

Chapter 9

Seeking EEO Best Practice

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The really clever thing about AMP's equal employment opportunity program is the way it has allowed us to identify our people as a core strength. This has let us link human resources strategy with normal business practice in a way that meets EEO principles.

It all started here with the "planet" model of business where earning dollars is the primary goal, or central focus, and people are like a little "planet" in orbit around the sun of the main business.

Over the last few years, this model has slowly given way to a model which has people as integral to our success.

What we are moving to is a closer integration, an overlap, where people are the business. The two are seen to be inextricably linked.

In 1995 we identified and began to focus on the AMP Group's foundation strengths:

- Our customers.
- Our brand names.
- Our triple-A credit rating.
- Our capital strength.
- Our investment presence.
- Our people.

Identifying our people as a foundation strength was a critical new development.

Having accepted people as a core strength we looked for ways to link our business and our people practices. We did this through our employer-of-choice objective.

At first, we said that we wanted to be employer of choice in our industry for the best people regardless of race, colour, religion and so on, by 2000. Now we are happy with the shorthand version. We want to be the employer of choice.

The link with our business objectives is through a human resources framework, which included six elements:

- Management environment.
- Communication and involvement.
- Career development and training.
- Rewards and recognition.
- Common purpose and trust.
- Work patterns and methods.

We wanted:

- To create a management environment where everyone understood and supported the business direction and felt valued and "plugged in to" the

enterprise regardless of their race, colour, marital status or so on.

- Everyone to understand that communication was two-way, that they were responsible for it happening and that it should be timely, frequent, relevant, open, honest, inclusive and more face-to-face.

- Career development and training to be linked to the business strategy, to be a shared responsibility, an investment rather than an expense and available to all regardless of their status as full or part-timers, managers or staff.

- Our rewards to be consistent, fair and equitable.
- Everyone to understand and share the vision and values of the organisation and their functional group or work area.

- Work methods and patterns to reflect the needs of external and internal customers and to be flexible and collaborative.

Our studies showed that in every area of this framework there was a gap between our present performance and employer-of-choice status. We needed to change.

This is where EEO fits in.

Our employer-of-choice program is marked by three phases — red, yellow and green — like traffic lights.

Phase 1 - Raising Awareness

Red is the starting point — where awareness is being raised, we are gathering data, beginning analysis, identifying problems. In equal-opportunity and diversity-management terms, it is about being below desirable, minimum standards and in some instances is potentially not meeting legal requirements. As with traffic lights, it implies that we are not moving. As with a bank balance, we need to "get out of the red".

Red values sameness or doesn't recognise difference. As a consequence it risks unlawful discrimination. This is where we needed to look at pay-equity audits, training to eliminate sexual harassment, checks of communications to ensure that they use inclusive language and illustrations.

Phase 2 - Good Management

Yellow is okay — we have good management, but it is a bit static, we are marking time and gathering our forces.

Differences are understood and recognised. For example, recognition of full-time versus part-time roles, need for parental leave, need to acknowledge religious differences. This is where our enterprise agreement comes in with provisions for mentoring and workforce diversity programs.

Phase 3 - Competitive Advantage

Green is where we want to be. This is where we are recognised as employer of choice — the place to work and the people to work with. It is dynamic. We are on the move.

In this phase, AMP gains synergy from difference. Synergy means the potential ability of people to be more productive and successful as a result of working together. Our multicultural advertising campaign, our parental-leave agreement and our corporate-performance advertising using a wide range of role models are good examples of our moves in this direction.

Other examples include:

- Our health and safety policies.
- Our approach to briefing on organisational change — from the work supervisor, face-to-face, what is happening.
- Our language guidelines — language in the 1990s.

Scorecard

In 1995 our scorecard showed lots of red reflecting our need to raise awareness of people-management issues.

Already in 1996, our scorecard is showing less red, more yellow for good management and touches of green.

In 1996 we have:

- A common objective — to be employer of choice.
- Senior management commitment.
- A human resources framework common to our businesses worldwide.
- A scorecard to measure of our performance and progress against a 1995 benchmark.
- Data from a culture survey world wide.
- Programs based on our findings.
- Plans for a more objective measures of performance using a climate survey incorporating material from this work. This will be applied in 1997.
- Raised awareness of EEO, anti-discrimination and diversity management in a non-threatening, business-oriented way.

Evidence of Success

This is evidence that we are not only seeking, but finding, EEO best practice.

Synergy from difference is:

- Understanding and valuing others' differences. For

example, age, gender, cultural backgrounds, as a rich source of innovation and creativity.

- Valuing and harnessing differences in experience, background, skill, knowledge, opinions, attitudes and understanding.

- Understanding that when people cooperate and work together as one united team they achieve more than as individuals.

- Being innovative and sharing ideas and experience to create better ways of leveraging scarce resources, producing quality inputs and improving efficiency.

- Creating an environment where our people have the opportunity to give their best, for example, through having the best management of staff, becoming a learning organisation where we listen without prejudging and learn from our mistakes, from each other and from our competitors.

- Viewing people as the source of sustainable competitive advantage in a cut-throat market place.

- Seeking EEO best practice.