



Cultural Diversity in the Workplace Challenges and Opportunities

Case Study: Bonita Community Family Center

Background:

Bonita Community Family Center (BCFC) is a community-based organization dedicated to provide a variety of services to families living in Bonita City. The Latino population has increased considerably the last 10 years and the BCFC has been integrating bilingual bicultural personnel into the organization.

Mercedes Guzman has been working for the center for three year. She is one of the case managers providing family services to the Bonita Community. Part of her duties is to provide services to Spanish speaking families.

Jennifer Wilson is the Director of Bonita Community Family center. Jennifer has been working for the organization for 15 years and has been involved in the organization's initiatives to expand services to the Spanish speaking families.

At the cubicles:

Mrs. Wilson: "Mercedes, I need to talk with you in my office. Please come with me".

Ms. Guzman: "Yes, sure. Just let me inform the front desk person in case my next appointment shows up".

At Mrs. Wilson's office:

Mrs. Wilson's (Looking at Mercedes at her eyes): "Mercedes, the reason why I wanted to talk with you is because I have had complaints about you and the other Spanish speaking coworkers speaking Spanish in the halls and in the break room".

Ms. Guzman (Avoiding looking at Mrs. Wilson's eyes): "Excuse me Mrs. Wilson but I do not see why there is a problem with us speaking Spanish, we feel more comfortable speaking in our native language".

Mrs. Wilson: *“Well, some of your coworkers feel uncomfortable. They think that this is America and that you need to speak English”.*

Ms. Guzman (Avoiding looking at Mrs. Wilson): *I do not know why they feel uncomfortable. We are not talking about them and they never have talked with us about how they feel. Besides, we have been hired because we are bilingual and we speak Spanish. I have even felt sometimes that this is the only skill that you see in us.*

Mrs. Wilson: *“I do not understand what you mean by this”*

Ms. Guzman: *“When there are opportunities to get ahead in the Center we are not considered because you need our Spanish speaking skills in the lower level positions or because you do not see other skills that we have.”*

Mrs. Wilson: *“Mercedes, I did not know that you were interested in those positions”.*

Ms. Guzman: *“Well, I feel that you did not consider me because nobody asked me if I was interested.”*

Mrs. Wilson: *“Lets talk about these issues later.”*

Ms. Guzman: *“Ok, lets talk later.”*

Unraveling the Situation:

Desired Outcome:

1. To respect each person.
2. To create a workplace environment that is safe, comfortable, and honors each person's gifts and talents.

Remember:

- ❖ We each have a cultural lens, which shapes the way we make sense of our experience.
- ❖ We all have gifts and talents to share.
- ❖ We all want the best for our organization.

Questions for your small group:

After you choose a recorder and someone to summarize your discussion for the whole group, answer the following:

1. What are the issues in this scenario?
2. Describe the cultural lens of each person/group involved. Include their feelings.
3. List as many ways that you can think of to create a win-win strategy in which all participants adapt to reach the desired outcome listed above.
4. What are ways that this situation could be prevented? In other words, what could an organization do to keep these disconnects from occurring?