EVALUATION OF A DIVERSITY TRAINING PROGRAM WITHIN THE CHARLOTTE FIRE DEPARTMENT

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

BY:  Lee Belton
     Battalion Chief
     Charlotte Fire Department
     Charlotte, NC

An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy
As part of the Executive Fire Officer Program
June 2001
Abstract

This research project explored the feasibility of a diversity training program the Fire Department could use to improve relations within its workforce and effectively interact with its multicultural customers. The problem addressed was the lack of diversity training done by the Charlotte Fire Department. The purpose of this project was to develop the criterion for a Diversity Training Program within the Charlotte Fire Department. Action research, including the literature review, was used to explore what diversity training organizations are offering presently, the benefits of this training, and the growing need for these programs in the public and private sector.

The research questions posed were:

1. How did diversity training get started?
2. What diversity training has the private sector done?
3. Why is there an increase in diversity training?
4. Does diversity training really work?

The procedure began with a literature review of the history of diversity training. Next, the diversity training offered by private business was examined. A literature review on diversity trainers and the benefits of the training was completed.

The results of this research project showed that changes in demographics and cultural attitudes have resulted in a push toward a more diverse and inclusive work force; this new climate sometimes opens up more possibilities for friction in the workplace. The research also showed that a diversity training program is an integral component of the process of imparting personal knowledge to allow for healthy relationships at work.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCEDURES</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A- Diversity training Plan</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B – Preventive Training Questions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The Charlotte Fire Department is a large sector, consisting of 850 career combat personnel and operating out of 35 fire stations. The rapid growth of the city of Charlotte has made it necessary to build new fire houses and hire additional firefighters. Last year the Charlotte Fire Department formed a diversity recruiting team. The goal of this team was to increase the number of females, black males, and Latinos applying for the position of firefighter. The team had some success the first year, but there is much to do before we have a department that reflects the population of the city of Charlotte. The American work force is changing radically; diversity in the workplace makes good business sense. If we want to get the best possible people to staff our organization, we must continue to recruit from these rapidly growing classes.

The problem prompting this research project was the lack of a diversity training program within the Charlotte Fire Department. If the current training practices are not changed, we will have more friction in the workplace. Friction can lead to a hostile environment that causes turnover among women and minorities whom we have gone to great length to recruit.

The purpose of the applied research project was to identify the need for a diversity training program within the Charlotte Fire Department that would benefit its workforce and the community. Action research, including the literature review, was used to explore how a training program could be developed and put into action.

The research questions examined were:

1. How did diversity training get started?
2. What diversity training has the private sector done?
3. Why is there an increase in diversity training?
4. Does diversity training really work?
**Background and Significance**

Charlotte is rich in history. The city was settled by the Scotch Irish in the 1740s, and the Charlotte area also felt the strong influence of German colonists who came south about the same time. In fact, the city owes its name to German-born Queen Charlotte, wife of England’s King George III, and the county owes its name to her birthplace of Mecklenburg in Germany. That’s why Charlotte is referred to as the “Queen City” and why the Bank of America building has a crown architecturally incorporated in its design.

The Charlotte Fire Department also has an impressive heritage. Volunteer fire fighters protected Charlotte until the year 1887, at which time it became a paid department. Among these volunteers were African Americans. Slaves originally organized the Neptune (an entirely African-American company) in 1864. Two other African-American stations followed: the Dreadnaughts and the Yellow Jackets, both of which were established in 1874. The original Neptune station was located on North Church Street, behind the Wachovia Bank on North Tryon.

One of the best-known Neptune volunteers was Charles Samuel Lay Fayette Taylor. Colonel Taylor was born in Charlotte in 1854. Taylor served in the Charlotte Light Infantry, first as a Lieutenant, and after a year he was promoted to Captain. On April 17, 1898, during the Spanish-American War, he was promoted to Colonel.

In May of 1891, the North Carolina General Assembly ratified a charter for the North Carolina Colored Volunteer Firemen’s Association. Colonel Taylor was a leader in this organization from its inception. He served as financial secretary for many years before assuming the presidency in the late 1920’s. In August 1893, the association held its convention and tournament in Charlotte and was supported by a grant from the Charlotte Board of Aldermen.
The Charlotte City Council adopted an Affirmative Action Plan in January of 1977, which was amended in February 1977 and again in February 1981. For the purpose of this applied research project, “affirmative action” means the deliberate use of race and gender in personnel decisions to correct past discrimination. During this four-year span, black males and females were recruited for the fire service under the city’s Affirmative Action Plan. For the first time since its creation in 1887 as a paid department, Charlotte’s Fire Department had a diverse workforce.

The Charlotte Fire Department formed a Diversity Recruiting Committee last year in an attempt to increase the number of females and minorities in the department. At present the Charlotte Fire Department has a total personnel of 914. There are 834 in uniform, 80 are civilian, 11 are black females, 41 are white females, 1 is an Asian female, 118 are black males, 2 are Hispanic males, and 561 are white males. The researcher of this project is a member of the Diversity Committee and realizes that for the Fire Department to reflect the makeup of our communities, our work has just begun.

The researcher of this project has been a member of the Charlotte Fire Department since 1977 and knows of only two classes in diversity training that were mandated by the Fire Department over this twenty-four year period. They were both on sexual harassment in the workplace.

