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Managing Diversity at ServiceMaster

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Abstract

ServiceMaster developed their capacity of managing diversity in diverse global workforce, workplace, and marketplace through their deep-rooted four objectives: Honor God in all we do, help people to develop, pursue excellence, and grow profitability. The leaders used these four objectives to make quality decisions in the midst of differences, similarities, and the related tensions and complexities. The leaders practiced the concept of "shingles on a roof", exemplified the characteristics of diversity-mature individuals, advocated the integration-learning perspective of diversity, developed religious inclusivity, promoted minorities and women as leaders, developed a teaching and learning organization culture. Managing diversity at ServiceMaster were embedded in people and heavily leadership programmed. When a new leader came and did not want to follow the four objectives or learn from the previous leaders, the culture of honoring God and valuing employees can be easily replaced by tangible business outcomes. It is essential for ServiceMaster to institutionalize their diversity management and mature the organization in their diversity practices through systematic definitions of their required diversity and measure their progress through systematic culture audit, strategic goals and planning.

Introduction

ServiceMaster was recognized as a top service company in the 80s and 90s by *Fortune Magazine* (Erisman, 2020). It started from "a foundation of Christian faith, these five leaders of ServiceMaster were rooted in an understanding of the value and dignity of every persona and a commitment to the highest level of integrity" (Erisman, 2020:3). It employed more than two hundred thousand people and delivered service to more than 10 million customers in the United States and in forty-five countries in 90s (Pollard, 2014: 133). Its core business was defined as a business of training and developing people. There was a wide diversity among their workforce (i.e., different social demographic backgrounds), workplace (i.e., different functions, divisions, lines of business—contracts, finance, computing, research, branding and others, cleaning, equipment care, plant operations, food services and many other services, customer services, management services), and marketplace (different stakeholders and mergers, company owned vs franchise owned business, mix of market segments under Consumer Services: pest control, lawn care and landscaping, in-home health care, home cleaning services, appliance home warranty, furniture repair, plumbing, HVAC and electrical services, Home inspection and small area). The business decision making process was grounded on these four objectives: to honor God in all we do, to help people to develop, to pursue excellence, and to grow profitability (Erisman, 2020:5). ServiceMaster was deeply anchored in their first two objectives that allowed them to withstand the internal and external pressures over more than 30 years. ServiceMaster demonstrated longevity of growth and commitment to these four objectives (Erisman, 2020: 206). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, ServiceMaster still kept their unique culture and strongly motivated workforce even though

there were many rampant acquisitions and growth (Erisman, 2020: 126). How did these four objectives enable leaders and executives to keep developing their skills of managing complexity challenges and making quality decisions in the midst of differences, similarities, and the related tensions and complexities in diversified workforce, workplace, and marketplace? How did ServiceMaster develop an organization that worked for such a diverse audience of people? As ServiceMaster relied on their Christian faith and developed their capacity for managing diversity, what can Christian high education institution learn from ServiceMaster?

Managing diversity is defined as a process for addressing workforce diversity through a single vehicle: mutual adaptation (Thomas, 1996: 113). In this article, I will use ServiceMaster as a case study and case study research methods (Lam, 2000; Yin 1994) to illustrate how leaders develop managerial capacity to cope with all changes in workforces based on their four objectives; subsequently, hopefully this knowledge will aid in the application of the lessons learned from ServiceMaster to Christian higher education institutions. This is the research question:

> How did ServiceMaster leaders and executives keep developing their skills of managing complexity challenges and making quality decisions in the midst of differences, similarities, and the related tensions and complexities in diversified workforce?

This article was grounded on extensive literature reviews and personal conversations with Bill Pollard, Al Erisman, Pat Asp, and Helen Chung in the summer of 2021. It proceeds with five sections: Section 1: A literature review of the research on diversity management; Section 2: A case study of ServiceMaster: Section 3: Lessons learned from ServiceMaster; Section 4: Implications to Christian high-education. Section 5: Limitations.

A Literature Review of the Research on Diversity Management

To examine how ServiceMaster manage diversity that is grounded on the four objectives, I will review the literature about diversity, individual diversity maturity, organization diversity maturity, inclusive leadership behavior, and leaders' integration-and-learning perspective of diversity.

Concepts about diversity, managing diversity, and diversity management

Diversity is a process and that involves the change of individual and organizational mindset toward individual and organization diversity maturity (Cox & Beale, 1997; Holmes, 2004; Kossek & Lobel, 1996; Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991; Kossek & Lobel, 1996; Thomas, 1996). Diversity is broadly defined as "any mixture of items characterized by differences and similarities" (Thomas, 1996:5). It means that diversity is beyond the social demographic differences and is a "complex and every changing blend of attributes, behaviors, and talents" (Thomas, 1999:5). "Diversity in its broadest sense applies not merely a collection of people who are alike in some ways and different in others, but also to intangibles—ideas, procedures, ways of looking at things" (Thomas, 1996:5) Leaders need to maintain discerning and articulating the meaning of diversity that organizations have to work with and develop managerial capacity to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity created by diversity. Managing diversity is one part of diversity management, and it specifically targets the work force. Thomas (1996:113) defines diversity management and managing diversity as follows:

> Diversity management is a process for addressing diversity in all of its dimensions, *including* the workforce, through the eight action options of the Diversity Paradigm.

