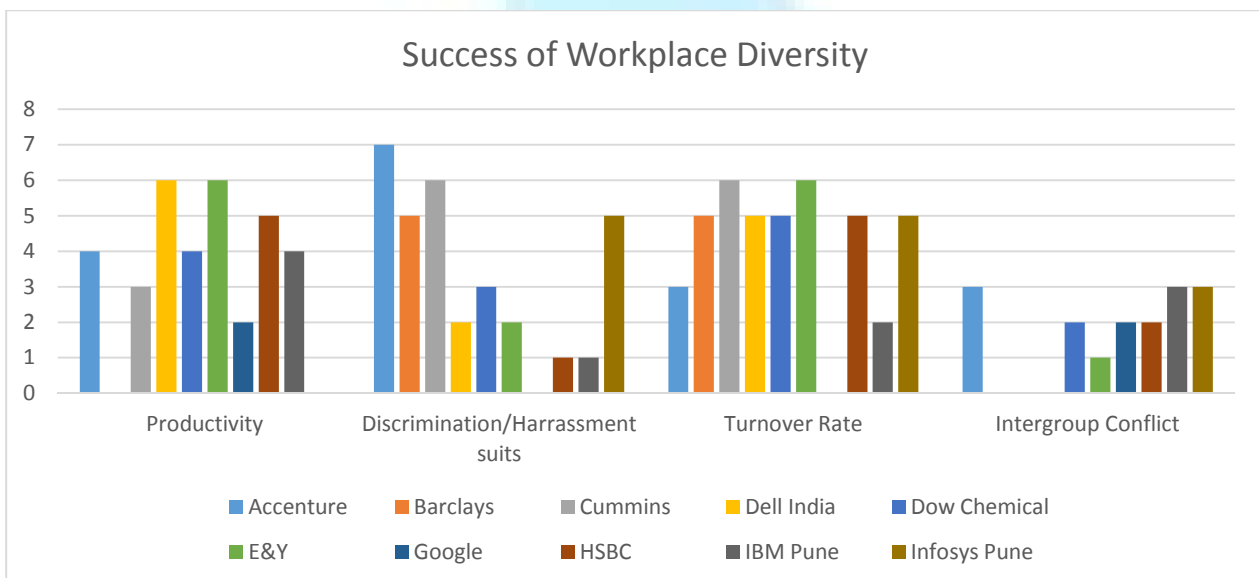
S.No	ORGANISATION	SEMINARS/ EVENTS
1	Accenture	Leading a Diverse Workforce Being Gender Sensitive Vaahini
2	Barclays	Diversity and Inclusion Summit Disability Listening Groups Spectrum Employee Network Training Seminars
3	Dow Chemicals	Diversity and Inclusion Training Program Disability Employee Network
4	Ernst & Young	Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities Abilities Champions Network Recruitment Programs Training Seminars
5	Google	Global ERG Leadership Summit Gayglers: Google's LGBT Network
6	HSBC	Sexual Harassment Seminars
7	Infosys Pune	ACTION Infosys Gay Lesbian Employees and You
8	Cummins	Diversity Training Cummins Code of Conduct Treatment of Others
9	Dell India	Sexual Harassment Dell PRIDE Equal Workplace Summit
10	IBM Pune	People with Disability (PwD) IT Camp Women's Leadership Conference

7. HOW DO YOU MANAGE WORKPLACE DIVERSITY?



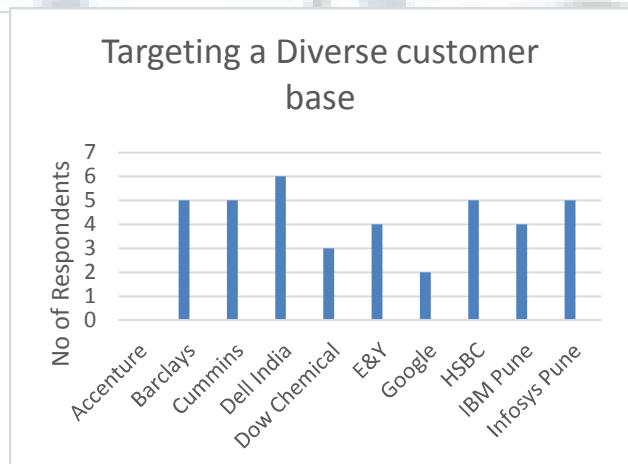
70% of the companies use Management Training Programs to manage workplace diversity. 60% of the companies make use of Policies and Value Statements for managing their workplace diversity. 80% of the companies adopt Structured Work Teams to manage workplace diversity . Only 10% of the companies make use of Rewarding Employees to manage their workplace diversity