Firms that have already recognized the value of a diverse work force and made a sincere effort to maximize its contributions have learned that changing hiring policies will not in and of itself ensure success. A strong commitment from company leaders is also critical. When you seek to attract talented employees of diverse backgrounds, one of their considerations will be whether your organization offers a reasonable opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.
Both companies and individuals are attracted to the thriving Charlotte region. Booming with economic and commercial activity, Charlotte has all the advantages of one of the most rapidly growing metropolitan areas in the nation.

Charlotte offers a highly productive work force for companies concerned about the quality of their products or services. The draw of this high quality work force is evident in the number of firms locating to Charlotte in the last ten years. During this period, 8,395 firms have selected Charlotte-Mecklenburg for new or relocated operations, representing $5.5 billion in investments.

The work force continues to grow steadily. Since 1988, Charlotte has experienced a 27% increase in its work force. During this same period, employment has grown by 27%. The growing population of the area ensures a constant and predictable flow of workers into the job market. During the last ten years, Charlotte’s population grew by 31%, well above the national growth of 11%. Much of this growth was through the immigration to the region of all races of people seeking a superior quality of life.

Despite the nation’s increasing heterogeneity, diversity is encountering varying degrees of resistance among different sectors of U.S industry. But like it or not, diversity is not going to disappear. And as always, the workplace is the primary arena for social change. Statistics graphically tell the story. Minorities, immigrants and women already make up more than 50 percent of today’s work force.

Today’s fire service managers must be aware of cultural differences internally and externally and how they affect customer service. Sensitivity is the key.

This paper has been produced to satisfy the applied research project requirement for the Strategic Management of Change course at the National Fire Academy. The project relates to the course work on developing a framework for change, resistance to change, and leadership in
change management. The author’s goal is that this research will offer some insight into the need for a diversity training program within the Charlotte Fire Department.

**Literature Review**

The literature review for this project focused on four essential areas: (1) the history of diversity training; (2) a look at diversity training in the private sector; (3) the increase in diversity training; and (4) whether diversity training really works. The first three topics were researched with literature at the Public Library of Charlotte and the NETC Learning Resource Center. The fourth topic was researched by conducting interviews with experts in the field of diversity training and conducting literature searches at the Public Library of Charlotte and on the Internet.

**How did diversity training get started?**

Lawley (1997) wrote that diversity training takes many different forms, but one is called experiential learning. Training that includes role-playing or spending part of a day with an artificial disability can provide valuable insight that would be lost in a verbal or lecture presentation.

Vaughn (1998) wrote diversity training has its history in peace negotiation, racial desegregation in the United States, and race relations training. Historically, the settlement of disputes between tribes and countries depends on masterful negotiations.

According to Vaughn (1998), the 1960s witnessed both increased multinational business and racial tensions in large metropolitan areas. Multinational companies realized quickly that sending managers to overseas companies without cross-cultural training caused problems. Sometimes the overseas manager from the United States would unintentionally cause cultural conflicts. Many managers found it difficult to adjust to the foreign culture.
Wallace (2001) writes that Joel A. Freeman, former chaplain of the Washington Wizards basketball team, is a motivational speaker and corporate change agent, but lately he’s been earning more of his income from a new gig: cultural coaching.

Freeman is white. His sessions are designed to build respect among employees, which, in turn, facilitates good communication. He encourages those who are Caucasian to take a few weekends out of their lives to watch some videos or read some books and try to understand what life is like for people from other cultures.

Vaughn (1998) stated efforts to desegregate American racial groups also contributed to the rise of diversity training. The military led the way. A segregated military was considered ineffective and counter to the image America wanted to present internationally. Troops across the different military organizations received intense race relations training. New recruits received as much as a week of full-time, intensive race relations training in boot camp. The primary focus was on black-white American relations. Recruits receive less intensive training today, and the focus is on human relations training to broaden the scope.

Kerka (1998) wrote that in the multicultural 1990s workplace diversity training (DT) initiatives were everywhere. Surveys of companies employing over 100 people indicate that about 40% had DT programs in 1992, 50-56% had them by 1996. The American Society for Training and Development’s 1990 survey turned up 15 diversity trainers in 1990 and 138 in 1996. Motivation behind DT included compliance with legal mandates, fear of lawsuits, social justice, desire to expand into diverse markets, and overall organizational transformation.

Kennedy (1999) wrote that diversity training was built on the premise that with action together we can change the world. Change is hard work, often with big swings of effort and sacrifice necessary to arrive at the next step, and when you reach a moment of success, you soon realize that there remains much more to do to keep the momentum alive. So, keep marching on!
Hemphill (2001) states the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided laws that ensured fairness to all individuals in the workplace with the exception of gays and lesbians. As a result, terms such as equal employment opportunity and affirmative action entered the business lexicon. Human resource departments were given the responsibility of ensuring compliance with laws. Training programs were designed to raise the level of awareness regarding gender and minority issues in the workplace. It was hoped that creating awareness would engender understanding and thereby eliminate discrimination and harassment practices in the workplace.

Kennedy (2001) wrote that prevention is the best tool for elimination of discrimination in the workplace. Educating both employees and management and creating specific in-house procedures to detect and handle such problems may reduce an employer’s exposure to potential litigation.