Managing diversity is a process for addressing workforce diversity through a single vehicle: mutual adaptation.

Leaders should recognize the diversity and complexity created by environmental changes and know how to effectively adapt to those changes. Thus, leaders need to develop their diversity management skills through eight action options: exclude (avoid), isolate, deny, assimilate, suppress, tolerate, build relationships, and foster mutual adaptation. When these leaders address workforce diversity, they must have to adopt mutual adaptation: addressing diversity by fostering mutual adaptation in which all components change somewhat, for the sake of achieving common objectives (Thomas, 1996:20). Leaders need to be diversity-mature individuals before they can positively and efficiently impact the organizational diversity maturity of their respective organizations. They need to internalize these required diversity values before they can change their organization toward these values.

Individual diversity maturity

These are the characteristics of diversity-mature individuals: 1. Accept diversity management responsibility; 2. Possess contextual clarity: know himself or herself, know his or her organization, understand key diversity concepts and definitions; 3. Is requirement-driven: differentiates among preferences, traditions, conveniences, and requirements, and contextually locates differences when making include/exclude decisions; 4. Is comfortable with diversity tension; 5. Engage in continual learning (Thomas, 1999: 238). Leaders are recommended to cultivate collective diversity maturity of their executives and develop an organization culture that supports these managers in managing diversity. Without the support of organization diversity maturity, the most effective diversity respondents will have limited impact and see no benefit of pursuing diversity. Thus, individual

diversity mature leaders are required for the development of organization diversity maturity of their respective organizations.

Organization diversity maturity

"Diversity mature organizations achieve competitive advantage by enhancing productivity and nurturing the development of employees at all organizational levels who respond to differences and similarities in focused and effective ways" (Thomas, 1999:226). It means that in an organization with highest level of diversity maturity, employees at all organization levels can focus what required differences and similarities they need to address and maximize their talents and gifts for individual and organization objectives. A mature diversity business organization should have these characteristics: 1. Develop and communicate two missions and visions: a comprehensive mission and vision, and a diversity management mission and vision; 2. Articulate a compelling business motive; 3. Clearly define the concept of diversity; 4. Maintain and discern what attributes and behavior of diversity should be included or excluded; 5. Focus what should be required; 6. Comfort with diversity tension and complexity; 7. Develop a clear framework and process; 8 Have a strategic plan (Thomas, 1999: 226). A diversity mature organization is recommended to keep on learning from its diversity missions, visions, diversity strategies, framework, process, and accountability measures. As more employees are involved in the collective learning, they can reflect the diversity practices of their organizations and gradually embrace the values of diversity as part of their organization culture. Without a systematic approach to increase organization diversity maturity, diversity programs in many organizations have proven very vulnerable to financial budget cuts and have higher failure rates (Loyd-Paige and Williams, 2021; Williams,

2013; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). As such, organizations may implement short-term diversity practices to respond to a social crisis without developing capacity for a long-haul institutional cultural change. When the crisis has passed, they can easily cut the diversity costs and return to the old system. In the process of changes, new programs and policies may disrupt the routine of employees and thus need to be gradually weaved into the fabric of the organization. It is critical to develop collective learning practices through the raising of multiple voices and processes that are supported by senior leaders, strategic action plans, accountability systems, and networks of employees (Loyd-Paige and Williams, 2021: 138-141). Thus, collective learning practices can mature employees' diversity and organization diversity when there are comprehensive diversity missions, visions, diversity strategies, frameworks, process, and accountability system.

Integration-and-learning perspective of diversity

Thomas's idea of managing diversity through mutual adaptation, diversity mature respondents and diversity mature organizations are aligned with Ely and Thomas (2001)'s idea of integration-and-learning perspective of managing diversity. From their empirical studies, Ely and Thomas determine that the integration-and-learning perspective (i.e., treating diversity as a valuable resource for learning and adaptive change) is the best form of managing diversity. They find that a diverse work force cannot bring significant cultural change when hires are only brought on to comply with the requirements of legal discrimination and fairness requirements (i.e., discrimination-and-fairness perspective of diversity) or to access diversified populations who can pay for their service (i.e., access-and-legitimacy perspective of diversity). These two researchers propose that for organizations to raise employee performance and satisfaction, they must move

beyond the discrimination-and-fairness and access-and-legitimacy perspectives and toward an integration-and-learning perspective. High-quality intergroup relations, including feeling being valued and respected can be expected when work groups adopt integration-and-learning perspectives. The integration-and-learning perspective can cultivate trusting relationships among different groups and encourage collaboration among different groups for the interests of customers. Success is facilitated by this integration-and-learning perspective of diversity because diversity is considered an opportunity for everyone within an organization to learn from each other and aid each other how better to accomplish their work. This perspective may also incline an organization to be more inclusive with "employee involvement and the integration of diversity into organization systems and process" (Roberson, 2006:228). Each person can "contribute fully and effectively to an organization" (Roberson, 2006:215). Employees coming from diverse social, cultural, and professional backgrounds on average feel more valued and treated with care in developmental ways (Bell, 2017; Cox, 2001; Janssens & Zanoni, Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2011). The support from employees helps sustain the cultural changes.

