

ORIGINAL SITUATION

When BNFL Inc. management began to hear rumblings of perceived harassment from its employees, they identified the need to help increase awareness of and sensitivity to diversity issues.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS

Harrassment and discrimination awareness increased. People acted more respectfully towards each other and recognized the value each individual brings to the company through understanding the issues by framing them in human terms.

Diversity Training Brings Corporate Values to Life.

While the value of a diverse workforce is undeniable, incorporating this diversity – with its wide-ranging cultural, gender, ethnic and religious underpinnings – can be challenging especially when a business has facilities dispersed throughout the country.



“*The course helped participants to see that few issues are cut and dried. They came away understanding that small issues can't be ignored or they could quickly become major problems.*”

MARIAN BOUSSIOS

Senior Counsel, BNFL Inc. and Innovation

BNFL Inc., an environmental services company specializing in the clean up and disposal of nuclear waste, uses a set of clear corporate values to guide decision-making at its eight facilities around the United States. High on the list is a respectful, inclusive workplace. When BNFL Inc. management began to hear rumblings of perceived harassment from its employees, the company was quick to respond.

The company, which is part of the British National Fuels group of companies, is headquartered in Virginia and employs more than 1,500 people.

RESULTS ACHIEVED



from course design to implementation



Created a humane, tolerant and inclusive workforce. People acting respectfully towards each other.



supervisors and managers trained



Recognize the value each individual brings to the company. Increased awareness of and sensitivity to diversity issues.



training sessions in eight states

Diversity Training Brings Corporate Values to Life.

Marian Boussios, BNFL Inc. Senior Counsel, was assigned to look into the allegations and recommend a course of action. After interviewing employees from across the company, Boussios concluded that while she could pinpoint few examples of blatant discrimination or harassment, employees weren't comfortable recognizing and responding to less obvious situations that might be interpreted as harassment or discrimination or might develop into harassment.

Protecting a Culture of Respect

Boussios said, "It was apparent that employees wanted to do and say the right things. They just weren't always aware of how what they said or did might be perceived. We needed to address these issues in human terms to be sure everyone understood the importance of respecting individual differences."

Charged by the company's president to correct the situation, Boussios turned to BNFL Inc.'s human resources group. They, in turn, brought in Susan Hall, Strategic Enhancement Group Senior Consultant, to brainstorm ways to help increase awareness of and sensitivity to diversity issues. According to Boussios, Strategic Enhancement Group was a logical partner because they had worked with BNFL Inc. to develop a successful succession planning program earlier that year.

"Several years ago, the company conducted awareness training using a standard, off-the-shelf program designed by another consulting company," explained Hall. "BNFL Inc. recognized the value of the training but felt strongly that a customized program was needed. The earlier training was very dry and focused on legal issues. While that is important, it is difficult to absorb and retain."

Recognizing the Value of Diversity

Hall added, "Everyone agreed that any new training needed to focus on the human side of diversity and the personal toll insensitivity takes on individuals and teams. A key criterion was that the training had to be grounded in the company's values and address actual situations that managers have already or may encounter in a BNFL Inc. plant."

Hall helped BNFL Inc. isolate the issues, fine-tune their goals and expectations and, finally, identify some options for addressing the challenge. The result was a mandatory half-day training session for all managers and supervisors and an executive session for senior managers. Ultimately, the training would be

offered through 14 sessions in eight states. An abbreviated overview course designed for individual contributors is being developed.

Hall then identified a facilitator who had the background and personality traits to fit the situation and the BNFL Inc. team. This proved to be a critical success factor.

Boussios said, "The facilitator Susan recommended fit our needs perfectly. Judy (Chayer-Hartley) did a wonderful job of incorporating our objectives in very engaging, interesting ways."

Despite a very tight time-frame, *Respecting Our Differences* was designed and rolled out to more than 200 BNFL Inc. supervisors and managers in the United States within just three months. The design process began in earnest in November and the first manager session was rolled out in February. The last session was delivered in March.