Cox (1998) concluded that orientation programs are the most widely used tool among leading organizations that value cultural diversity. New member orientation programs are basic in the hiring processes of many organizations as part of their managing diversity initiatives. One example is Procter & Gamble’s “On Boarding” program, which features special components for women and non-white hires and their managers.

What diversity training has the private sector done?

Pitney Bowes (2001) wrote that in the 1940s, Pitney Bowes Chairman Walter Wheeler took several sales representatives, including one African American, to an awards ceremony. The hotel hosting the event refused to register the African American, so Wheeler left with his sales force in tow. Diversity has been at the forefront of the company’s social and business agendas ever since.

Although most employees felt respected by the corporate culture, management realized that many minority employees were not advancing through the ranks. So in 1987, Pitney Bowes
created the Women’s Resource Group and the Minority Resource Group to address this issue.
The result of the work of those resource groups indicated that much needed to be done to make
every Pitney Bowes workplace an environment where differences are respected.

Each year, Pitney Bowes’ general managers, in conjunction with their diversity
leadership councils, present diversity action plans that outline initiatives linked to the strategic
goals of the DFT. Each business unit is required to submit an end-of-year report measuring how
well the unit performed against these objectives. This report is critical to maintaining goal
accountabilities.

Thomas (2001) stated what the small business owner must do is create an environment
where no one is advantaged or disadvantaged, an environment where “we” is everyone and in
which people feel their contributions are valued.

“When you seek to attract talented employees of diverse backgrounds, one of their
considerations will be whether your firm offers a reasonable opportunity to develop to their
fullest potential,” Thomas emphasizes.

Rowe (2001) wrote that small businesses, like any other business, have to look at
diversity from both an internal and external perspective. Internal because you have staff and
chances are that people will differ from each other in some way, such as educational level, age,
parental status, or physical attributes. From an external perspective, a diverse workforce can
also provide a distinct competitive advantage for your firm and enhance its success in today’s
increasingly global marketplace.

This message was emphatically driven home when a Maryland biotechnology firm
seeking to relocate recently rejected Des Moines, Iowa, for being too homogeneous. Iowa had
offered the company $25 million in incentives. As it turns out, however, money wasn’t
everything.
Company officials on a scouting trip realized that almost all the faces they saw in Iowa were white and decided to turn down the generous offer. The failed deal cost the state 250 new jobs and potentially millions of dollars, graphically illustrating the powerful economic ramifications of the nation’s diversifying work force.

“We were really wooing them,” recalls Michael Reagan, president of the Greater Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, regretfully. “But then somebody in their group said, ‘I think we may be uncomfortable here. We’re used to all kinds of different people.’ ”

Far too often in the past, Reagan acknowledges, visiting business leaders were greeted by a team of white men, a mistake he vows will not be repeated.

Nissen (1999) wrote that computer giant Digital Equipment Corporation at its Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in Berkeley, California, piloted a one-year mentoring program that paired senior staff members, mostly white males, with new hires of a different ethnicity, gender, or age. The goal was to have the senior staff members act as coaches and teach their partners how to do business more skillfully.

“The program was an enormous success,” notes Nissen. After 12 months, 22 of the original 24 pairs remained together. The two that dissolved did so because they felt they had fulfilled their objectives. Moreover, although initially the pairings were only intended to last a year, all 22 wanted to continue, and the program has subsequently been expanded.

Rowe (2001) noted that Ernest Drew, chief executive officer of chemical giant Hoechst Celanese, experienced firsthand the value of diversity when he attended a conference for the corporation’s top 125 officers. Mostly white men, they were joined by 50 lower-level women and minorities.

Conference attendees broke into problem solving teams, some mixed by race and sex, others all white and male. The primary issue was the impact of Hoechst’s corporate culture on
the company and what changes could be made to improve results. Listening to findings presented by each of the teams prove to be quite a revelation to Drew.

“It was obvious that the diverse teams had broader solutions,” he remembers. “They came up with ideas I’d never even thought of before. For the first time, we realized that diversity is strength as it relates to problem solving. Previously, we just thought of diversity as the total number of minorities and women in the company-like affirmative action. Now we truly understand that we need diversity at every level of the company where decisions are made.”

Brown (1999) wrote that the Supreme Court’s recent ruling is motivating employers to take actions that reflect their compliance with federal laws as protection against sexual harassment litigation. Emerging from the literature on sexual harassment prevention are three steps that employers can take to counter sexual harassment (Kimble-Ellis 1998; “Protecting Employees” 1998):

1. Develop a strong company policy that specifies in writing outlawed behaviors and penalties for their demonstration.

2. Establish grievance procedures for reporting, processing, and resolving complaints.

3. Provide sexual harassment training for supervisors, managers, and workers that explains what sexual harassment means and how it can be recognized, confronted, and averted.

Cox (1998) stated the most widely used tool among leading organizations is managing or valuing cultural diversity training. Many companies, including AT&T, Exxon Research and Engineering, and Citizens Insurance Company, have found that the use of line managers to facilitate diversity training pays dividends in building organizational commitment to the effort.

Bearden (2001) recognized that over the past decade diversity has made its way near the top of the agenda in corporate America. Business leaders, although few, have come to realize that there is a business rationale to changing the organizational culture. As a result, hundreds of
diversity consultants, human resource specialists, and marketing experts have come out of the
woodwork to guide big business down the right track.