Leaders can exemplify the integration-and-learning perspective by developing cross-functional dialogues and exploring opportunities to serve the interests of marginalized customers and employees. The leaders' choices also show their individual diversity maturity and develop the organizational diversity maturity (Thomas, 1999). Learning how to adopt the integration-and-learning perspective of diversity also results in a change in the information flow between top-level management, front-line workers, and management at different levels. Leaders' words and deeds that invite the contributions of others (i.e., leader inclusiveness) can help cross-disciplinary teams in organizations "overcome the inhibiting effects of status differences, allowing members to

collaborate in process development" (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006). Leaders also learn to cultivate safe spaces and stabilize teams for collective learning (Edmondson, Bohmer, and Pisano, 2001).

Thus, leaders with individual diversity maturity in mature diverse organization will adopt the integration-and-learning perspective of diversity and demonstrate inclusive leadership behavior through the following actions:

- developing cross-functional dialogues and exploring opportunities to serve the interests of marginalized customers and employees.
- changing the information flow between top-level management, front-line workers, and management at different levels.
- Inviting the contributions of others (i.e., leader inclusiveness)
- Cultivating safe spaces and stabilizing teams for collective learning.

A Case Study of ServiceMaster

ServiceMaster was founded in 1929 and incorporated in 1947. Before 1993, it has acquired several entities such as Merry Maid, TruGreen, American Home Shield, Terminix and still kept the decision-making process to be anchored in the Christian faith for 70 years. Before 1999, "the success of these leaders was rooted in a set of principles that centered on serving God in the marketplace, on the dignity and worth of every service workers and the work that person performed" (Erisman, 2020: 1). ServiceMaster successfully broke the cycle of failure in the service industry by committing to valuing and developing workers through equipping workers with respect and necessary tools to carry out their task. Thus, ServiceMaster had "basically reengineered jobs,

providing training to people, and attempted to deliver a level of self-esteem that many workers have never had in the past" (Heskett, 2011 work quoted by Erisman, 2020:183). Before 1999, ServiceMaster adopted four objectives that guide their diversity efforts. Their management professionals embraced their moral responsibility toward workers and relied on the moral sources that originated in their Christian faith. ServiceMaster kept on developing their capacity to manage a wide diversity among people—diversity of skills, talents, gender, race, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, and religious beliefs workforce by implementing their four objectives, embracing religion inclusivity, employing the concept of "shingles on a roof", adopting servanthood in leadership, signifying leaders' individual diversity maturity and integration-and-learning perspective of diversity, and being committed to teaching and learning culture.

Implementing four objectives

Between 1970-1999, the leaders implemented the four objectives (i.e., honor God in all we do, help people to develop, to pursue excellence, and grow profitability) to make quality decisions and thrive in a complex, uncertain, ambiguous pluralistic global market. These four objectives had been practiced and internalized for more than 30 years before they were crystallized and announced in the 70's. Leaders continuously learned how to make business decisions based on these four objectives through their frequent dialogues and reflection about their failures and mistakes (Erisman, 2020: 7). Leaders embraced the tensions among these four objectives and kept on find the balance when ServiceMaster grew and developed tremendously during 1983-1999. Leaders used the four objectives to do business and also learned how to manage diversity in the workforce through mutual adaptations, leaders' initiatives, and many training and learning programs. Before 2000, ServiceMaster honored God by giving dignity and worth of every person and valuing

diversity as a divine moral imperative. Managing diversity at ServiceMaster was to honor God and to help people develop.

Bill Pollard (CEO 1983-1993, 1998-1999) and Carlos Cantu (the first Hispanic CEO, 1994-1998) both advocated managing diversity was required to fulfill the four objectives in the 1993 ServiceMaster annual report and Pollard's numerous writings. Pollard intentionally defined the promotion of diversity as way to uphold its first objective, "To honor God in all we do." He said (Pollard, 2014:166),

> We did not use the first objective—"To Honor God in All We Do"-as a basis of exclusion. Instead, it became the reason for our promotion of diversity, as we recognized that different people with different beliefs were all part of God's mix. The business firm must operate in diverse and pluralistic world. It is not the role of the firm to mandate a person's beliefs. It is not a church or a place of worship.

Pollard recognized diversity as parts of God's plan and discerned what changes were required to better individual and organization performance in this regard. He understood managing diversity as a continuous learning process and did not want people to be assimilated to his Christian beliefs. He implemented many innovative practices that recognized the benefit of diversity within the firm from 1990 to 1999. These practices included asking managers to be responsible for the moral development of other people; not asking minorities to accommodate to the needs of majority; assigning a new CEO, Carlos Cantu, in 1994 who was the first Hispanic American and non-evangelical protestant among senior leaders; and implementing mentorship and learning system among managers. These practices empowered people for extraordinary service and achieve the guiding 4 objectives.

