

Multicultural Teams

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ISBN: 978-81-314-2117-8

Editorial Team: R. Naga Sandhya and Deepa Verma

Visualiser and Designer: P. Damodara Siva Prasad

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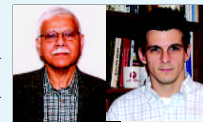
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Building a Diverse Workforce It's no Longer a Choice

P R E L U D E

Mr. Gerarld, a 33-year-old Irish, graduated from Harvard Business School (June 2004), a former semi-professional rugby player, had arrived in March 2006 in New Delhi with his wife and two young children and had quickly set about creating an entirely new organisation from scratch. His parent company, Cantour Inc. headquartered in Helsinki, Finland, manufactures ATM machines. He joined Cantour Inc. in September 2004 in the corporate strategy department. The chairman (also the CEO) heads the corporate strategy department. Two vice presidents are the other members of this department. By 2004, Cantour Inc. had

“What do you think businesses can learn from International bodies like UN, IMF, World Bank, NATO, NASA, etc?”

worldwide revenues of €6.6 billion and was widely perceived as the market leader in North America, South America and Europe. He was greeted with “Incredible India” campaign on his arrival at Mumbai’s Santa Cruz International Airport. Gerarld’s mandate is to set up Cantour Inc’s business operations in India and reach a sales target of \$1 billion by 2008. CEO’s India mandate echoed, “India will be our window to Asia.” With the help of a global recruiting agency, he has roped in five Indians, two Chinese, two Malaysians, two Japanese and one Saudi Arabian to be a part of the Indian venture. He briefed them the task ahead. “What do you think businesses can learn from International bodies like UN, IMF, World Bank, NATO, NASA, etc?”, Gerarld asked in one of those meetings. Plethora of observations poured in.

What businesses can learn from these multilateral institutions is the way they leverage on their multicultural teams’ capabilities. How to leverage on multicultural teams’ capabilities? Is managing not good enough?

“Leveraging is all about optimism and managing is all about survival and desperation when dealing with multicultural teams.”

Leveraging is all about optimism and managing is all about survival and desperation when dealing with multicultural teams. What do you want the multicultural teams to deliver? You

definitely want them to stick to the knitting and expect them to stick their neck out when it comes to team's commitment. They can ill afford to have 'individual' agendas. When there is a stalemate and deadlock in a multicultural team it's all about managing (the 'somehow' syndrome). How often not to expect such deadlocks? Often. Multicultural teams hit the dead end quite early if team composition was not well thought out. Instead, the wish is that they should hit the deck fast.

Gerard, into 7 months of his new job in India, faces different challenges. Not the business-related, not even the hardware, it's the software. The team that he assembled seems to go disarray. There are more disagreements than concurrences. There are

"Multicultural teams are necessitated in an increasingly globalised world. They come with plethora of challenges. If handled well, the capabilities can be leveraged upon."

more excuses for not having done than one good reason for having completed the task. Frustration has crept in. Every one seemed to be a naysayer in the team while they enthused him when met nationality-wise. The dilemma's intensity only increased until he...

Multicultural teams are necessitated in an increasingly globalised world. They come with plethora of challenges. If handled well, the capabilities can be leveraged upon. They become sublime serendipities. If not, the solutions solemnly surface as problems. They become sacrosanct sacrileges.