Hubbard (2000) recognized that interest in measuring the effects of diversity has been
growing for some time. Yet the topic still challenges even the diversity departments. Diversity
professionals and managers know they must begin to show how diversity connects to the bottom-
line in hard numbers. Otherwise, they will continue to have difficulty maintaining funding,
gaining support, and assessing progress. In short, they must calculate and report the return-on-
investment (ROI).

Caldwell (2001) wrote that Gastonia consultant Jennifer Davis and her staff at J. P. Davis
and Associates faced a tall order five years ago when the company was asked to teach diversity
skills to 1,500 Charlotte-Mecklenburg police officers. Race and culture-related conflicts often
come to a head when police officers are involved. In many cities across America police conduct
has been called into question after incidents where civilians have been shot or beaten by officers.
In almost all of those cases, the protagonists have been of differing racial or cultural background.

Bean (2001) concluded that there was a time in the history of apparel retailing when
companies believed that a single ethnic face in a mainstream ad was evidence of diversity and
inclusion. But tokenism is fading as companies increasingly attempt to weave diversity
strategies throughout the fabric of their organizations.

Cases in point: Federated Department Stores and Federated’s Rich’s, Lazarus,
Goldsmith’s division and Nordstrom Inc. Each company has a history of hiring women and
people of color and advancing those employees through the ranks. Now, each is seeking to
integrate diversity practices throughout the organization.

Lawley (1997) noted that Union Electric Co. of St. Louis began its diversity training
courses in 1990 in response to this need. Since then, more than 700 Union Electric employees
have completed the courses. The company also has received two national awards for the program, the 1991 Edison Electric Institute Affirmative Action Award and the 1992 World of Difference Award.

Why is there an increase in diversity training?

Korn and Appelbaum (2000) recognized workers are facing a new type of safety concern, psychological safety, according to a new study. When 13 percent of workers go to work, they are afraid of being harassed, intimidated, or summarily dismissed, according to Aon Consulting’s Loyalty Institute in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Ensuring a safe and secure work environment is the foundation of trust and zero mistreatment of people. Training is an integral component of imparting personal knowledge to allow for healthy relationships at work.

According to Korn and Appelbaum (2000) both in the United States and the European Union, the strong social content of legislation aimed at elimination of discrimination has heightened the employers’ responsibility to achieve zero tolerance of a hostile workplace. In accordance with the laws, employees have been allowed to sue for punitive damages that go beyond the traditional notion of compensating someone for actual loss deterrence from a hostile workplace. This is an economic reality for employers, given that proven inappropriate workplace behaviors have been costly to the employer.

In contrast to traditional training methods, the PsychoLegal Approach combines the expertise of a lawyer and a psychologist. The aims are to promote greater levels of organizational awareness about the issues of sexual harassment in the workplace, promote lasting attitude and behavioral changes, and to focus on preventative attitudes. It is grounded in the belief that employees benefit most from understanding the legal issues of sexual harassment in the broader context of understanding the behavioral, emotional, and psychological issues that are intertwined in the law.
Greenberg (2001) wrote sexual harassment is one of the most complicated areas of employment. It is also one of the areas that has recently received the most press. Sexual harassment often goes hand-in-hand with other illegal acts, like gender discrimination. If you have a problem with sexual harassment, you should think about what else might be going on as well.

Klein (2001) noted that a diversity issue exists where the policy or business practice has an impact exclusive of difference but not inclusive of difference. Having a diversity issue is not necessarily a bad thing. Doing nothing about it, given you have knowledge of the issue, is negligence. Being in denial about these issues does not make them go away. Ignorance is not bliss inside or outside the courtroom. The real question is why do we have this issue, and can we take action to correct it or improve the situation?

Griggs (2001) wrote conflict is inevitable and is often a natural aspect of a developing relationship. One must learn to recognize and manage the conflict phase of relationships, to relate across differences, and prevent the downside to hostile cycles. The challenge is not to avoid conflict, but to turn it into an opportunity. Conflict is the most critical phase of moving a relationship to a higher place with a greater potential for effectiveness.

Humphreys (1996) wrote that 62 percent of colleges and universities responding to an AAC&U survey report that they either have in place a diversity requirement or they are in the process of developing one. This is the main finding of the first national survey to examine this development in undergraduate education. Colleges and universities now recognize that learning about diversity is a key element of a quality undergraduate education and should therefore be required of all students.

McInnes (1999) wrote as we enter the 21st Century, workforce diversity has become an essential business concern. In the so-called Information Age, the greatest assets of most
companies are now on two feet. Undeniably, there is a talent war raging. No company can afford to unnecessarily restrict its ability to attract and retain the very best employees available.

Generally speaking, the term “Workforce Diversity” refers to policies and practices that seek to include people within a workforce who are considered to be, in some way, different from those in the prevailing constituency. In this context, here is a quick overview of seven predominant factors that motivate companies, large and small, to diversify their workforces and provide the needed training:

1. As a Social Responsibility
2. As an Economic Payback
3. As a Resource Imperative
4. As a Legal Requirement
5. As a Marketing Strategy
6. As a Business Communications Strategy
7. As a Capacity-building Strategy

Stavraka (2000) found that job seekers are looking beyond salaries and benefits packages to companies’ commitments to social causes. A recent study revealed that 75 percent of prospective employees would consider a company’s commitment to a variety of social causes, including volunteerism and diversity initiatives, such as work/life balance programs, when deciding on job changes.