Carlos Cantu (CEO, 1994-1998)'s leadership was credited for the progress of ServiceMaster organization diversity maturity. He has honored ServiceMaster's culture and diversity in this way that is commensurate with the four objectives:

> Diversity starts where we have always started at ServiceMaster—with the imperative that we respect the dignity and worth of every person, created in God's image. Diversity is a continuing process that challenges us to stretch beyond what is required and do what is right….We must work together as a team, complementing each other's strengths and weakness and focusing on fulfilling a common mission and purpose: To honor God in all we do; To help people develop; to pursue excellence; and, To grow profitability. This brings Unity in Diversity and recognizes an authority and direction beyond ourselves" (ServiceMaster, 1993:1-2).

Embracing religion inclusivity

The earlier leaders lived wholistic lives and were consistent to their Christian identities and also practiced religious inclusiveness. "While all of the early leaders rooted their own leadership in their Christian faith, they didn't want to impose their faith on others but to create a strong moral standard. While some perceived a religious pressure, the commitment of the leaders was to be inclusive" (Erisman, 2020: 156). For example, Ken Hansen (CEO, 1957-1973) clearly told a reporter the hiring policy at ServiceMaster with its Christian roots: "I've never hired a gentleman because he was a Christian, and I've never not hired one because he wasn't. But we do insist that a man be of high moral caliber" (quoted by Erisman, 2020:59). Likewise, Bisher Mufti, a Muslim, was initially hired as a housekeeper and later was promoted to manage hospitals in the U.S. and later launched ServiceMaster Jordan and worked as president of International Operations. Mufti had served ServiceMaster for 46 years and was faithful to carry out the four objectives of ServiceMaster. This was the response of Mufti when his boss, Ken Wessner (CEO, 1973-1983),

asked Mufti how he handled the assignment to Jordan. He said, "The company is built on the four objectives. These shape every decision. I know and believe in the objectives, knowing they are the soul of the company. I will make decisions based on these" (Erisman, 2020:81). Ken Wessner accepted the difference between his Christian faith and Mufti's Islamic faith and appreciated Mufti when he could build the company based on these four objectives in Jordan. Thus, in this situation, Ken Wessner discerned what was required for the company and practiced religion inclusivity.

Employing the concept of "shingles on a roof"

Before 1999, each new leader worked with previous leaders to fully utilize the skills of each person in complementary attitude; this unique way overlapping leadership was described as "shingles on a roof" (Erisman, 2020:4). Each shingle has to be overlapped with another shingle for the formation of a strong roof. So did leadership at ServiceMaster. Each leader was willing to acknowledge the strength of the others. The concept of "shingles on a roof" had been practiced by five leaders for more than 50 years (Erisman, 2020:38) and in this time had cultivated an important learning infrastructure for senior leaders to use the best gifts of each retired leader and a new leader. The "shingles on a roof" leadership styles warranted a level of accountability and succession of the core culture when leaders changed (Erisman, 2020:158). For example, when "shingles on a roof" was practiced between the new CEO, Cantus Carlos (CEO 1994-1998), and new board chairman, Bill Pollard (retired CEO, 1983-1993), Carlos and Pollard can clearly communicated and articulated the mission, vision, necessity of managing diversity, and new approaches in the 1993 annual report. When Carols left his CEO position due to his illness in 1998, Pollard was reappointed as CEO in 1999 and still could continue working on the same theme of

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diversity. All of the previous leaders before 2000 acknowledged that the process of "shingles on a roof" was sometimes difficult, but it made the leaders and ServiceMaster better (Erisman, 2020: 165). At the end of twenty century, ServiceMaster became increasing difficult to maintain their "shingles on a roof" when previous leaders (Ken Hansen CEO 1957-1973, Ken Wessner CEO 1973-1983, Carlos Cantau 1994-1998) died, and a new CEO (Jon Ward) was brought from outside in 2000. The new CEO discontinued "shingles on a roof" style of leadership and made it clear that he was going in his own direction and ignored Pollard's advice to ground his work in the development of people (Erisman, 2020: 172).

Adopting servanthood in leadership

Before 2000, ServiceMaster leaders were required to do six weeks of front-line work and experience their employees' doing these routine tasks. For example, Pollard recalled being humiliated by a friend when he mopped the floor in a busy corridor of the hospital. His experience reminded him leaders need to "shape the work environment and culture to enable workers to feel the importance and dignity of their labor" (Erisman, 2020: 103). Thus, executives had to do their workers' work in each year's annual "We Serve" event so that they could understand their workers and better grasp their own responsibility toward the workers. The annual practice "We Serve" also increased leaders' and executives' capacity to adapt to the needs of their workers and understand what required differences of workers really matter to the organization's competitiveness. This also enhanced the information flow between top-level management, front-line workers, and management at different levels. As ServiceMaster was working in a social, political and economic system that was shaped by decades of structural racial injustice and white male Christianity, the

leaders might lack conscious of their own biases but they expressed openness to criticism. Each leader was required to do the work of a janitor work during their training to better step into the shoes of those whom they managed. All leaders were asked to be role models, teachers, and givers. Pollard defined the value of leadership by how the leaders improved the lives of those (2014: 166-173):