8. HOW DO YOU GAUGE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR WORKPLACE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT?

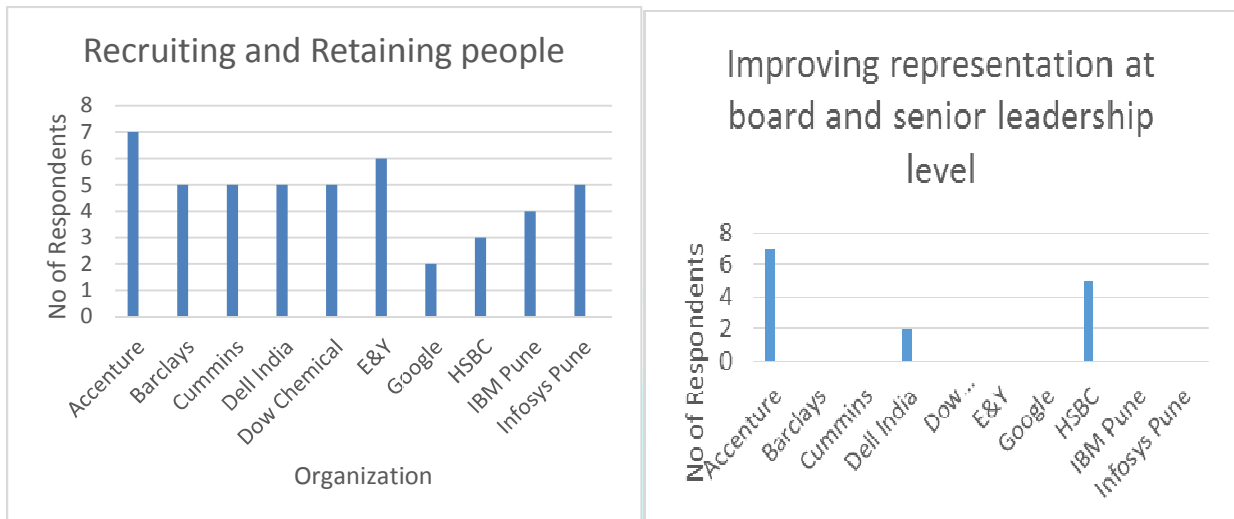


80% of the companies use Productivity to gauge the success of their workplace diversity management, 90% of them use Discrimination/Harassment Suits, 90% of the companies measure Turnover Rate and 70% of them measure Intergroup Conflict to gauge the success of their workplace diversity. Accenture uses a combination of all 4, Productivity, Discrimination/Harassment Suits, Turnover Rate and Intergroup Conflict to gauge the success of their workplace diversity.

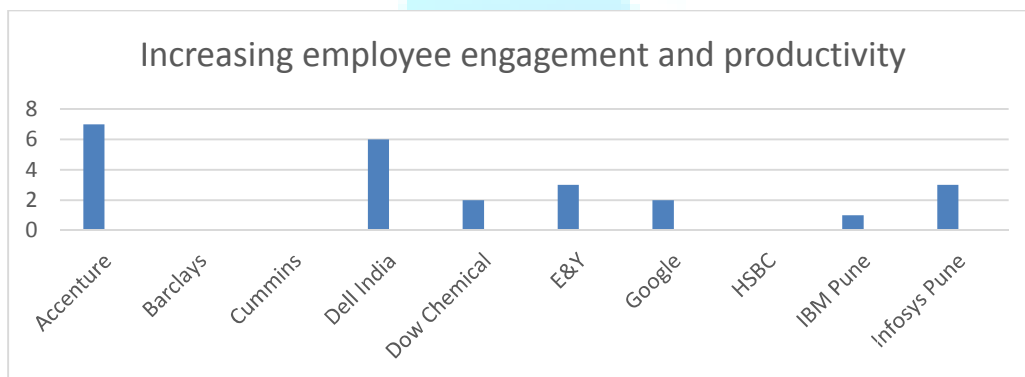
9. WHAT ARE THE BENEFICIAL OUTCOMES THE BUSINESS HAS SEEN AS A RESULT OF A DIVERSE WORKFORCE?



