



Hiring and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

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Attracting and keeping the best and brightest diverse employees is one of today's largest business challenges.

George Cunningham, associate professor and director of the Laboratory for Diversity in Sports at Texas A & M, who interviewed 70 people, including presidents, athletics directors, student-athletes, coaches and administrators said that the notions that workers must value diversity and must understand the impact that diversity has on the work unit are particularly important. The goal then, Cunningham said, "is to determine how differences are affecting the workplace, positively or negatively, and capitalize on the positives."*

Consumer buying power of diverse groups is significantly increasing. Consumer purchasing behavior is influenced by an organization's employment practices and sensitivity to their needs. Varied perspectives increase your organization's creativity and enrich organizations' decision making. Diverse and inclusive workforces offer different ideas, solutions and product offerings that may generate new opportunities for the organization. Additionally, the variety of insights contributes to informed and responsible decisions. See "**The Business Case for Diversity**" at www.DiversityMatters.net and click on publications.

Question # 1 Does your company have a clear vision? Does this vision include information about talent retention and diversity?

- **Make sure your company has a workforce diversity-related vision and mission.** Take action to assure that your employees know what the vision means and how it relates to them by following the next steps:

Articulate it. Say the vision in a way that is understandable to you and your employees. Make sure you can tell them what it looks like to *you*. Check for Understanding. Be certain that your employees can explain it and what it looks like to them. If they can't, you haven't explained it well enough. Live it. Make it happen.

- **Make sure your company's Mission and Vision include goals on Workplace Diversity.**

Start by assessing your organizational culture including your EEO-1 report, HR statistics or observation; determine who is represented and who is not by EEO protected groups.

Ask the question, "Does my organization have a diversity initiative with a vision, mission or goals statement?" If yes, how is it being cascaded throughout your organization? If not, you might want to share with the organization that retention involves more than getting representation. Consider using an organizational consultant to give attention to the need for change.

Build your own support network both internally and externally before taking on diversity.

Question # 2 Does your company have a clear recruitment strategy?

Create a clear recruiting strategy to ensure that your company's recruitment practices correspond to the overall mission of the company.

"You have to look at people's experience, what individuals bring to a particular position; their backgrounds; their references; and, most importantly, the experiences, successes and failures they've had and what kind of fit they'll be," said Columbia Athletics Director M. Dianne Murphy. "When you talk about being bold and courageous, you have to have confidence in yourself that you're making the right decision and you're going to support that person." * Excerpt from Diversity in hiring is a leadership issue," Jan 16, 2009 By Leilana McKindra The NCAA (National Collegiate Association) News

Assure that your current recruiting staff understands the strategy and the "whys" behind it. HR staff can be a great proponent for creating high-performing diverse teams, or can be a hindrance to the process. Get them onboard. Ask these questions as you assemble your strategy.

- a. **What are the skills and abilities we are looking for in the candidate?**
What are the requirements for the position? Are they "bona fide occupational requirements?" (i.e. college degree) If they are not don't include them. Develop your interviewing guide based on the desired requirements.
- b. **What interview guide will we use to assure consistency and legality?**
Create a list of behavioral-based questions that will help you determine if the candidate possesses the most important qualities. When determining the questions, ensure your interviewers know what you are looking for and why each question is being asked. Make sure your guide is EEOC compliant.

- c. **Who is going to conduct the interviews?** Make sure they know the job, its most important qualities and what you are seeking.
- d. **Are we attracting a mix of candidates?** Attracting a diverse talent pool depends on more than visually-apparent diversity. Are you looking for different experiences, backgrounds and education? Where does the organization typically recruit? Are you getting a diverse population of people in the door? Following are additional recruitment strategies that build a "pipeline" of potential employees.
 - Seek current competent diversity employees who could be targeted for promotion.
 - Create internships that recruit diverse employees and hire them! Some organizations get interns, but fail to hire them, even if they have proved themselves.
 - Identify personal contacts within diverse communities such as community colleges, churches, synagogues, mosques, fraternal and other non-profits that serve the communities you are seeking. Make a network and nurture these contacts.
 - Capitalize on your current diverse employees since they can be a useful resource for diversity information and candidates. Let these employees know that you are looking.
 - Conduct research with current associates to learn about different cultures, employment barriers and successes. \
 - Be consistent and follow through with your vision, mission and workforce diversity strategies.
- e. **How am I verifying the skills of the recruit?** Look for non-traditional ways to quantify work and life experience. Don't just rely on traditional testing.
- f. **Will we need external recruiters?** If so, make sure to meet with them and outline your diversity goals. Beware of code words that may be used by recruiters to "mask" advertisements that steer away from diverse employees, such as "all American" or "A plus." These code words can represent companies that only recruit from specific ethnic or cultural groups. Make sure the recruiters understand and appreciate your need for a diverse pool. If they don't, find a recruitment agency that has a successful track record

Question #3 How can you implement a rich and diverse employee retention and recruitment process?

1. **Make developing talent a job requirement of all supervisors and managers.** Train them to do it. Monitor results and define what how bonuses or performance increases are dependent on positive outcomes.

2. **Give incentives** to managers and supervisors for developing and promoting all candidates. Ensure you are looking at all your employee populations, not just the most numerous
3. **Ensure that all employees have the "informal and unwritten" rules** of how to succeed in the company. Have supervisors and managers articulate what they look for and guide all employees to those reasonable and articulated expectations.
4. **Train all supervisors and managers in diversity awareness**, mentoring, performance management and coaching.
5. **Ensure all of your top leaders are aware** and can communicate consistently your organization's diversity, recruiting and overall objectives. Make sure your leaders have a plan for how to effectively communicate those messages to all employees.
6. **Ensure your HR staff is aware** of your company's diversity, recruiting and overall objectives. Help them define HR's role early on, as they should be a leader in the early stages of diversity change. Failure to do so could jeopardize the success of the initiative. Remember, they are the "gate-keepers" in the organization. Make sure your HR team is made up of a diverse group of individuals with a variety of backgrounds and experiences
7. **Create an internal diversity steering group** with employees from a variety of levels. Establishing a designated VP or higher as an executive sponsor is a strategy for "nurturing the change process."
8. **Create business opportunities for diverse employees.** Develop a comprehensive training and mentoring program. Focus on helping all people excel in the organization. Ensure that the programs help the team as well as individuals excel.

*A University of Pennsylvania study of over 1,000 employees found that those enrolled in mentoring programs were promoted at six times the rate of those who were not. **See Five Mentoring Best Practices**: Formal structured programs, informal mentoring, make mentoring cross cultural, measure success and follow up, publicize the benefits.*

http://www.diversityinc-digital.com/diversityincmedia/20090304/?pg=41&search=mentoring&per_page=5&results_page=1&doc_id=-1

Question # 4 What Are the Next Actions?

1. **Develop a plan.** How are you going to help take your organization to the next level? Write it down and gain buy-in from all levels.
2. **Ask for Help.** Use a consultant that has experience with large-scale culture change,

as well as diversity experience. Check consultants' references. Be aware that the changes required for diversity may conflict with the old or traditional culture. Two to three years is about the time that non-diverse cultures can stand being challenged.

3. **Use resources.** Government workers; local, state or federal, may be able to assist the change process for free or low cost. Contact the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) for resources in diversity recruitment and mentoring, www.shrm.org/ Go online to www.DiversityInc.com for articles. It is free to government and some nonprofits.

** Excerpt from "Diversity in hiring is a leadership issue," Jan 16, 2009 By Leilana McKindra, The NCAA, National Collegiate Athletic Association.*

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