



Diversity as a Strength

Alone the fact that the *Ford Motor Company* employs about 300,000 people worldwide in 100 production facilities and operates on 200 markets on six continents clearly illustrates the dimension of variety or diversity at *Ford*. Moreover, the corporate culture requires inter-cultural co-operation throughout its entire international group.

This particular challenge was recognised at *Ford* and what started in 1996 with the creation of a special working group on the question “What does diversity mean? What do we want to achieve?” was systematically developed further. Now diversity management has for years been the cornerstone of *Ford's* global corporate culture.

The focus of *Ford's* diversity culture is respect for every employee, regardless of nationality, religion, sexual identity or social group. This culture reflects the company's conviction that the workplace has a major role to play in wider socio-political responsibility. The values lived in the company, such as tolerance and mutual respect, are taken into society by the employees.

At *Ford-Werke*, diversity is not regarded as a programme or an initiative. It is a permanent, integrated approach which promotes understanding that diversity is an opportunity for both employees and the company.

One visible expression of this is the many activities inside and outside the company in which many employees actively participate and constantly develop new ideas which help promote diversity and bring about cultural change in the long term.

The company's own diversity organisation is supported by a diversity team – with a European and a national diversity manager – working groups of national and divisional diversity councils, resource groups and networks.

Implementation in the line organisation is the responsibility of the European and functional diversity councils.

The various units advocate, for example, work-life balance and particular needs relating to culture, ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, age, disability, religion, marital status, sexual identity and education.

A works agreement on behaviour at the workplace (“dignity at work”) based on partnership, flexible working (time) models (part-time, telework, sabbaticals etc.), initiatives to enhance females' interest for technical and engineering as part of Women@Ford, various offers of care (for children and dependents in need of care) as well as an extensive disability concept for the prevention of disabilities and the integration of employees with disabilities are just a few examples of the successful diversity practice at *Ford*.

Through diversity, *Ford* wants to create a working environment which promotes a culture in which the employees can contribute towards *Ford's* success, respects and appreciates the differences and abilities of all employees and benefits from the advantages of work teams comprising many different people.

This involves:

- ▶ Gaining more customers
- ▶ Optimum reflection of the workforce structure
- ▶ Reinforcement of external perception
- ▶ Benefitting of employee potential.

Diversity management at *Ford* is not seen as a promotion programme for minorities. It does not involve achieving and observing quotas or satisfying a charitable purpose. It is an opportunity to harness the diversity of the workforce productively and to discharge the social obligations of a major global company.

Against the backdrop of an ageing population, the changed role of women in business life and further internationalisation, diversity will continue to gain in importance for all companies and organisations.

The investment in the diversity initiatives of the company are already paying dividends for *Ford*.

The diversity culture lived in the company not only increases the motivation and productivity of the employees. Diversity has an impact on the company, and, at the same time, radiates out into society.

Ford is becoming an “employer of choice” both for the workforce and potential applicants, an employer people enjoy working for or would like to work for in the future.