Headquartered in Boston, Cone Inc. and Roper Starch Worldwide of New York City found that an increasing number of employers leverage social commitments as effective recruitment and retention tools. These two companies study cause-related trends and marketing.

Deck (1999) concluded that executives and personnel managers today must contend with the ramifications of a work force that is becoming less predominantly white and male.
The American work force is changing radically,” said Debra Connelly, assistant professor of organization and human resources at the University at Buffalo School of Management.

Connelly said that half of American workers entering the job force today are female, and African-Americans and Latinos each make up about 13 percent of new workers. She said the numbers of Latino job entrants and workers who are new immigrants to the United States will grow rapidly in the next 20 years.

According to Deck (1999) while changes in demographics and cultural attitudes have resulted in a push toward a more diverse and inclusive work force, this new climate sometimes opens up more opportunities for friction in the workplace.

Pope (2001) wrote that diversity is the vast array of human differences, inclusive of everyone and every dimension of diversity which contributes to our uniqueness. It’s about embracing the individual differences and recognizing group similarities. It’s about learning to work together for the common good. Work force diversity is not just a theory; it’s a fact. The only question is: Will you make it an asset or a liability? If that makes it sound like a business issue, like profits, losses, investment capital, etc., that’s because it is.

Edwards (2001) states that any team that wants to produce outstanding results must find ways for its diverse members to communicate effectively across their differences and build healthy working relationships. In workplaces that reflect our increasingly diverse society, it is vital for employees to learn the values and skills that enable them to participate in, and contribute to, an organizational culture of respect, civility, and community. In addition, organizations that fail to develop those norms run an increased risk of exposure to employment harassment litigation.
According to Perkins (2001) more and more companies are looking at diversity as a competitive advantage. He states, “I know both of those terms are thrown around frequently today, but companies are recognizing that if they are going to be successful, both for their stockholders and in providing services and products to the global community, they have to find ways to take full advantage of the market. One way of doing that is to recognize the changing demographics and to respond in kind. Many companies are developing diversity programs that reflect that concern and objective.”


Korn (2000) writes that the psycho-legal approach to sexual harassment training, counseling, or investigations emphasizes that the key to effective workplace interventions lies in training employees at all levels of the organization to understand the legal and psychological issues that surround sexual harassment. All too often sexual harassment training is limited to simply explaining the definitions of sexual harassment to employees. Organizations and trainers proceed based on the notion that once people understand the behaviors that constitute sexual harassment and its legal implications, they will no longer engage in this behavior. The psycho-legal approach takes training to the next step by demonstrating how the myriad of legal concerns surrounding sexual harassment is inextricably linked to the psychological and behavioral issues. When individual employees gain a psycho-legal understanding of sexual harassment, there is a greater potential for maximal behavioral change in the organization.

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2001) announced in April a $485,000 settlement of a harassment lawsuit against Charoen Pokphand, USA, Inc., at its
Eufaula, AL, chicken processing plant. The EEOC and private plaintiffs alleged that seven
African-American female line workers were subjected to egregious sexual harassment, racial
discrimination, and retaliation in violation of the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The
private plaintiffs were represented by the law firm of Gordon, Silberman, Wiggins & Childs,
with Jon Goldfarb acting as lead counsel. A second case in the same month produced a landmark
$2.44 million settlement of a class action lawsuit against the University of Incarnate Word
(UIW), a private university in San Antonio, Texas, on behalf of 18 Hispanic housekeepers who
were subjected to an unlawful English-only rule and harassed due to their national origin in
violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Does diversity training really work?

Kerka (1998) comments on the “backlash” arising from the training and states that
diversity training programs are exploding in their sponsors’ faces. Reasons for the backlash may
be reaction to rapid social change, deep-seated prejudice, sensationalistic journalism,
misunderstanding of diversity and its identification with “political correctness,” and badly
planned and implemented training programs.

Valasquez (2000) discusses another important reason why diversity training may not
work: “I have realized recently that I am doing way too much “Rescue Diversity training.” That
is, I am hired to come in and clean up and pick up where other diversity trainers started and
failed. The organization, my client, was polarized during and after the training and what I call
unifying work (healing) is now called for, and how to “restart” the training and other support
initiatives is the next step.

According to Bond (2000) included in the “next step” is the notion of solidifying
diversity as more than a mere buzzword. The topic was a common thread for both political
parties at their national conventions and “the diversity card” would seemingly determine our
next president. In addition we are seeing diversity become the key issue in fields like entertainment, sports, community relations and education. We expect the corporate sector and private industry to take the lead in this effort. Top-flight companies are recognizing that this is more than “the right thing to do.” Today, it’s the only thing to do. As one CEO said, “This is not about winning awards, but it is about winning in the global marketplace.”

Continuing with the downside, Vaughn (2001) states that diversity training is filled with land mines. “I once witnessed a couple of facilitators lose an audience of about sixty people. The simulation game they introduced was so powerful that several participants became angry with each other afterwards. Instead of using the situation to point out the powerful features of their game, the facilitators allowed the emotional tone of the disagreement to intimidated them. Before we knew it, the workshop was over. We all left feeling that our time was wasted.”

