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Miles, Inc., Pharmaceutical Division

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Case 1: Miles Inc., Pharmaceutical Division ¹

Miles Inc., a North American Fortune 100 research-based firm with business in chemicals, health care, and imaging technology, is an independent operating company owned by Bayer AG, the German pharmaceutical and chemical giant. The pharmaceutical division has 6,000 employees and sales of \$1.4 billion in the United States and Canada.

As a US government contractor, Miles Inc. has to comply with government regulations prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, race, colour, religion, or national origin. However, corporate leadership decided to go beyond mere compliance with the executive orders, and to make diversity an integral part of Miles' culture.

Sessa et al. report as follows (Sessa et al., cited in Ferris et al., 1995):

Both the corporation and the pharmaceutical division responded to the corporate-wide diversity vision by immediately implementing several initiatives designed to demonstrate that they were taking diversity seriously. The first initiative to be targeted was in benefits. The division created a family friendly benefits concept that incorporated both corporate programs already in existence (e.g., adoption benefits, personal and family leaves, wellness programs, employee assistance programs, and flexible benefits) with new benefits (e.g., job sharing, alternate work schedules, child-care referral services, on-site degree programs, and spousal relocation assistance). This first initiative was relatively easy to implement because it was an extension of previously existing programs that management already supported.

As another immediate initiative, managers are held responsible for diversity management on their performance reviews and in bonus calculations. At the same time, the organization began to advertise its seriousness toward the diversity effort through communications to employees and to the community.

At the same time that these initiatives were being put into place, the division fostered the development of a variety of employee input vehicles to help manage diversity on a longer-term basis on several levels of the organization... Several groups including the sales diversity advisory group, the two research professionals task forces, and the gay and lesbian support group discuss issues and report to line managers of particular areas and sites... Using these employee involvement groups as a model, management decided to develop a central group for the division to coordinate the specific site employee groups. This Division Diversity Group is composed of geographically and functionally diverse managers and it discusses diversity issues on a division-wide basis. The mission of this group is to recommend and review action plans for improving the pharmaceutical division's performance in hiring, promoting, and retaining employees from an increasingly diverse work force, with specific emphasis on women and minorities. The first three recommendations made by the group and adopted by management were: (1) a sexual harassment prevention education program for all employees; (2) a training program for all managers and supervisors designed to teach them how to manage people of diverse backgrounds, and (3) a managing diversity questionnaire to serve as a baseline and feedback tool to management regarding diversity issues in the workplace.

¹ Source: Ferris et. al., 1995.

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This diversity programme helped the pharmaceutical division of Miles Inc. to start the process of cultural change and to set objectives and priorities that would allow the enterprise to stay competitive in the rapidly changing business and social environment.

The Miles Inc. case describes an overall diversity programme undertaken by an enterprise. The next case looks at corporate non-discriminatory policy, aimed at better treatment of ageing workers. As in the case of Walgreens, presented in Chapter 2, skills shortage was the major economic rationale behind the policy. However, the issue here is not limited to recruitment, but to retaining a disadvantaged group of workers.