

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this dissertation was threefold. First, implement an empirical study designed to profile what diversity management training initiatives hospitality industry employees are involved in, identify who these employees are, and identify what relationships exist between the level of diversity management training involvement and the personal inputs and outputs of employees. The second purpose was to contribute to the expanding body of literature on diversity management training programs. The third purpose was to gain a better understanding of the usefulness of diversity management training programs in the hospitality industry. Specifically, the present study investigated the perceived benefits of diversity management training programs on the individual level by addressing two research questions. The first research question asked if there was a relationship between diversity management training involvement and the personal inputs of various lodging managers. The second question asked if there was a relationship between diversity management training involvement and the personal outputs of lodging managers.

As indicated in a review of the literature, there was no one paradigm, theory, or model to support the need for diversity management training programs. However, the literature did support the impact of diversity on individuals, groups and organizations; thus, leading to the potential importance of diversity management training programs.

With a combination of Adams' Equity Theory Model, Cox's Interactional Model of Cultural Diversity, and Charles' Relationships of Factors Affecting the Recruitment, Retention & Promotion of Blacks Into Upper-Level Management Model, the Diversity Management Training Effectiveness Model used four major constructs to describe and communicate the potential impact of diversity management training programs on individuals. In the current study, the proposed model utilized personal inputs, diversity climate (organizational), and personal outputs to predict a lodging manager's involvement in diversity management training programs. What follows is a discussion of the results found in Chapter 4 of the study.

The Hypotheses

In an effort to address the two research questions, 11 hypotheses were developed to guide the current study. These hypotheses were based upon a literature review of the potential impact of and relationships shared between diversity management training programs and individuals. A further discussion of the results of the study in relation to each of the 11 hypotheses is now presented. The implications and overall results of each hypothesis will be discussed.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between age of employees and DMTI.

Research hypothesis 1 was not supported. There was no relationship between age of an employee and DMTI. This should be seen as an indication that companies are not targeting specific age groups to participate in diversity management training programs. This is a positive aspect of training and should be seen as a plus for the industry.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between educational level of employees and DMTI.

Research hypothesis 2 was not supported. There was no relationship between educational level of an employee and DMTI. This should be seen as an indication that companies are not targeting specific employees based on their educational levels to participate in diversity management training programs. This is a positive aspect of training and should be seen as a plus for the industry.

Research Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between gender of the employees and DMTI.

Research hypothesis 3 was not supported. There was no relationship between gender of an employee and DMTI. This should be seen as an indication that companies are not targeting a specific gender to participate in diversity management training programs. This is a positive aspect of training and should be seen as a plus for the industry.

Research Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between loyalty of employees and DMTI.

Research hypothesis 4 was supported. A correlation was found between employee's loyalty and DMTI. The overall results suggest that loyal employees tend to be more involved employees. Further research needs to be conducted on this relationship to better understand any causal relationship between loyalty and involvement in diversity management training programs. Is loyalty a result of the involvement or vice versa? Simply knowing that a relationship exists between the two constructs is a positive aspect of training and should be seen as a plus for the industry.

Research Hypothesis 5: There is a relationship between racio-ethnic backgrounds of employees and DMTI.

This hypothesis was not tested. The present sample has a predominance of whites (those primarily of European descent). Therefore, comparisons can not be made on diversity management training involvement across racio-ethnic backgrounds.

Research Hypothesis 6: There is a relationship between seniority of employees and DMTI.

Research hypothesis 6 was supported. There was a positive relationship between seniority of employees and DMTI. The overall results suggest that those employees with greater levels of seniority tend to be more involved in diversity management training programs. Knowing that a relationship exists between the two constructs is a positive aspect of training and should be seen as a plus for the industry. The literature supports the need for involvement on all levels, especially with senior managers, in order for diversity management training programs to succeed. Further research needs to be conducted on this relationship to better understand any causal relationship between seniority and involvement in diversity management training programs. Is seniority a result of the involvement or vice versa? Simply knowing that a relationship exists between the two constructs is a positive aspect of training and should be seen as a plus for the industry.

Research Hypothesis 7: There is a relationship between DMTI and employee job/career satisfaction.

Research Hypothesis 7 was not supported. There was no support for the relationship between DMTI and one's job/career satisfaction.

Research Hypothesis 8: There is a relationship between DMTI and organizational identification of an employee.

Research Hypothesis 8 was partially supported. There was partial support for the relationship between DMTI and organizational identification. This support was greatly influenced by the survey question that asked, "I feel that I am a part of the organization." The overall results suggest that DMTI did not share a relationship with the sub-construct, "organizational identification" on a whole, however one of the three survey questions had a significant relationship with involvement in diversity management training programs.

Research Hypothesis 9: There is a relationship between DMTI and job involvement of an employee.

Research Hypothesis 9 was not supported. There was no relationship between DMTI and the job involvement of employees.

Research Hypothesis 10: There is a relationship between DMTI and the compensation of employees.

Research Hypothesis 10 was not supported. There was no relationship between DMTI and compensation of employees.

Research Hypothesis 11: There is a relationship between DMTI and the opportunities given to an employee.

Research Hypothesis 11 was supported. There was a positive relationship between involvement in diversity management training programs and the opportunities given to an employee. The overall results suggest that diversity management training is

seen as an opportunity to help foster an individual's career. This is a positive aspect of training and should be seen as a plus for the industry.