Most organizations feels maintaining a diverse workforce benefits them in the way of reaching new markets, using innovative methods .Only IBM and Infosys do not agree. Whereas, all organizations feels maintaining a diverse workforce benefits it by targeting a diverse customer base.

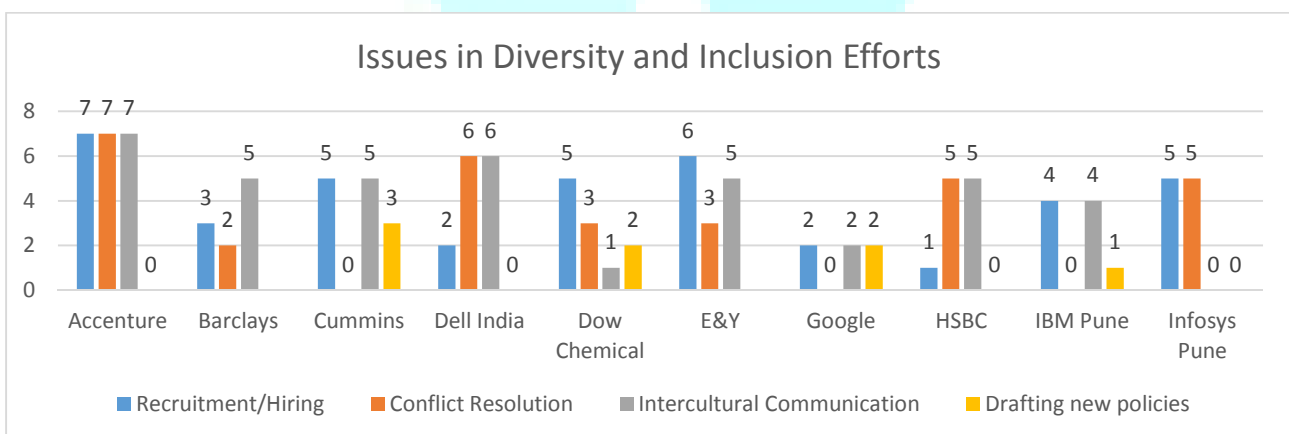


All organizations feels maintaining a diverse workforce impacts the recruiting and retention of employees. Whereas , Only Accenture , Dell and HSBC feel that it improves representation at the board and senior level. Others do not consider it an important aspect.



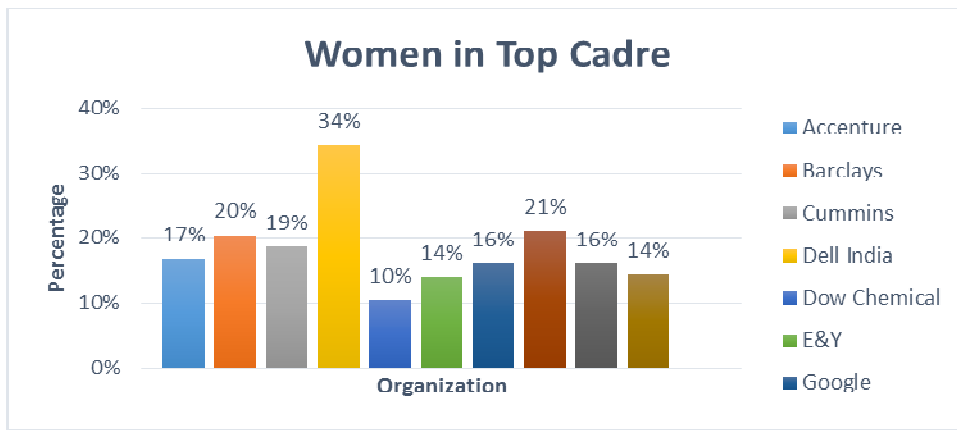
Most organizations feel that it helps it in increasing employee engagement and productivity

10. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ISSUES DO YOU SEE AS A TOP PRIORITY IN YOUR DIVERSITY/INCLUSION EFFORTS?



