ABSTRACT

The concept of diversity has become an issue at the forefront of discussions in all sectors of society. This includes the business centers and their workplaces, higher education, and non-profit institutions. As the world becomes more and more ethnically diverse, methods of communication also become even more relevant, critical even. One way in which organizations are finding it easier to engage with those within their walls and get their ideas across to one another is through technology and the availability of social media. Digital tools such as Facebook, Twitter, email, YouTube, smart phones, virtual conferencing, Skype, and an indispensible amount of downloadable software applications, have paved the way for easier communication and the ability to reach not only diverse groups but in a varied number of ways. Over the past couple of decades, the ability to communicate has rapidly transitioned away from traditional modes of communication in the vein of land-based telephone lines, written letters, and verbal communication. This chapter focuses on how two major areas of society communicate with their diverse constituencies utilizing these sundry technologies. Specifically, it examines successful strategies higher education and businesses employ to disseminate information to diverse groups.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-2668-3.ch003
INTRODUCTION

The concept of diversity has become an issue at the forefront of discussions in all sectors of society. This includes the business center and their workplaces and higher education. As the world becomes more and more diverse, methods of communication also become even more relevant, critical even. One way in which organizations are finding it easier to engage with those within their walls and get their ideas across to one another is through technology and the availability of social media.

Digital tools such as Facebook, Twitter, email, YouTube, smart phones, tablets, virtual conferencing, Skype, laptops and an indispensable amount of downloadable software applications, have paved the way for easier communication and the ability to reach not only diverse groups but in a varied number of ways. Over the past couple of decades, the ability to communicate has rapidly transitioned away from traditional modes of communication in the vein of land-based telephone lines, written letters, and verbal communication.

This chapter specifically examines how some business owners and administrators within higher education use technology to implement and practice their goals to reach diverse constituents within their organizations. The emergence of digital technology and social media and its influences on organizational communication has grown and continues to flourish.

Two major areas of society, communicate with their diverse constituency utilizing sundry digital and electronic technologies. Specifically, there is the examination of successful strategies higher education and businesses employ to disseminate information. Logically, each of these entities shares common groups with which they communicate at regular intervals such as media and employees. However, each also has unique characteristics within them as well. Higher education institutions have a constant need to communicate with students, staff and faculty whereas businesses must communicate with clients or customers and employees. Nonetheless, both are using social media and other modes of technology to communicate with these groups.

Therefore, the questions of what, why and how business and higher education institutions are communicating in relationship to maintaining, training and embracing diversity need to be analyzed in order to provide suggestions for others to successfully implement similar strategies in their organizations. They also explain the tools they are using, positive and negative consequences of digital technology and social media and ways in which technology can be improved upon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term “diversity,” as it is used within the context of higher education, has been defined in numerous ways. However, Owen (2009) identified two common meanings for this concept. The first simply involves valuing differences, while the second reflects the concern of “making the academy inclusive and equitable” (p. 187). Institutions of higher education have spent the past few decades increasingly focused on improving both of these interpretations and ensuring that diversity is reflected throughout campus. According to the ASHE Higher Education Report (2006), “the transformation of higher education needed to include diversity as a core value if it was to increase the capacity of colleges and universities to prosper and keep pace with changes in the environment” (p. 37).

One of these changes is America’s increasing racial diversity, and colleges and universities are uniquely positioned to provide leadership on this matter. Gurin, Day, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) noted that many students who arrive on college campuses have lived their entire lives in segregated communities. Therefore, “colleges that diversify their student bodies and institute policies that foster genuine interaction across race and ethnicity...