> Much about our business could be considered by some as routine or mundane. We often dealt with people in entry-level positions. Some were unskilled, uneducated, and more often than not unnoticed. Our task was to train, motivate, and develop these people so that they could do a more effective job, be more productive in their work, and also be better people. This was both a management and a leadership challenge, which was far from being mundane….Leaders must accept this ethic must be prepared to be examples of another important value—the willingness to serve. Leaders must be willing to do what they ask others to do; to listen and learn before they talk; to walk the talk as role models and teachers; and to not be caught up in the perks of office, but to be givers, not takers…. The last criterion—the criterion with eternal value—is whether the results of my leadership in the operation of the firm can be seen in the changed lives of people.

Pollard's idea of leadership was to prepare the way for others to grow (Erisman, 2020: 158). In 2000, this changed when the new CEO, Jon Ward, forged six weeks of front-line work as other leaders had done. This reduced his capacity to manage the diverse workers and hindered the access flow of information flow between top-level management and front-line workers.

Signifying leaders' individual diversity maturity and integration-and-learning perspective of diversity

Bill Pollard (CEO 1983-1993, 1998-1999) and Carlos Cantu (the first Hispanic CEO, 1994-1998) both valued diversity as divine moral imperative. Employees were encouraged to move beyond their comfort zones and mutually adapt to fulfill a common mission and purpose that is grounded

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on their four objectives created in 70's. Cantu clearly communicated the importance of managing

diversity as an ongoing effort. ServiceMaster needed to learn how to manage diversity in ways that

would determine their ability to compete in the world economy. Cantu has already recognized the

challenges and opportunities created by diversity. He said,

> Diversity, when managed properly, can unify the work force and provide
> stimulus for social, intellectual, and economic growth….Most importantly, we
> must recognize that effective management of diversity means managing a work
> force of individuals. Even though managing people who are different may be
> considerably more complex than working with people who share the same
> perspectives, we cannot allow any individual to become disillusioned or
> frustrated because of a lack of understanding, support, or general
> sensitivity….Our task as leaders is to define and communicate "belonging" in
> terms that pertain to specific standards or values, and to a sense of purpose that
> goes beyond the preferences of any one group….We must effectively
> communicate throughout the organization a commitment to fully maximize the
> potential of every individual member of the work force: to place the emphasis
> on enabling and then empowering every person; and to create an environment
> where everyone will perform to the highest level of ability….The goal of
> achieving unity in diversity can occur through our capacity to accept, enable,
> and empower the diverse human talents of every person….But as the definition
> of diversity expands to reflect more than race and gender, so does our challenge
> to improve on the way we manage this diversity. It is an ongoing effort—
> changing, adjusting, and even experimenting— as our understanding of the true
> strength of diversity grows'' (ServiceMaster 1993:9).

Cantu demanded the leaders to understand the differences across workforce, to empower each

individual person, define and communicate "belongings" that are grounded on their four

objectives, and to create an environment where everyone could perform to their highest level of

ability. He increased the leaders' awareness of the need of managing diversity properly and

demanded them to increase their capacity to accept, enable, and empower the diverse talents of

every person. He also encouraged leaders to develop broader skills of managing diversity through

changing, adjusting, and even experimenting, rather than simply follow the traditional practices—

assimilation and tolerance. He said,

> The traditional approach to diversity has too often been one of simple assimilation. Women, minorities, and immigrants have all been absorbed into a previously homogenous environment, with the burden of change and integration essentially placed on the newcomers. This has sometimes had a negative effect on the work performance of these culturally diverse groups--which has driven management to conclude that superior performance, productivity, quality can be achieved by homogenous groups….As leaders we do not rely simply on a philosophy of tolerance. Our charge is to actively pursue practices that pertain to recruiting, training, personal development, and growth, and to ensure that these practices support and encourage a diverse work force, to guarantee that opportunities for minorities and women is based on competence and character and not on circumstance (ServiceMaster 1993:9).

Cantu called executives to recognize and respect the differences that a diverse work force brought

to ServiceMaster and to adapt their managerial practices in a way that reflects these four boons.

Executives were called to be responsible for the development of their diverse workforce and to be

committed to "the acceptance of diversity as both an opportunity to optimize the potential for

contribution from a diverse work force and to the process of individual development, enablement,

and empowerment so that people possess the necessary resources to perform their full potential

(ServiceMaster, 1993:9).

Pollard and Cantu have demonstrated the characteristics of diversity-mature individual:

accepting diversity management responsibility, possessing contextual clarity, requirement-driven,

comfortable with diversity tension, and are engaged in continual learning (Thomas, 1999:238).