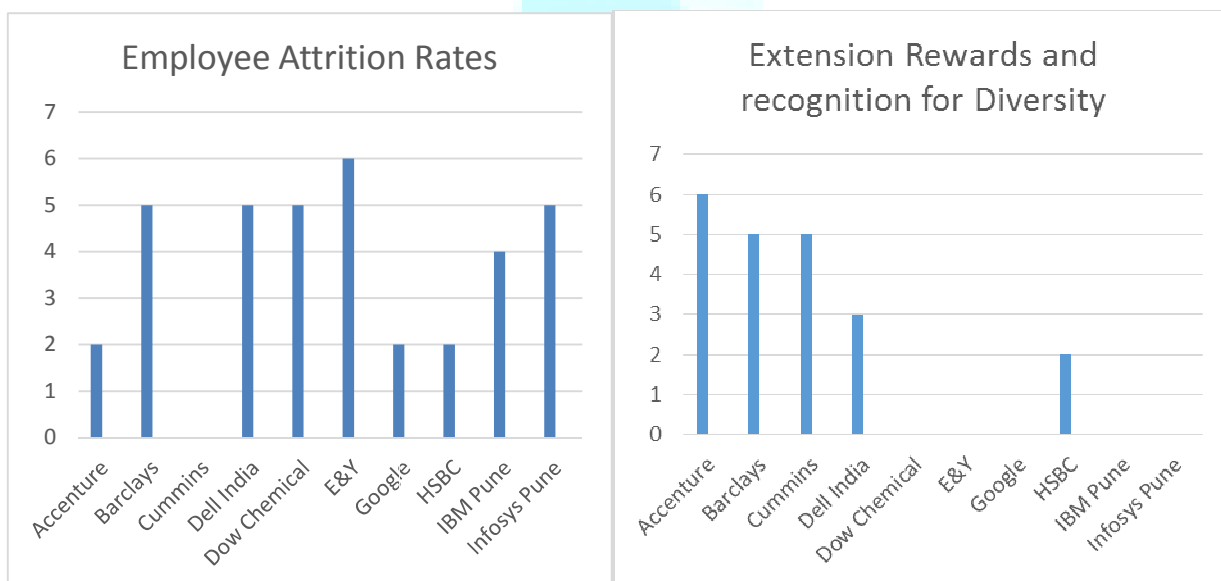
80% of the respondents of the respondents believed that recruitment /hiring and intercultural communication should be the top priority in handling diversity followed by 42% saying conflict resolution.

