

TEN KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL DIVERSITY RECRUITING

A business objective – not brain surgery

Have you ever heard of the Nineteenth of June celebration? “Juneteenth” is the day on which black people in the South give thanks for freedom from slavery. *The People Could Fly, American Black Folktales*, told in prose by Virginia Hamilton and narrated on CD by James Earl Jones, is a magnificent collection of folktales.

Folktales take us back to the very beginnings of people’s lives; to their hopes and their defeats ... Folktales were once a creative way for an oppressed people to express their fears and hopes to one another.

These folktales belong to all of us because they are part of our nation’s history. *How Nehemiah Got Free* is one of these interesting folktales. (27)

Nehemiah, a slave, was very clever. He had an engaging and infectious sense of humor. Nehemiah knew how to work the system. Today we would describe him as a street savvy person. Nehemiah made a practice of outwitting his owners and as a result was moved from plantation to plantation. Mr. Warton, his new owner, was a notorious taskmaster. Determined to break Nehemiah’s spirit, Warton gave Nehemiah an enormous list of chores to accomplish in one day.

Nehemiah agreed to do the work, but asked Warton: “If I make you laugh will you let me rest today and do the work tomorrow?” Warton, who had never been known to laugh, replied: “If you make me laugh, I won’t only let you rest today, but I will give you your freedom here and now.” Nehemiah grinned and proclaimed: “Mr. Warton, you sure are a good-looking man.” Warton shot back: “I’m sorry I can’t say the same thing about you, Nehemiah.” With an enormous smile, Nehemiah replied: “You could, Mr. Warton, if you told as big a lie as I just did!” Warton let out a long, raucous laugh and freed Nehemiah on the spot.

Many “Nehemiahs,” people, who are not part of the traditional mainstream, have had to use all their wits, wiles, and street smarts to get a seat at the table and a place in the

workforce. Have there been improvements; has progress been made in the last thirty or forty years? Certainly. But there are still non-traditional people, of all stripes, who have to outsmart the system or make it work for them. Roosevelt Thomas describes it this way: “Women and minorities no longer need a boarding pass, they need an upgrade.”

In the last week of October 2002 at PricewaterhouseCoopers Eighth Annual Chief Diversity Officer Summit, the results of a diversity survey were released. Two findings stood out:

1. U.S. businesses still discriminate against people of color, gays and lesbians, people with disabilities and older workers.
2. Organizations are not convinced that a diverse workforce means a more profitable business.

An examination of the **ten keys to successful diversity recruiting** demystifies the process of identifying, recruiting, hiring, and retaining diversity candidates. Many in corporate America believe that diversity recruiting is a complex mystery, loaded with problems and unattainable objectives; nothing could be further from the truth.

1. CLEAR BUSINESS MANDATE

The most senior executives of the firm must establish a **clear business mandate** that diversity recruiting is a business necessity with clearly defined objectives and measurements.

Line and human resources managers must have a significant amount of their annual increase tied to successful diversity hiring. This practice must be measured and progress reported monthly to senior management.

2. DIVERSITY RECRUITING TIED TO BUSINESS GOALS

Diversity staffing must take careful aim at business goals. Successful diversity recruiting initiatives are tied to the business objectives of the company. Senior leaders must:

1. Have a vision for diversity and understand demographic changes in the workforce.
2. Insure that all levels of management are on-board with diversity and recognize its necessity.
3. Train hiring managers and their staffs to interview multicultural candidates and encourage them to learn the cultural norms of diverse candidates.
4. Provide cross-cultural coaching/training for the entire workforce. Increase retention by developing a diversity-friendly culture.
5. Recognize and promulgate the importance of honest feedback. Guarantee equality and fairness in career advancement.

6. Make sure that the company website and advertising programs feature a diverse mix of individuals.
7. Convince senior leaders that the composition of the board of directors should reflect the diversity of the community, the workforce, and the customer base.

3. PLANNED RECRUITING PROCESS

The recruiting process must be efficiently planned, effectively implemented, managed, and measured. Minimize surprises. The diversity recruiting plan must receive input from all stakeholders.

Establish a *Diversity Staffing Advisory Committee* made up of line and human resources managers to increase acceptance, iron out problems, and achieve success.

Line managers must determine and communicate what constitutes success in a specific job and what are the accountabilities of each individual. Encourage use of performance profiles.

Use creative approaches and resources to attract multicultural candidates.

1. Train recruiters to use candidate research.
2. Develop techniques to attract and sell diversity candidates to your company.
3. Best recruiting sources are word of mouth and the good name of the company in the marketplace.
4. Identify and use the best resources to find diversity candidates.
5. Diversify your candidate pool; insist on a diverse slate of candidates.
6. Be honest in dealing with diversity candidates.

Spell out the results of diversity recruiting on business goals and company growth; compare to the consequences of no diversity recruiting and hiring.

Present the case to management: recruiting, retaining, and promoting diverse employees are basic to ethnic marketing and gaining new customers.

Demystify the process of recruiting a diverse workforce :

1. Gain insight into why courting a candidate is as important as hiring the candidate.
2. Learn various strategies for recruiting at senior, middle, and entry levels.

3. Understand the concept and necessity of being culturally competent.
4. Build workable solutions to the problems of hiring and retaining a diverse workforce.

4. ELIMINATE ALL OBSTACLES AT BEGINNING OF PROCESS

All obstacles must be eliminated at the beginning of the recruiting process. Get rid of lame excuses for not hiring talented diversity candidates. Before the recruiting begins get closure on issues such as relocation, job level, reporting relationships, sign-on bonuses, title, etc.