They encouraged leaders and executives through their role modelling to accept diversity

management responsibility and to keep inquiring for the best environment for all people in the

workforce. They and other leaders were engaged in continual learning and experimenting with the

purpose of creating a better environment for the entire workforce. They both wanted to promote

diversity as a valuable resources for better work performance when managers need to unlearn their traditional approaches to diversity and relearn (or learn for the first time) how to embrace culturally diverse groups for better performance without putting the burden of cultural change and integration on those who are minorities or newcomers. Their speeches guided executives to be aware of their old habits of controlling others to influence the development of homogenous groups and to experiment new practices to define and communicate "belongings" to a diversified work force. They both adopted an integration-and-learning perspective of diversity. They did not desire executives to practice mere toleration or force minorities to assimilate. They clearly articulated the necessity for learning new skills related to managing diversity and affirmed the required differences that made more innovative and competitive. They did not want to follow the majority's preferences, traditions, and habits. They also wanted to manage diversity to honor God and encourage each other to have mutual adaptation when diversity was well-managed for social, intellectual, and economic growth. Their perspectives both reflected treasuring of differences as valuable resources for the future of ServiceMaster.

In summary, Pollard and Cantu did not want managers to practice mere toleration or force minorities to assimilate to traditional homogenous culture. They articulated what differences really mattered to the long-term health of their organizations. They accepted certain required differences that make ServiceMaster more innovative and competitive. They did not want to follow the majority's preferences, traditions and habits. They also fostered diversity to honor God and encourage mutual adaptation.

Being committed to teaching and learning culture

ServiceMaster had a very strong culture of teaching and learning that allowed people to reflect and share their best practices. ServiceMaster's leaders knew how to inspire others and nurture other people's hearts through numerous teachings and by learning from mistakes. Leaders modelled how to empower people and held themselves responsible for actions and mistakes: "Learning in the work environment should include elbow room for mistakes. In the absence of grace, there will be no reaching for potential" (Pollard, 1996:119). Ken Hansen (CEO, 1957-1973) said it clearly in his little book *Reality*:

> I have had failures. Some have been failures of judgement. Some of motives. The first type of failures should be faced openly (not covered up) and then put in one's memory bank for future reference, but not dwelt upon. The second requires forgiveness in order to be healed. I am grateful for forgiveness; forgiveness by God, by family, and by friends. Failure and risk-taking seem to be woven together in this life, in which we have limited knowledge and mixed motives in doing what we know ought to be done.

Ken Wessner (CEO, 1973-1983) said,

> Leaders must have the heart of a shepherd and the heart of a teacher in order to lead and develop men and women. For the shepherd, there is no greater reward than that of seeing others develop. To have the heart of a shepherd is to be totally committed to the personal welfare of those he is leading (Erisman, 2020:87).

Bill Pollard (CEO, 1999-2000) had specific teaching goals for the workers throughout the company and led workers to feel ownership over the company's success and to be able to teach others. Pollard (1996: 115) said:

> If the manager is too busy to teach, he is too busy to work for ServiceMaster. Teaching enhances the process of understanding. To encourage teaching, we must openly reward those people who mentor and develop others….At the same time, we must be careful not to transfer the responsibility of learning from the student to the teacher. The student is not the work product. He is the worker. The student's active participation and ownership in the results is essential.

Teaching was regarded a significant part of each executive's leadership. Pollard, for example, taught in ServiceMaster's internal graduate program and took his role as a teacher seriously. Executives were required to complete an internal graduate program in each year's performance review regardless of their education background. In 1990's, Pollard had to put many different business divisions (e.g. Consumer Services Division, Management Services Division, International Service Division) together as a cohesive company and planned to maintain ServiceMaster's original culture through teaching and discussion at every opportunity (Erisman, 2020: 120). Managing diversity was regarded as a way to honor God through many monthly spiritual practices. Before 1999, at the beginning of each monthly meeting and shareholders' meeting, leaders prayed and read Christian scriptures. Bill Pollard also assigned workers to read spiritual, business, and futuristic books. Before the annual Delta Lambda Kappa Group (i.e., the organization's senior leadership group), all executives had to receive a box of books to read before the meeting. Reading was regarded as a tool of transformation of leaders.

A testimony of Pat Asp

ServiceMaster valued learning and growth of different employees. The promotion and testimony of racial minorities and women showed how the organization lived out their core values and enabled these minorities and women to be up to their potentials. ServiceMaster's diversity management was built on mentorship programs that were practical-laden rather than system-laden. In fact as early as 1986, Jerry Willbur, VP of People Development at ServiceMaster, wrote and published his doctoral thesis "Mentoring and Achievement Motivation as Predictors of Career Success" (Willbur, 1986) which was distributed to senior executives. Subsequently, having new and existing managers identify their five-year career goals became embedded in operational

standards. For example, when Bill Pollard was involved in the acquisition process of Pat's previous employer in 1981, Bill ultimately became Pat's mentor. Pat also was mentored and sponsored by Pat Gallagher, who owned Service Direction Incorporated and many other leaders within both organizations. Her mentors and sponsors were men due to the makeup of the organization at that time. During her 25 years of service at ServiceMaster, she learned and grew through these mentorships and sponsorship. She completed managerial skills seminars, the graduate program, and was a member of the Delta Lambda Kappa Group (i.e., the organization's senior leadership group); all of these enhanced her leadership capability. Later, she became the first woman to be internally promoted to senior vice president. She was supported to learn from mistakes and did not experience gender pay inequality.

