



Using Assessment Centres to Transform Organisational Behaviour

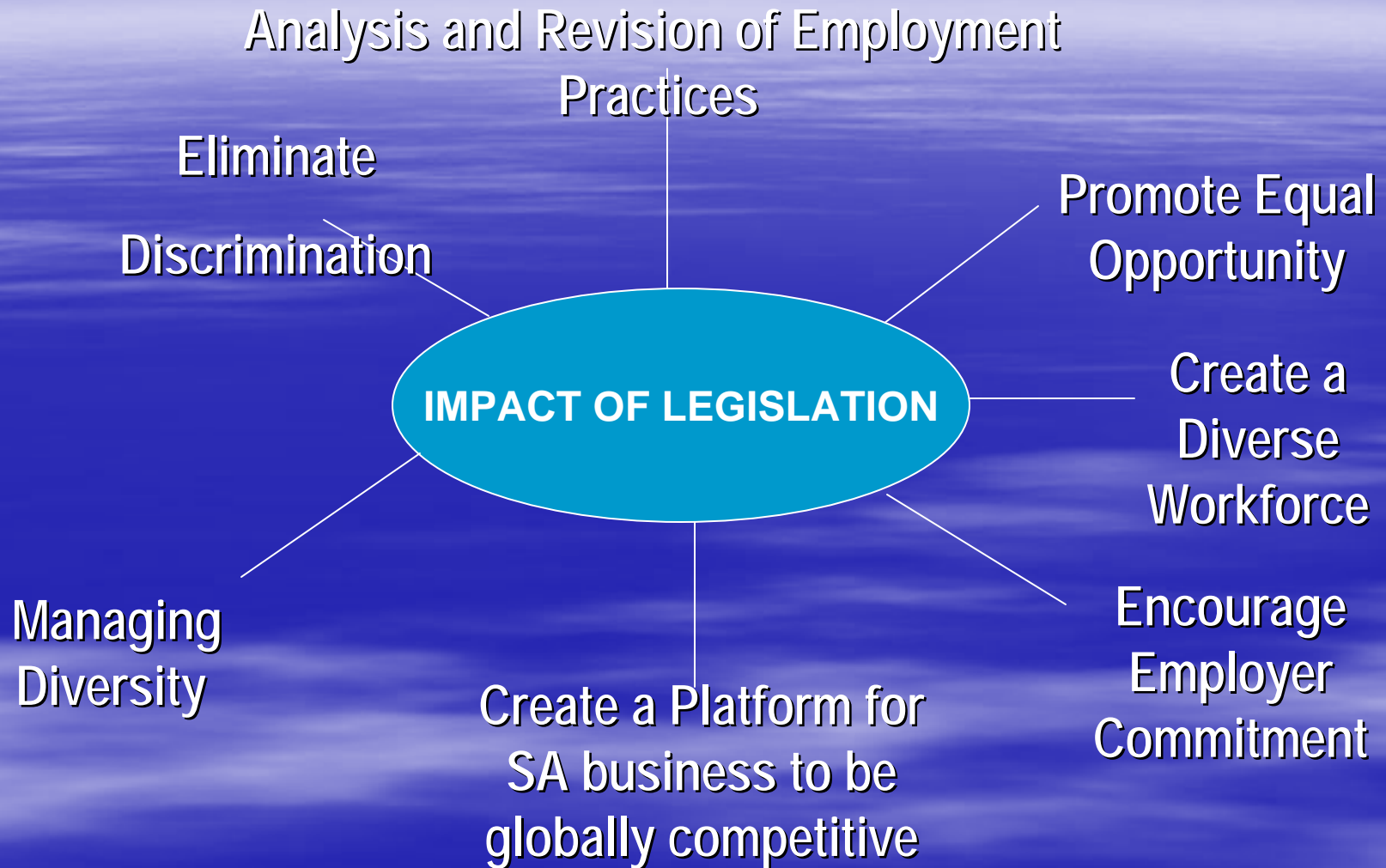
(A Discussion of Interventions and Learnings)

By

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OVERVIEW

- Creating a Burning Platform for Change
- Managing Diversity
- Using AC's to Manage Diversity
- Identifying the Need for Change
- Design Considerations
- Implementation : Participants
- Feedback Format
- Mentorship Tips for Sustainable Change



“Managing diversity is based on the synergy model which advocates that different groups will form a new form of working together in a pluralistic environment (Gardenswartz and Rowe, 1993). Pluralism, according to Bulin (1995) can be defined as “ a culture that promotes mutual respect, acceptance, teamwork and productivity by encouraging the use of a broader range of talents, knowledge perspectives (and behaviours) in the work group” (p.21).