Committed companies eliminate perceived roadblocks up front – well in advance of the actual recruiting. The path is clear. The direction is obvious. Pitfalls and red flags are met head-on. The objective is attainable: *Recruiters, both inside and outside the company, know that the organization is serious about diversity.*

5. ASSIGN BEST AND MOST RESPECTED LEADERS

Human Resources and company management must assign their best, most respected leaders to diversity recruiting projects.

Choose leaders who have forged a record of delivery and have excellent political skills. Leaders must be able to work the gray areas of the organization and remain unequivocal in their commitment to diversity.

The men and women selected will not take criticism and rejection personally and will be relentless when they are *beaten on*. *Leaders must have the clout, the respect, and the resources to override stumbling blocks that exist or might occur.*

6. CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Establish and strengthen cultural competency and multicultural respect. Cultural competency means the ability and skills to work with diverse people and to manage this process.

Culturally competent organizations have a compelling competitive edge in recruiting and retaining the best talent and in developing and promoting a diverse workforce. They have the ability to move quickly into new markets. They recognize and respond to the needs of culturally diverse customers. Diversity-aware companies harvest the benefits of hiring diversity candidates by gaining shares in the emerging ethnic markets.

Valuing differences pays off in organizational effectiveness and in learning from customers and employees. Good things can happen: increased market share, productivity, improved retention, enriched public relations, and strengthened relationships in ethnic communities. Inclusive environments appeal to the best and brightest candidates.

Diversity welcomes everyone to the workplace and commits to a level playing field where talents are recognized, opportunities are available, and promotions depend on performance.

7. CAST A BROAD NET

Cast a broad net to find diversity candidates. Build long-term relationships with minority organizations and effective recruiting firms. Network for strategic alliances to facilitate and maintain diversity recruiting. Suggestions:

1. Offer corporate internships and scholarships.
2. Sponsor and participate in diversity job fairs.
3. Develop partnerships with student organizations, like INROADS, and college student groups. Establish networks with traditionally black colleges.
4. Build relationships and partnerships with diversity professional and community organizations.
5. Develop and maintain affiliations with community, neighborhood, and church groups.
6. Utilize websites where resumes of diverse individuals can be found.
7. Use internal employee resource and affinity groups.
8. Insist that the recruiting firms you use submit diverse slates of candidates.
9. Know the demographics and corporate culture.
10. Encourage key people to speak at diversity conferences, associations, etc.
11. Tell your success stories; promote them far and wide.
12. Sponsor events and sport teams in ethnic communities.
13. Host meetings of diversity groups at your company.
14. Use local minority vendors.

8. TIMELY FEEDBACK

It is critical to provide timely feedback when you work with recruiting firms.

Many companies are looking for the same talented people. Outside recruiters cannot adjust the quality, focus, or quantity of the candidates they are submitting without prompt and detailed evaluation of the applicant submitted. A *no interest* is unacceptable.

The companies that work closely with proven recruiting firms get the hires.

9. EFFECTIVE RETENTION PROGRAMS

Upgrade retention programs for all employees. Learn what appeals to multicultural employees and use their input to design your retention programs. Studies indicate multicultural professionals are leaving their companies in frightening numbers.

Companies prove they value multiethnic, culturally diverse employees by providing the same advancement opportunities to all employees.

If diverse employees are happy and get the same shot as everyone else, they proclaim this loud and clear to the community, family and friends. Then, diversity hiring takes off. The best recruiting occurs by word of mouth. Inclusion and respect do it every time.

Smart companies build on their respect for multiculturalism. They get involved in civic and neighborhood activities. Employees volunteer in the community; and teach in the local schools. They offer internship programs.

Why do multicultural employees leave?

1. They are marketable and they know it.
2. They are attracted to better opportunities.
3. They want to work in a company where there are more people of diversity.
4. They are not valued in the present company.
5. They are offended by racial stereotyping.
6. They have no valid reason to stay in a hostile environment devoid of promotions.
7. They do not get honest feedback from managers.
8. They feel the company is not concerned about their career.

Why do multicultural people stay?

1. They like it here; people are nice; they are treated with respect.
2. They can grow and are free to try new things.
3. They can work without much supervision.
4. There are many challenges here.
5. They want to be successful in the company, and people want them to be successful.
6. They made good friends, and there are other people of color.
7. They like coming to work and they tell family and friends how great it is to work for the company.

10. TELL YOUR DIVERSITY SUCCESS STORIES

Diversity candidates talk to each other; they help each other. They share what it is like to work for the company, or, to interview with the company. How diversity candidates perceive you spreads throughout the community.

Companies that have a positive customer service approach to prospective candidates become employers of choice. Tell your success stories; promulgate your best practices. Let the world know you are a champion of diversity.

Diversity benefits everyone

Before turning our attention to the world of diversity recruiting, a few words about what is missing in American college life.

There is a wonderful college a few miles from where I am writing. The campus is beautiful: picturesque, spacious, quaint New England, colonial buildings, green lawns, natural ponds, and plenty of trees. You get the picture. It is a safe, secure, peaceful haven to spend four years getting a degree. The competency, scholarship, and dedication of the faculty are extraordinary. The student body is down-to-earth, serious about education, friendly and welcoming.

Okay, what's missing? Everyone looks pretty much the same. There is little to no diversity.

I wonder if the education and environment provided prepare students for the world in which they will spend their lives. The students are getting short-changed; when they graduate, diploma in hand, and join the workforce, they will be forced to play “catch-up” for a long time.

Numerous studies prove that everyone prospers, learns, grows, and increases the quality of life experiences when they live and work in a heterogeneous society. Some universities see the enormous value of diversity and practice it; others scatter the profound theories proposed by wise scholars like leaves pushed around by a winter wind. Let’s hope all of academia becomes believers: *diversity is not a compromise but a step forward.*