The following story was paraphrased from the interview of Pat Asp (Asp, 2021):

Pat was the new president of a Food Service Corporation that had acquired an Education Food Service organization. This acquired organization won a contract from a very large organization and reported to Pat. Unfortunately, this project was unsuccessful and resulted ServiceMaster to substantially miss projected results. When she asked her mentor, Bill Pollard, why she wasn't terminated immediately, he invited Ken Wessner (CEO 1973-1983) to his office and reminded him to take his wallet. They then proceeded to remove slips of paper with a list that contained names and numbers, explaining those lists were of mistakes they had made over the years. The message to her: "why would we terminate you now, when we just made a major investment in your education?" She also discovered that when there were gaps in service quality that the best practices was to investigate and identify the root cause and then fix the process and subsequently implemented significant training for all involved. Overall, she learned how to

increase the capability of workers through systems, rules, and tools after learning from her mistakes.

Pat did not experience gender pay inequality and was confident that the diversity practices were embedded in people and were heavily leadership programmed. When she was promoted from the Vice President to SBU President, leaders such as CEO and COO, demonstrated sensitivity to gender issues and internal concerns. The leaders had simultaneously launched an external and internal search to fill the role. She was named President as the best qualified candidate. ServiceMaster also adjusted her pay so that her salary would not be lower than male colleagues at the same rank. Their decision was supported by data and information about the pay. It's necessary to note that the initiation of equal pay between men and women was subject to the male leaders' actions. Throughout Pat's career more women were promoted to senior executive positions. It follows that the practice of gender equality was very much due to the essence of awareness of Bill Pollard's leadership.

Lessons learned from ServiceMaster

Given the years of many changes between 1990 to 2000, ServiceMaster still grew and knew how to sustain their progress through their deep-rooted four objectives, individual leaders' diversity maturity and integration-and-learning perspective of diversity, and teaching and learning culture. Leaders had internalized the core values and four principles in their work and lives. Employees felt being cared and developed. In 1993 ServiceMaster annual report, ServiceMaster had its own mission and vision statements at both the comprehensive level and the diversity level. They lacked the diversity framework and process to clearly define what diversity was and what was needed to

be measured to make the organization to be more supportive of collective diversity practices. Managing diversity was built on mentorship programs that were practical-laden rather than system laden. Diversity practices were embedded in people and were heavily leadership programmed.

Pollard and Cantu clearly communicated the health of a diverse workplace required respecting individual differences and leverage these differences for individual growth and organizational competitiveness. Under Pollard's and Cantu's leadership, ServiceMaster was a disciplined and lean organization. It was easier to diffuse the learning among work groups and leaders. Many diversity programs were embedded in people development and leaders' initiative programs. Managing diversity was framed as closely related to the four basic objectives. Pollard created a more collective learning environment through teaching, training, mentorship programs and spiritual practices. Cantu focused on managing diversity properly and mobilized the organization to garner a higher level of mature organization diversity. ServiceMaster did not adopt a systematic framework and process to keep them to track what diversity would be required for success and how success would be measured. They needed to examine and define what the meaning of diversity was when there were many rampant mergers and acquisitions in 1990's. ServiceMaster's diversity practices were very fragile in times of leadership change and when the traditional practices such as "shingles on a roof" and servanthood in leadership were abandoned.

For example, Service Master crafted a job for John who had special needs and was a witness Jesus's teaching "as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40). John was accepted as a whole person and inspired those people working with him. However, he was fired by his new boss. Bill Pollard (2014: 173) lamented:

After my retirement as CEO, my successor decided to sell the business unit that employed John. The purchaser continued to employ John, but had a different management style. The commitment to invest in John with sensitivity to his needs started to erode. One day, John's employment was terminated. When he has called and told this, he was confused. He asked if he could say goodbye to some of his fellow employees and was told he could not. His manager had cleaned out his locker, and someone from the human resource department escorted him out the back door of the building.

Another example was the new leadership of Jon Ward (CEO, 2001-2006) who perceived too hard to follow the four objectives of Service Master. He focused on the growth of business without much commitment to the development of people or honoring God (Erisman 2020: 164). Jon had no heart for his people and did not seek advice how to develop his people from Bill Pollard (Erisman 2020: 173). Jon and his followers were claimed to cause the ultimate failure of ServiceMaster after 2000 because they focused only on the practical outcomes of business without saying anything about the development of employees in his first annual report. Erisman (2021) commented about best diversity practices:

My own view is that the practices are always subject to deterioration and decay, and they need to be tended. If they are not deeply rooted, they won't adapt to changing circumstances, but will be rigidly applied even when they are not relevant. Practices are very important. But heart, commitment, and rootedness on the part of the leader is also important. I see the two as going together.