According to Wilson (2000), diversity training is working. It has to, because it is the key to success in the future global marketplace. This idea is made concrete by the statement of Procter & Gamble CEO John Pepper, who states, “Our success as a global company is a direct result of our diverse and talented workforce. Our ability to develop new consumer insights and ideas and to execute in a superior way across the world is the best possible testimony to the power of diversity any organization could ever have.”

Hemphill (1997) adds that as the workplace continues to diversify, employees of all races, creeds and orientations will become the norm rather than the exception. To employ and meet the challenges ahead, it is essential that workers develop skill sets to interact effectively in today’s diverse workplace. In order to develop skills necessary to work effectively together, it is necessary to make significant corrections.

Valasquez (2001) says that not only does diversity training work, but also it encourages a bigger plan of action addressing the systems, the structures, and the culture of the organization.
He notes the example of Holy Cross Hospital, which sponsors several interesting diversity initiatives acknowledging and celebrating diversity within their employment and client (patient) ranks:

- **Fashion Show** – employees are invited to wear clothing from their place of origin and model the attire at a gala. While employees model their clothing, a narrator reads cultural, religious, ethnic, or other personal data to further inform and educate the audience. Information may include traditions, color, and symbolism as related to religion.

- **Martin Luther King Day Service** – planned and administered by the Holy Cross Hospital Diversity leadership committee. It included a variety of religious ethnic and cultural activities. This service spoke to everyone that attended with diverse food, music, and a wide variety of speakers.

- **US and World Map Activity** – at a holiday gala one year, employees were asked to place a pin on the state or county where they were born. Posted in a public place at the hospital for some time later, it was clearly evident that Holy Cross Hospital employed people from all fifty states and approximately fifty countries.

- **Diversity Case Study Work/Management Development** – cases were written specifically for Holy Cross Hospital by management and supervisory personnel illustrating common situations and issues that occur every day at Holy Cross Hospital. Given problem solving and effective communication skills, all managers retreated away from the hospital and worked in small teams. Their work was collected and published in a book for reference purposes.

  Grollman (2000) acknowledge that most businesses’ attempts at diversity training end up being little more than window dressing. These companies set up programs through their human resource departments that are nothing more than one-day seminars with some videos shown and
a questionnaire or survey form filled out. Perhaps even culturally diverse holidays are posted on company-issued calendars, as little more than nice-to-know information.

Lauber (1998) concluded that diversity training is not a one-time stand-alone event that can instantaneously produce a positive workplace where all employees are culturally competent and have mastered the necessary skills for cross-cultural communications. What is learned from diversity training needs to be regularly reinforced. That is why many organizations select train the trainer workshops. By developing an in-house cadre of competent diversity trainers, organizations build internal capacity and invest in the future.

**Procedures**

Action research was conducted through several avenues, including literature review, personal correspondence, personal interviews, and phone interviews.

**Literature Review**

Literature searches were initiated at the National Emergency Training Center’s (NETC) Learning Resource Center (LRC) in September 1999 during the author’s attendance at the National Fire Academy. Additional searches were conducted within the public library system of the city of Charlotte, North Carolina. Extensive searches were also conducted online through the Internet to identify published documents, web sites, organizations and newsletters with content relative to the subjects of affirmative action, civil rights and diversity. The author’s private collection of Ebony magazine was also examined.

**Personal Interviews and Correspondence**

Phone interviews and written correspondence were conducted with experts in the field of diversity training. A series of ten questions was posed to all those interviewed (Appendix B). Phone interviews and electronic mail correspondence was conducted with Mr. Terrence R.
Simmons of Simmons Associates on May 2, 2001. Mr. Simmons is Chief Executive Officer and Managing Partner of Simmons Associates, Inc., a nationally known resource team located in New Hope, PA. The firm has provided consultation and training services in Human Resources, Organizational Development, and Workforce Diversity to Fortune 500 corporations for more than 20 years.

Within Charlotte, several personal interviews were conducted with High Point Fire Department Chief, David Taylor. Chief Taylor is responsible for personnel recruiting and selection for the High Point Fire Department. He was also interviewed on April 12, 2001, and on May 15, 2001.

Miss Cathy Webb, who serves as vice president of First Union National Bank Human Resource Department, was interviewed on April 15, 2001. Follow-up written correspondence was also conducted with Miss. Webb on April 17, 2001. A personal interview was conducted with Mr. Vern Williams, a teacher, facilitator, mentor, and coach with over 20 years of experience in leadership development. Mr. Williams offered insight on diversity training.

Written correspondence and requests for information were also made to several diversity training firms, including Griggs Production, Pro2Net, the National Multi-Cultural Institute, the American Corporate Counsel Association, DiversityInc.Com and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Not all of the organizations responded; however, some did offer information on diversity training and leads to other literary resources.

**Assumptions and Limitations**

In performing this research, the author assumed that material cited in the literature review was conducted in an objective and unbiased manner. It was further assumed that the fire service community has an interest in diversity training.
The limitations that affected this research project included the author’s lack of knowledge about employment laws and diversity training systems.

The research project was also limited by time. The six-month submission criteria of the EFO program did not allow the author to travel to other cities and conduct interviews in person with experts in the field of diversity training. The research was further limited to books readily available at public libraries on the subject of diversity training. The author found that many new books that examined the results of diversity training were not carried by the Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library.

