



MANAGEMENT AND POLICY PROCESS

African American manufacturing line employees filed complaints about unfair and unequal vacation policy favoring white employees.



Issue/Challenge

At this manufacturing plant, the first shift employees were predominantly white while second and third shift employees were predominantly black. Employee vacation requests were handled through a sign-up sheet that was “first come first serve” and was posted in the break room at the start of the business day. The timing of the posting favored those employees on the first shift and was viewed as biased. Because the plant manager didn’t intend to create an unequal outcome when his administrative assistant posted the sign-up sheet in the morning, he didn’t view his actions as discriminatory and further took offense to black employees’ accusations of racist behavior on his part.



Solution

The situation centers on a common diversity white/black issue of accountability and “intent vs. outcome.” To better understand the challenge and to work toward a more inclusive work environment, KMA conducted training sessions with employees and managers to explore and address both U.S. Mainstream and African American culture. These sessions provided social history, culture-specific values, and group patterns or characteristics that include communication styles, attitudes/expectations toward authority and interpreting workplace behaviors. Through multimedia resources, small group breakouts and group reporting – the team created a new dialogue in which employees could engage and resolve issues through greater cultural understanding and equitable outcomes.



Results

After the training, the original manufacturing plant where the initial complaints were filed changed its procedure to post a portion of vacation openings at the beginning of each of the three shifts – creating a more equitable process and improving employee satisfaction. In addition, Boeing conducted a comprehensive review of its organizational policies and procedures that identified disparate outcomes. Changes were implemented to create more inclusive policies and procedures resulting in best practices that were implemented and shared throughout the Boeing organization.



Measure of Success

At Boeing’s sixth annual Global Diversity and EEO Compliance Summit, titled “Leveraging Unique Contributions for Business Success,” President and CEO Jim McNerney tied the concept of diversity—in all its facets, including race,