It is essential to develop collective learning practices and internal organization capacity by making diversity practices or programs aligned with the organization's missions, strategies, accountability system and compensation system. The diversity strategic plan should be aligned with organization's strategic priorities that are rooted in the core values of the organization. Leaders' individual diversity maturity must be supported by the organizational diversity maturity

level. Although Pollard and Cantu demonstrated their individual diversity maturity and valued differences as important resources and requested executives to have mutual adaptations in their process of learning to manage diversity well, ServiceMaster's organization maturity might be located in the low or moderate maturity stage. The lack of a development of a strategic diversity management plan and the absence of a framework or process negatively affects their diversity maturity development.

Implications to Christian Higher Education

Higher education's governing structures are more fluid and democratic than the corporate world. High education institutions may be inspired by ServiceMaster to develop managing diversity capability through their deep-rooted core values, leaders' integration-and-learning perspective of diversity, and teaching and learning culture. Faith-based higher education institutions may know how to manage complexity and be congruent with their operating environment through their own core values, shared leadership, individual and organization diversity maturity, inclusive leadership, and teaching and learning cultural environment. However, the concept of valuing human beings as God's images bearers may be hindered or not implemented when some Christian higher education institutions are distorted by the power of intellectual capacity, status, and money (Jennings, 2020) or speed (Berg & Seeber, 2016) or fear (Palmer, 2000). They sometimes may struggle to achieve their missions to honor God and objectify their financial performance without caring for their employees as Jon Ward did. They also could not clearly articulate the necessity of managing diversity quickly like ServiceMaster experienced under the leadership of Bill Pollard and Carlos Cantu. The recent high turnover of president and diversity officers at small Christian

higher education institutions also creates challenges for the development of diversity strategies, frameworks and process (Lam, 2022).

The recent polarization and white supremacy in the U.S. also generates fear among some Christian Universities as they are afraid of being labelled as progressive or liberal organizations (Lam, 2022). Some private Christian higher education institutions are used to being labeled as conservative and hierarchical-oriented (Schuurman, 2003). These institutions may also reproduce structural injustice (Ray, 2019), particularly when their leaders do not practice inclusive leadership (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006), do not intentionally cultivate a safe space for the gradual development of a collective voice (Satterstrom, Kerrissey, and DiBenigno, 2021), or neglect to hire diversity officers.

It is a long-haul process for Christian higher education institutions to develop collective individual diversity maturity and organization diversity maturity even though many diversity practices are framed as God' work in the pursuit of academic excellence and the development of global citizens. Leaders are workers or prophets of diversity to better the kingdom on earth (Longman, 2017; Menjares, 2017). Diversity management should be the key ingredient to creating a brighter, more productive, and more inclusive culture. Managing diversity must be strategically implemented with goals, and an accountability and assessment system while it is continuously revised and aligned with the organization's mission and strategic priorities. Each institution must prioritize her diversity initiatives according to its historical context and strength. Some institutions may focus on racial, gender, and faith diversity. Some institutions may focus on learning diversity. Each institution must develop shared language of selected diversity practices with participation of many internal and external stakeholders. It is expected that the process of change be a long one.

Institutions must take advantage of many available resources in the Christian higher education communities to develop better education opportunities for many marginalized students. The process of managing diversity must be embraced in the fabric of teaching and learning with patience and diligence!

Limitations

I struggled attaining enough information about the detailed diversity practices at ServiceMaster. There were no systematic diversity practices at ServiceMaster. It seems that before 1999 ServiceMaster was in an early stage of organizational development on the diversity front. I could only assume that leaders at ServiceMaster must read and develop their capacities to make cultural changes to enable women, minorities, and immigrants to thrive. Through the written speeches by Pollard and Cantu, leaders have developed abilities to adapt and practice the skills of managing complexity they encountered in the increasingly diverse and pluralistic world. I could only use a few examples to illustrate the fruits of their diversity practices. However, many organizational concepts and practices at ServiceMaster were unknown to me. I can only assume the twenty years' success of ServiceMaster in a dynamic, global pluralistic world was due to their excellent capacity of managing diversity well that were grounded on their four objectives, the "shingles on a roof" concept, leaders' individual diversity maturity and the integration-and-learning perspective of diversity, the cultivation of servanthood in leadership, and the presence of a teaching and learning culture of ServiceMaster. I am unaware of how leaders at ServiceMaster unlearned their previous successful practices and learned new practices to realize the potential of the organization in a more uncertain, complex, and ambiguous business environment. I suspect current leaders could examine

the similarities, differences, and the related tensions and complexities in their numerous mergers and acquisitions in the 1990's by developing framework and process to examine how successfully ServiceMaster managed those required differences. In sum, when their leaders learn how to develop collective diversity maturity and organizational maturity, ServiceMaster might learn how to maintain important practices such as the "shingles on a roof" concept, servanthood in leadership, and four objectives.

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