**Definition and Clarification of Selected Terms**

**Acculturation.** The integration of aspects of mainstream culture into one’s cultural identity, family relationships, ethnic community life, or cross-cultural interactions.

**Cadre.** A small group of trained personnel around whom a larger organization can be built and trained.

**Culture.** The conscious and unconscious ways of life of a people, including attitudes, values, behavior, and material things.

**Discrimination.** Treatment that favors one person or group over another.

**Diversity.** A goal for workplaces and educational facilities to include people in their population who represent many different races, backgrounds, beliefs, and perspectives.

**Pluralism.** A condition in which members of diverse cultural groups have equal access to the resources needed for realizing their full potential.

**Prejudice.** An opinion formed without enough knowledge or thought; biased about someone or something.
Quota. A numerical expectation or requirement. In the realm of affirmative action, quotas are fixed percentages of minorities or women to be hired by employers or admitted to schools to create a diverse population.

Racism. Unfair behavior whereby one race has and uses power over another.

Stereotype. A generalization or oversimplification about a whole group.

Tokenism. The policy of making merely a perfunctory effort or symbolic gesture toward the accomplishment of a goal, such as racial integration or the education of the dangers of sexism.

Results

1. How did diversity training get started?

The research data revealed that diversity training has its history in peace negotiation, racial desegregation in the United States, and race relations training. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided laws that ensured fairness to all individual in the work place, with the exception of gays and lesbians. As a result, terms such as equal employment opportunity and affirmative action entered the business lexicon. Human resource departments were given the responsibility of ensuring compliance with these laws. Training programs were designed to raise the level of awareness regarding gender and minority issues in the workplace. It was hoped that creating awareness would engender understanding and thereby eliminate discrimination and harassment practices in the workplace. The research also revealed that efforts to desegregate American racial groups also contributed to the rise of diversity training, and the military led the way.

2. What diversity training has the private sector done?

Research data shows that over the past decade diversity has made its way near the top of the agenda in corporate America. Business leaders, although few, have come to realize that there is a business rationale to changing the organizational culture. As a result, hundreds of diversity
consultants, human resource specialists, and marketing experts have come out of the woodwork to guide big business down the right track. The research also pointed out that the bulk of diversity training programs in place today are little more than a Band-Aid approach to an issue that needs constant attention. A company cannot simply inoculate an employee with a single diversity seminar and assume that its job is done. For diversity training to be successful and effective, it must be an on-going process.

3. Why is there an increase in diversity training?

The research indicated that executives and managers today must contend with the ramifications of a work force that is becoming less predominantly white and male. While changes in demographics and cultural attitudes have resulted in a push toward a more diverse and inclusive work force, this new climate sometimes opens up more opportunities for friction in the workplace. It was also revealed that more and more companies are looking at diversity as a competitive advantage. Companies are recognizing that if they are going to be successful, both for their stockholders and in providing services and products to the global community, they have to find ways to take full advantage of the market. One way of doing that is to recognize the changing demographics and to respond in kind. Many companies are developing diversity programs that reflect that concern and objective.

4. Does diversity training really work?

The research showed that the underlying expectation of the diversity training process was to provide an avenue of learning and create a level of awareness that would eliminate discrimination and harassment in the workplace. At first, diversity training seemed to be the needed answer and, over time, it developed a following. To update what happened in the movement and why, as the workforce became more diverse, to the dismay of those purchasing the training and those receiving it, diversity training failed to diminish discrimination and
harassment behaviors in the workplace. It was believed the reason diversity training has failed to provide the much-needed answer is because its central focus places attention on ideas and ideologies rather than behaviors and skills. The research also made clear that diversity training is not a one-time stand-alone event that can instantaneously produce a positive change in the workplace. That is why many organizations select train the trainer workshops. By developing an in house cadre of competent diversity trainers, organizations build internal capacity and invest in the future.

**Discussion**

The literature search revealed that efforts to desegregate American racial groups contributed to the rise of diversity training (Vaughn, 1998). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided laws that ensured fairness to all individuals in the workplace, with the exception of gays and lesbians. Human resource departments were given the responsibility of ensuring compliance with laws.

The findings indicated that training programs were designed to raise the level of awareness regarding gender and minority issues in the workplace (Hemphill, 2001). It was hoped that creating awareness would engender understanding and thereby eliminate discrimination and harassment practices in the workplace.

Research revealed that the most widely used tool among leading organizations is managing or valuing diversity training. (Cox, 1998). Many companies, including AT&T, Exxon Research and Engineering, and Citizens Insurance Company, have found that the use of line managers to facilitate diversity training pays dividends in building organizational commitment to the effort.

Over the past decade diversity has made its way near the top of the agenda in corporate America. Business leaders, although few, have come to realize that there is a business rationale
to changing the organizational culture. As a result, hundreds of diversity consultants, human resource specialists and marketing experts have come out of the woodwork to guide big business down the right track.

The research also recognized workers are facing a new type of safety concern, psychological safety, according to a new study (Korn and Appelbaum, 2000). When 13 percent of workers go to work, they are afraid of being harassed, intimidated, or summarily dismissed, according to Aon Consulting’s Loyalty Institute in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

According to Korn and Appelbaum (2000) both in the United States and the European Union, the strong social content of legislation aimed at elimination of discrimination has heightened employers’ responsibility to achieve zero tolerance of a hostile workplace. In accordance with the laws, employees have been allowed to sue for punitive damages that go beyond the traditional notion of compensating for actual loss.