IMPLICATIONS FOR HR

Macro Level:
Reinforcing Business Benefit
Culture Change
Restructuring the Organisation

Individual Level:
Rethinking Leadership Styles
Getting all to interact and work in different ways

TWO CHANGE MANAGEMENT MODELS

- LEWIN
 - Unfreezing
 - Movement
 - Refreezing
- ACTION RESEARCH
 - Identify Need
 - Data Collected
 - Feedback Provided
 - Joint Action Planning
 - Action
 - Assessment
 - Feedback

IDENTIFYING THE NEED FOR CHANGE...

- Cases: Some Background
- Understand Business Strategy
- Identifying Core “Future Fit” Competencies
- Analysing Old vs New Behaviours



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Gather data from a diverse workforce
- Simulations/ Items that reflect the changing business environment.
- Clearly defined BARS
- Emphasis on future fit and transformational competencies

WHEN IMPLEMENTING, ENSURE...

- Proper Briefing
- Consent should make provision for results to be shared with critical partners
- The use of trained Assessors
- Cultural Sensitivity is Maintained
- Ethical Standards are Maintained
- Opportunities for Candidate Feedback

FEEDBACK MODEL

- Face to Face Feedback
- Specific feedback where “future fit” competencies and behaviours are reinforced
- Written Feedback report with Action Steps
- Involve HR and a Mentor as Critical Partners to ensure implementation of proposed changes

Role of the Mentor

- Mentor: A person whom the protégé trusts to have his/her best interests at heart and whose judgement and guidance the protégé values. The aim of the mentoring relationship is to facilitate the protégé's professional and personal development within a given context.

The South African Context



Rationale for formal mentoring programs

- **Addressing skills shortage**
- **Gaining organizational competitiveness through diverse workforce**
- **Providing a vehicle for black advancement**
- **Complying with relevant legislation e.g. Affirmative Action**

Amos & Pearce (2002)

Critical Phases

- Rapport Building
- Direction setting
- Progress making
- Winding down

Clutterbuck & Ragins (2002)

The Mentor's Role in...



Ensuring Value of AC's ...

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ASSESSING FOR SUCCESS

THE MENTOR AND AC VALUE

- **Depends on the Mentor...**
 - **Buying into the value of Assessment Centres as a catalyst for awareness and change**
 - **Committing to meaningful participation in the AC feedback**
 - **Modeling the new, desired behaviours**
 - **Recognising and rewarding positive changes**
 - **Keeping abreast of changes in core competencies**

COMMON SUCCESS FACTORS

- Depend on:
 - Quality of relationships between parties
 - All parties benefiting from the intervention
 - The Participant's perception that the quality of the intervention addressed professional and personal development needs.
 - An appreciation of different cultures and commitment to valuing diversity.

COMMON PITFALLS...

- **Lack of trust and mutual respect**
- **Lack of cultural sensitivity**
- **Participants not properly involved in the process**
- **Mentors/ Assessors not wanting to be part of the process**
- **Under-representation of individuals from cross-cultural groups**
- **Cloning**
- **Politics undermine positive outcomes**

IMPLICATIONS FOR HR

- Align intervention to diversity programme to business strategy
- Intervention needs to be supported by a strategic HR role
- HR needs to partner with Mentors/ Assessors to maximize success
- Need to pay more careful attention to cross-cultural issues that may impact on the success of the intervention

IMPLICATIONS FOR HR

- Be involved in clarifying outcomes with both parties
- Document pitfalls and successes

Summary

- **Know the context in which the intervention will be used**
- **Be sensitive to the impact of diversity differences and proactively identify support mechanisms for parties involved in the intervention**
- **Customize your intervention to meet diversity and business objectives**
- **Document success stories and reinforce lessons learnt**