"We achieved this aggressive deadline largely because BNFL Inc. was very responsive and reviewed content immediately. Their commitment kept the project moving forward. Plus, Judy was a quick study and was able to put the course together in record time," said Hall who oversaw the development process and kept the project on track.

Personalizing the Issues

While most other training programs approach diversity and harassment from a legal perspective, the SEG solution focused on increasing employee awareness and understanding of the issues by framing them in human terms. The course uses real situations to address a variety of difficult, sensitive issues ranging from sexual harassment and sexist behaviors to racism and cultural differences.

"*Respecting Our Differences* helps managers and supervisors look outside their own perceptions and become more empathetic by thinking about how others with different backgrounds, ethnicity or gender view a situation," said Hartley. To reduce any implied "finger pointing", Hartley facilitated the majority of each session with Boussios and a human resources representative providing legal or corporate context.

"I wasn't there to teach employment law. My role was to reinforce the issues we had highlighted in the scenarios, to outline the key legal concerns and to make sure they knew whom to call," said Boussios. "Downplaying the legal issues

COMPANY PROFILE

British Nuclear Fuels Limited (BNFL) was a nuclear energy and fuels company owned by the UK Government. BNFL was a former manufacturer and transporter of nuclear fuel, ran reactors, generated and sold electricity, reprocessed and managed spent fuel, and decommissioned nuclear plants and other similar facilities.

The company, which was part of the British National Fuels group of companies, was headquartered in Virginia and employed more than 1,500 people. BNFL changed to BNG America LLC in 2005. In 2006, BNG America was sold to Envirocare and is now EnergySolutions headquartered in Salt Lake, Utah.

allowed participants to focus on creating a humane, tolerant and inclusive workplace.”

Boussios was particularly impressed by the variety of examples Hartley created for the course. “Judy really captured how difficult it is to define a ‘hostile workplace.’ It helped participants see that most issues are not cut and dried. They came away understanding that small issues can’t be ignored or they may quickly become major problems.”

She added that Judy’s ability to adjust the emphasis of the training to meet each group’s needs was a big plus.

“One of Judy’s strengths is her ability to adjust the training as she delivered it to emphasize areas where participants indicated they had issues. She was also willing to adapt the training to incorporate some of the issues that managers raised and discussed in earlier sessions. This allowed managers in later sessions to benefit from discussions that took place at earlier sessions and showed them that managers at other BNFL Inc. facilities were experiencing similar issues. I think this definitely increased the level of participation and showed our managers that this program was tailored to address real issues at BNFL Inc.,” said Boussios.

Management Support Critical

Respecting Our Differences was endorsed and supported at the highest levels of the company. All members of the BNFL Inc. senior leadership team attended an overview session and agreed to introduce the sessions. Many used the opportunity to describe situations they had encountered personally further affirming the training’s relevance.

“Management support was absolutely critical. It showed that the company meant business and underscored the value the company placed on diversity,” said Boussios.

In addition to the scenarios, the 4-hour training incorporated a variety of techniques to keep participants attentive and engaged, including a video, small group discussions designed to challenge personal perceptions and innovative ice-breakers. A manager tool kit containing tips and techniques, sample “responses” and practice scenarios helped reinforce key elements once participants returned to work. Hartley also used the session to document local issues in a “parking lot” posted on the wall. This approach proved very popular as it gave managers and supervisors a “heads up” on emerging issues that needed to be addressed outside of the session.

Living the Values

Boussios said that since the training, “awareness has definitely increased. People are acting more respectfully toward each other and recognize the value each individual brings to the company.”

Participants agree that the course was very valuable. Many indicated that they had been reluctant to attend the session initially but were pleasantly surprised. In fact, many stayed after the session ended to gather more information and set times to work with others to resolve outstanding issues.

“That’s exactly what we hoped would happen,” said Boussios.

To learn more about these concepts and how Strategic Enhancement Group, Inc. can help you in addressing these issues, contact us at **(630) 377-4300, (888) 668-9382** outside of IL or StrategicEnhancement.com.