Research revealed there are many different opinions why diversity training has not always worked. (Kerka 1998) comments on the backlash arising from the training and states that diversity training programs are exploding in faces of their sponsors. Reasons for the backlash may be reaction to rapid social change, deep-seated prejudice, sensationalistic journalism, misunderstanding of diversity and its identification with “political correctness,” and badly planned and implemented training programs.

The research produces examples where diversity training has worked (Valasquez 2001). At Holy Cross Hospital, it was stated that not only does diversity training work, but also it encourages a bigger plan of action addressing the systems, the structures, and the culture of the organization. Holy Cross Hospital sponsors several interesting diversity initiatives acknowledging and celebrating diversity within their employment and client ranks.
This researcher believes diversity training is fast becoming a key strategic business issue in many organizations. Progressive corporate leaders have begun to acknowledge the importance of attracting, developing, and retaining a diverse workforce. Much of this concern can be traced to major changes that are occurring in the composition of our labor pool. Several key census statistics and research publications have indicated that by the year 2000 a large percentage of the labor pool will consist of groups previously unrepresented in the workforce, e.g., women, people of color, single parents, dual earners, generation X, etc. Diversity enhances an organization’s ability to tap into previously under-utilized labor supplies both locally and globally. In fact, the most progressive employers have begun to use diversity initiatives as a means of positioning themselves as the employer of choice for their industry.

The other development in the area of diversity training appears to be a reduced tolerance to discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Within the past few years several multi-million dollar discrimination based class action suits have been filed against well-known corporate entities. While most of these suits are generated in the United States, they have a predictable impact on human resource management. Fire department managers are now being asked to deal with the highly complex and sometimes emotional issues that are generated in an increasingly diverse workforce. This researcher believes diversity training will reduce the friction in the firehouses of Charlotte but recognizes that diversity training is not a one-time stand-alone event that can change our department overnight. It must be regularly reinforced.
Recommendations

Based upon this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. The fire chief should contact a national diversity training firm that can help the fire department recognize the early signals of conflict and actively develop enhancing relationship patterns among managers and employees, keeping disagreements from escalating into destructive and damaging conflicts.

2. Based on input from the consultant, top management of the Charlotte Fire Department should develop an action plan that includes the visualization of the desired results or outcomes of the changes from a diversity training program.

3. Once the action plan has been developed, management must make the commitment to transform our organization, and the vision must be shared with all members of the organization.

4. The fire chief and his staff should interview all battalion chiefs about their opinions on diversity training. They are the ones that have daily contact with the troops in the firehouses. The fire chief can use the assessment to identify allies for the changes.

5. A task force (workgroup) should be appointed to plan and establish an exclusive ongoing training program to be required for the fire department. This training for all employees should be in addition to the current training done by the city of Charlotte.

6. The task force should perform a cultural audit of the fire department to assess hiring, retention, and promotion practices and demographics.

7. The task force should compile data about complaints, potential lawsuits, and hiring, retention, and promotion problems, current and projected customer demographics. Then the task force should present the data to the chief and his staff.

8. It is specifically recommended that the Charlotte Fire Department adopt a diversity training program. For the criterion of a diversity training plan, see Appendix A. This training
program should be used on a continuous basis. A cadre of in-house competent diversity trainers should be developed.
References


Pope, G. (2001) What is Diversity?


Vaughn, B. (1998) How Did Diversity Training get Started?


Appendix A

Criterion For A Diversity training Program

Goal 1: Create a organization climate that values diversity. The chief and his/her staff must take an active role in defining and prioritizing department climate and diversity goals. Attention to the celebration of diversity in all its aspects and the clear willingness to allocate resources to achieve equity are but a few concrete demonstrations of leadership.

Goal 2: Create the administrative and organizational structure needed to coordinate and monitor department climate progress. Institutionalize, staff, and fund the program through the department.

Goal 3: Recruit, hire and retain culturally diverse employees across all levels and areas of the Fire Department. Increase efforts to recruit, hire and retain more diverse employees. Implement a system of valuing and recognizing efforts to promote the recruitment, hiring and retention of diverse employees.

Goal 4: Provide professional development activities that assist all personnel in the understanding of their own and other cultures. Develop and implement a department-wide diversity training and development program. All newly appointed managers and supervisors should be required to regularly attend classes/workshops/seminars on effective management practices in a diverse work environment.

Goal 5: Promote user-friendly firehouses in which citizens, as well as employees, feel welcomed and appreciated. Aggressively establish and promote a wide variety of activities that promote communication, firefighter involvement, cultural appreciation, and ease of use.
Appendix B

Personal Interview Questions

1. What are the signs that your organization values diversity?

2. What do you wish that management understood about your own group?

3. What are the obstacles in the way of employees who are different from the mainstream?

4. What kinds of prejudice or discrimination have you faced, if any?

5. What contributions and behaviors are most valued and rewarded here?

6. What behaviors of other groups are more difficult for you to deal with or most irritating?

7. What do you wish your manager understood about you?

8. What do you need to do and/or know to get ahead in this organization?

9. What groups are easiest for you to cooperate with? What groups are the hardest?

10. What do you think the organization could do to get the best from everyone?