



Diversity: Finding & Keeping Talented Women & Diverse Groups

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To some companies, “workforce diversity” means employing a hodgepodge of demographically different people. To others, it means supporting an environment where demographically and psychographically different people draw on their backgrounds, values, cultures and work styles to develop unique approaches that outsmart the competition. Which definition will contribute more to your bottom line?

The latter approach proved to be very profitable for Home Depot. They saw a distinction in the amount of sales generated by mature workers – ones who were more effective at selling to mature customers. This was an opportunity to implement a competitive strategy that may have been overlooked by other companies. As a result, they’ve modified their recruitment strategies to seek out resumes of more experienced workers...and have seen a dramatic increase in revenue thanks to employing a workforce that genuinely reflects their customer base.

And that’s just one example of how rewarding diversity can be. A strong diversity strategy can also create opportunities for product innovation, creative customer solutions and even access to global markets.

Here are a few ways to work toward establishing diversity in your employee base – and start seeing the ensuing results.

- **Diversify your approach.** The same tactics often yields the same results. So don’t fall back on the same sourcing and search methods every time you need an employee -- you’ll only attract the similar candidates time and again. Assess your sourcing and recruiting strategy regularly, refining your approach to networking events, referrals and Internet searches. And always be on the lookout for new business and cultural associations to add to your mix.
- **Enlist the help of your team.** Hold managers accountable for supporting your strategy by educating them about the big-picture benefits early on and be clear about how your company defines “diversity.” Then, take it a step further to ensure interviews get at the heart of how a candidate thinks, adds value, and brings unique perspectives and experience to the team. Once you have a diverse employee base, you can use your employees to help you recruit to ensure your strategies are executed.
- **Develop policies and programs that benefit all candidates.** Offering flex time, job sharing, continuing education programs, retirement planning advice, mini-sabbaticals, and time off for volunteerism are all ways your company can attract quality people who otherwise might not consider applying for – or accepting – a critical position in your organization.

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- **Design cross-cultural mentoring programs.** People tend to gravitate towards others who think and look like themselves – and those who have a similar background. This “comfortable” approach can lead to a homogenous workforce or cliques within your teams, and when everyone shares similar values and experience, it’s challenging to be truly innovative. To help break this cycle, keep diversity in mind when executing your mentorship program. (For more on developing a mentorship program, visit http://praxishr.com/downloads/bottomline_julyaug_2005.pdf).
- **Build diverse teams.** Once you’ve found diverse talent, be sure to spread it throughout the organization, horizontally and vertically. And don’t forget to foster everyone’s differences. Diversity on paper is useless if unique perspectives and experience are stifled.

BottomLine

Embracing diversity – in experience, values and cultural background – creates an environment where innovation thrives. Not only will you see more creative solutions to your business challenges, you’ll maintain a competitive edge and create new business opportunities.

If you would like more information about this or other human resources and employment practices issues, please contact Praxis HR via email at info@praxis.com by phone at 206.262.8133 or visit our website at www.praxishr.com.