

## DEVELOPING THE BUSINESS CASE

*Private employers are naturally keen to increase the profits of their businesses and public employers are naturally interested in improving the quality of their services. Thus, an effective approach that is often used in EQUAL is to demonstrate to them that diversity in their employees will bring benefits rather than problems to their organisations.*

*TDC Mobil one of the partners in the Danish **Diversity and Social Responsibility** DP was concerned to develop customer match within customer counselling. It felt that this would “optimise the possibilities for business-oriented success by reflecting a manifold customer potential within a diverse employee composition”.*

The target group was Turkish-speaking customers and employees and this language group is the largest minority group within the Danish society. The project was based upon the assumption that there was an as yet unclaimed market potential within this segment of the population and that customer service and marketing in Turkish would generate more customers. However, the hiring of Turkish-speaking employees was not simply undertaken to cultivate new markets, it was also based upon a wish to strengthen ethnic diversity within the staff.

A group consisting of eight Turkish and Danish-speaking customer counsellors was recruited. The job of a customer counsellor at TDC Mobil presupposes competences within sales and service and knowledge of TDC Mobil's products, as well as TDC Mobil's intranet. The bilingual customer counsellors were trained in the same way as all the other newly-hired customer counsellors at TDC Mobil. Today, they are employed full-time answering calls in both Danish and Turkish at TDC Mobil's customer counselling centres.

The project has been very successful. The company has received many positive reactions from customers who are now delighted that TDC is offering customer counselling in their own language. The hiring of bilingual customer counsellors has also produced the following benefits:

- The development of leadership competences within managers;
- An increased tolerance and decreased anxiety among managers and employees towards problems of an ethnic character;
- A conspicuous need, and potential, for the hiring of managers with other ethnic backgrounds;
- An increased consciousness within the organisation of new potential markets.

Market analyses have been launched with the intention of expanding Turkish customer counselling by adding more services and products. A possible basis for the establishment of a similar service for speakers of Arabic is under investigation. The process has been a source of empirical knowledge for groups from the Copenhagen Business School who focus on sub cultural customer segments.

In general, the company has also received considerable PR benefits through being featured in the public press and media and during the DP's project presentations.

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*Sweden has a population of 8.9 millions inhabitants and about 1.9 million of these people, or in other words every fifth inhabitant, has a non-Swedish ethnic background. During the last 20 years the country has experienced a significant influx of migrants and refugees. The immigrant*

population is a young, international population and an important part of the future in Sweden. In this situation, the **Towns Together** DP has come up with a new approach to non-discrimination.

Towns Together is a partnership between the deprived areas in the three biggest cities in Sweden. It is also a partnership between the business sector, the NGOs and the public sector. All involved believe that if companies want to develop their businesses and reach new customers, they will need to employ staff with a non-Swedish background from various ethnic groups and also have a good reputation in terms of fulfilling their social responsibilities and practising non-discrimination. The same is also true for public sector services if they wish to improve their provision for the inhabitants of the areas in which they operate. Also, the public sector in Sweden will soon, because of demographic reasons, have to recruit many more members of staff and this is also a reason why this sector requires a positive image in the eyes of migrant and ethnic minority groups. One of the main principles of the DP is to focus on the need for knowledge in the business sector about how the population in Sweden has changed and will continue to change and also its need for knowledge about how to sell and market to these new citizens.

The messages are spread by NetWorkers – a new profession in Sweden. The NetWorkers provide the links between all of the partners involved in the DP and also market the idea of implementing business development to enterprises and public sector bodies such as the Tax Authorities. There are NetWorkers employed in all three cities and they arrange seminars and workshops together with the partners in the DP, as these partners also help to get the DP’s messages across. ForeningsSparbanken/Swedbank, Sydkraft an environmental energy group working on waste recycling and IKEA the furniture company with stores throughout Europe are all active partners in the project. They are used as good examples of companies employing people with non–Swedish backgrounds and also the Confederation of Swedish Enterprises is used as a platform for the marketing of the DP’s approach.