11. WHAT IS THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN TOP CADRE?

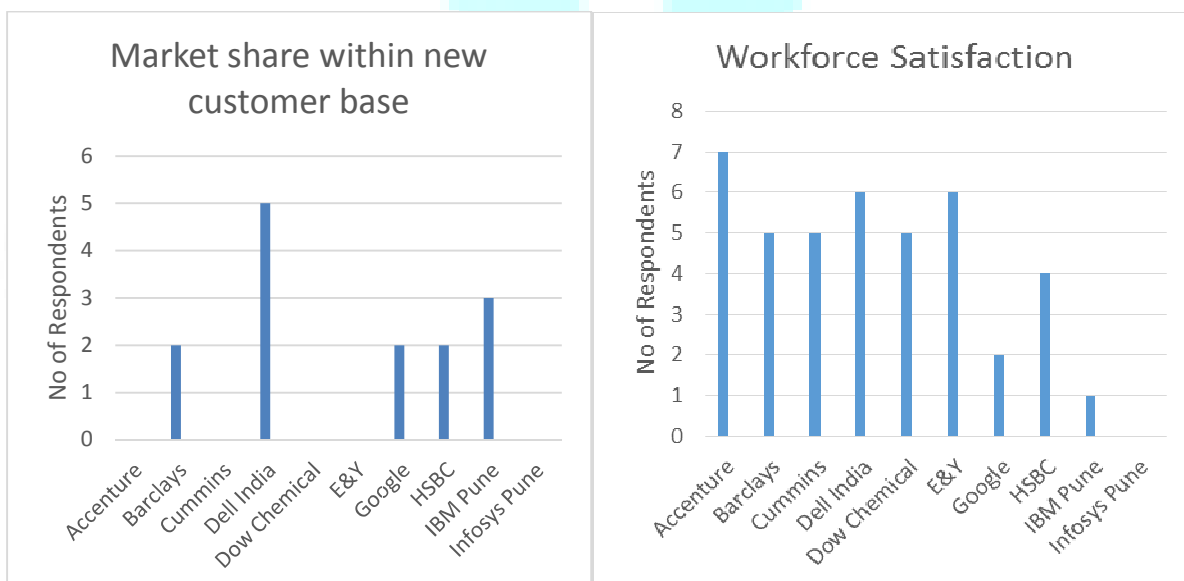


The above figure shows that most of the companies have 15%-20% women in top cadre.

12. DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE METRICS IN PLACE TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES?



All organizations except Cummins feel that Employee Attrition hinders in Diversity and Inclusion efforts. But Most organizations surveyed feel that not having a proper policy of rewards and recognition hinders in Diversity and Inclusion efforts.



Only half the organizations that market share is an important issue in Diversity and Inclusion efforts. All organizations except Infosys feel that Employee satisfaction affects the Diversity and Inclusion efforts.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

There are specific benefits associated with diverse and inclusive work force, some of them include creation of widest possible talent pool, improvement of national productivity and competitiveness, reduction in employee turnover, better management of impact of technology changes and globalization.

But managing diversity at workplace offers certain unavoidable challenges as well, like bridging communication gap, reshaping infrastructure, recruiting and retaining talent, overcoming technology barrier etc.

In such condition, it is recommended to have:

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF DIVERSITY PROGRAMS AND EDUCATION

Organizations should start with a written diversity policy and give a copy to all employees. Various sensitivity training and workshops should be conducted. This increases the awareness of employees and broadens their perspectives towards acceptance of a diverse workforce.

2. HIRE BASED ON SKILLS

Organizations must hire capable candidates based on skill and qualifications and not on any specific physical, generational or gender distinction. This not only broadens the qualified candidate pool but also provides the organization with a talented workforce. In doing this, organizations can better capture and retain clients on a global scale. Provide employees with quality on-site child care facilities for both mothers and fathers who work in the organization. Family leave must be available to both men and women (paternity and maternity leave).

3. EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

Establish a policy that compensates men and women equally for the same work. The policy should also ensure that both men and women are treated equally in all aspects such as recruitment, training and promotions. Management must ensure equity among all employees in order to stimulate the best performance from them.

4. STRICT DISCRIMINATION/ HARASSMENT POLICIES

Organizations must establish a policy which strictly forbids any form of discrimination or harassment. This policy must describe in detail the professional as well as legal consequences that will result from harassment. Provide employees with an avenue for reporting such harassment directly to the human resource department without fear of retribution.

5. TRAINING TO MANAGEMENT

Provide the management with training so they will be comfortable with hiring more people with disabilities and other diverse candidates. Give managers in Human Resource staff tools and training they may need to conduct lawful and productive job interviews for such diverse candidates.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Establishing policies that ensure equal compensation for men, women and physically challenged for performing the same work, apart from treating them equally in recruitment, training, hiring and promotion.

7. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Organizations must have effective communication channels, especially to enable smooth and efficient functioning of diverse work teams. It also helps employees feel less apprehensive in communicating with the management. This can be done through incorporating open door policy and town hall meetings. This would also make the employees feel more included in decision making process.

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