Implications

The results of the study have several implications for diversity management training research in the hospitality industry, specifically the lodging industry. First, the numbers look good. Approximately 46.7% of all respondents thought their company offered a diversity management training program. When asked how respondents thought their human resource manager would respond to the same question 57% (n=77) said they thought the human resource manager would state that their company did offer a diversity management training program. The results in the current study of diversity management training program offerings are similar to those in the past (Gregory & Hughes, 1996). For an industry that was thought to be in the beginning stages of development in the arena of diversity management training, this is very encouraging. The lodging industry's figures are representative of all major U.S. companies with more than 100 employees (Lubove, 1997).

The discrepancy between the perceived offerings of a diversity management training program as seen by human resource managers and employees suggest that human resource managers and thus companies have a perception that are doing more than employees perceive.

Second, there is an equal distribution of program participation based on age, gender, and educational level; thus they are equally as likely to participate in the diversity management training program regardless of demographic differences. The fact that diversity management training involvement (DMTI) was found to have relationships with loyalty, seniority organizational identification and opportunities offered by the company is very encouraging. DMTI could be used as a tool to increase loyalty and thus retention of employees. The relationship with seniority is important due to the fact that in order for change to take place and the programs to be viewed as a business necessity, upper level managers must be involved and endorse the programs. Organizational identification and opportunities given to an employee are both factors used to increase over all employee satisfaction (Taylor and Bowers, 1972).

A third implication from the current study is that the perceived level of importance (mean scores) on all the diversity management training initiatives increased with employee involvement. The results suggest that once an employee becomes involved in the diversity management training initiatives, their perception of its importance increase. This is a strong point in favor of the effectiveness of diversity management training program initiatives. Please refer to Tables 4.5 and 4.6.

Other Implications Found in the Study

The perceived impact of diversity management training programs is positive. Forty-eight and nine tenths percent (n=67) of those surveyed felt that diversity management training programs were effective to very effective with minority employees. Similarly, 50% (n=68) felt that these same programs were effective to very effective for non-minority employees. This is very encouraging, as respondents recognize the benefits of diversity management training programs to both groups of employees.

The study was also found that significant relationships between diversity management training involvement and the overall Organizational Commitment (Cook & Wall, 1980) and General Satisfaction (Taylor & Bowers, 1972) composite scales exists. Both of these composite scales had significant relationships with one's involvement in diversity management training programs. Thus, involvement in diversity management training programs is a predictor of an employee's organizational commitment and general satisfaction. Please keep in mind that these are the composite scores and take into consideration all survey questions used to operationalize the constructs.

Recommendations for the Lodging Industry

The results from the survey support the notion that the lodging industry is operating in a very diverse environment. This statement is supported by the literature and the fact that 50.4% (n=66) of those surveyed considered themselves a member of a diverse group. Given the fact that the term diversity can be defined using a narrow definition (Cox, 1993; Cross et al., 1994) or a broad definition (Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991; Thomas, 1991), a broader definition seems to be more appropriate for the current study and in future studies on diversity within the lodging industry. Keeping in mind that

73.2% of all respondents were white (primarily of European descent) it appears that all individuals, regardless of racio-ethnic backgrounds have very strong feelings towards issues of diversity. A variety of diverse identification groupings were included in the current study. They included sexual orientation (23.9%), physical ability (22.5%), religious affiliation (19.7%), and nationality (32.4%).

The industry needs to increase offerings of diversity management training initiatives while reiterating their importance to all involved. Communication and education and training initiatives should be emphasized since they were consistently ranked as important to very important by all respondents including those in the pretest and pilot test. It may now be less difficult for lodging companies to obtain the support necessary to implement diversity management training programs since the current study provides sound evidence that these programs benefit individuals. It is a matter of getting employees involved. The number of companies offering such programs also needs to increase given the diverse labor force.

A final recommendation is made to companies that have not begun to implement diversity management training programs. Begin with a self-audit and identify the diversity issues that are unique to your lodging property or company. Begin small and solicit feedback. Let the diversity management training initiatives, as outlined by Wheeler (1996) be your guide. The programs can and will succeed for the betterment of the individual employees and the organization on a whole.

Limitations

This study was subjected to constraints of time, cost and an issue of privilege/sensitive content matter. A time factor did not permit the researcher to control for the implementation of the diversity management training initiatives; thus, the study could not tell at what success level these programs were being implemented. The cost factor did not allow for the researcher to rent the AH&MA mailing list twice, thus only a follow up post card reminder was sent and not a second survey to non-respondents. It is speculated that this fact contributed to the low response rate. The issue of privilege and sensitivity of the subject matter did not allow for control of the sample. Since no single lodging property would support the survey, there was a lack of consistency and control in the content of the initiatives being studied.

The generalization of the results is another limitation of the study. While the demographic make up of the respondents are representative of the managers in the lodging industry the failure more fully address the non-respondent bias issue hampers the research with regard to generalizability.

Future Research

The findings and limitations of the study indicate several areas that need to be researched further. First, look back at the hypotheses and gain a better understanding of the relationships shared between loyalty and seniority and DMTI. Did the presence of the program increase an employee's loyalty or was it just the opposite? The same question should be asked of seniority. Second, there needs to be a study comparing the results based on diverse grouping identifications. Are the perceptions of members of a perceived diverse group different from those non-group members with regard to satisfaction, commitment, and perceived importance of diversity management training programs? Third, implementations of the current study on a single lodging chain, thus allowing greater control in the actual initiatives. Finally, test the entire model.

Conclusions

This study was selected due in part to a desire to answer the question, "do diversity management training program make a difference?" It has always been personal bias of the researcher that they did. The findings in the study support this notion. Because of the changing demographics, it is now a matter of necessity that lodging companies implement these programs. The survey and proposed models give industry professionals a guide in measuring and evaluating the importance of diversity management training programs on individuals.