NetWorkers help companies to consult focus groups of migrants that test and discuss different kinds of new products and services and this is also a form of empowerment for people in these groups. In return, some of the partners are also involved in helping migrants become more independent. For example, the ForeningsBanken/Swebank, working in close cooperation with an NGO that represents migrant groups, has established study circles on “how to manage your household finances more effectively.”

As a result of all these activities, over 30 seminars and workshops have been arranged for various groups on working with business development in Malmö, Stockholm and Gothenburg. It has also proved possible to employ a number of people from non–Swedish backgrounds, many of whom had formerly been unemployed for considerable periods of time. All of the partners are currently involved in a working group, led by the ForeningsSparbanken/Swedbank, which is discussing the future of this new concept and the NetWorking model and the methods by which they can best be sustained and disseminated.

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When the **DREAM DP** applies its Equality Audit to press and media companies in Greece, it makes every effort to help employers and workers to understand the benefits of recruiting people from minority or migrant backgrounds.

The DP explains these benefits as:

- Widening the audience;
- Increasing profits from alternative types of advertisements;
- Providing new sources of information for journalists;
- Developing the organisational culture;
- Improving the company’s image in terms of its social responsibility.

This process is then backed up by targeted training for representatives of ethnic minority and migrant groupings who are largely recruited through NGOs that work with these minority populations. The training takes account of the requirements of the company in which the “trainee” will undertake a placement. This placement is also subsidised for a few months when companies are willing to provide continuing employment if the placement proves to be successful. For example, a regional editor had participated in an “equality audit” workshop and was thinking about “opening” his newspaper. After some consultancy and market research, he decided that having a daily column in Albanian might increase the newspaper’s circulation. An Albanian immigrant, trained in journalism was recruited and the job position was funded for a number of weeks. This was enough time for the newspaper to set up the column and become convinced about the higher circulation and so the post was made permanent.

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*Managing Diversity on a proper basis can also help firms to resolve problems and improve the quality of their products. The Swedish [DISI](#) EQUAL DP stepped in to help a factory that was experiencing major difficulties.*

In this plant, sick leave was as high as 20 % and the product quality was deteriorating, which was creating even more serious consequences. Around 60 % of the employees were of non-Swedish origin and comprised a great many nationalities and so it was decided to focus on the ethnic diversity and to try to identify possible solutions to the problems at the factory.

The DP’s first action was to initiate dialogue at different levels in the company animated by an NGO called CEMPI (Centre for Multiculturalism and Practical Integration). As a consequence of the in-house dialogues that had been initiated by the DP, individual interviews were carried out with each and every employee. The second step was to create development teams, each of which worked on a particular topic concerning the future strategy and operations of the company. Every shopfloor worker was a member of one of these development teams and that reinforced a sense of belonging and self-worth. The results were a dramatic fall in the incidence of sick leave - from 20 % to 2 % in less than six months and a major improvement in the quality standards was achieved over the same period.

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*Another benefit that industry and commerce can receive from their involvement in CSR or diversity issues is enhanced, positive press and media coverage. A number of enterprises have indicated how their involvement in EQUAL has assisted them in this respect.*

One aspect of EQUAL that has had a considerable effect in developing public relations activities that promote the efforts of companies and businesses is the creation of [Equality or Diversity Awards](#). This was certainly the case for the [Falck Rescue Services](#) in the [Vision Partnership in Denmark](#) DP. One of their local stations received an award for the best work place in the local community and this had a number of spin-offs. For example, several articles have appeared in newspapers ‘praising’ the policies of the company, the head of personnel is being invited to speak at more and more seminars and conferences and the public sector has increased its interest in cooperating with the company because it is now more aware of Falck’s enlightened human resources policies and practices.

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A second Danish company, TDC Mobil one of the partners in the **Diversity and Social Responsibility** DP, is featured in the first example above. This company has received considerable PR benefits through appearing in the public press and media and during the DP's project presentations. Danish radio and television has shown a positive interest in the initiative and this resulted in a radio and a television broadcast. These were so convincing that a competitor called Teliasonera is now contemplating the introduction of a similar scheme in Sweden.

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