



This month, we are giving you educational information on making the business case for diversity for all employees. Whether your organization is consumer facing, B-to-B, a government supplier or a nonprofit, your success depends on the cultural competence of your management and employees. That is reflected in three key areas: employee productivity; retention and promotion of those most qualified regardless of background; and excellent customer service.

1 Cultural Competence = Employee Productivity

Employees who are hurt or insulted don't perform well. And nothing is more offensive than comments, whether blatant or unintended, that impugn a person's race, ethnicity, gender, age, orientation or disability.

As DiversityInc's Things NOT to Say series (www.DiversityInc.com/things-not-to-say) illustrates, comments such as "Are you the husband or the wife?" "You're so articulate," "Are you pregnant?" and "How do you go to the bathroom?" create an office atmosphere that is toxic, resulting in unproductive employees, higher turnover rates, and lack of innovation and output.

What inclusive companies—such as those on The 2013 DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity list (www.DiversityInc.com/top50)—do is create mandatory cultural-competence training, which goes beyond compliance training (www.DiversityIncBestPractices.com/beyond-compliance) and requires participants to address hidden biases and be tested on increased knowledge of other demographics. That can include bringing in effective experts who can address stereotype threat (www.DiversityInc.com/how-stereotypes-affect-us) and the negative impact on business for organizations that ignore it.

Guided Questions for Employees



» **If you saw or heard biased comments in your workplace, what outlets would you have to address it?**

Have the laws—and what goes beyond the laws in terms of appropriate behavior in our corporate culture—been made clear to everyone? Do you know the proper channels to address any instances of inappropriate or uncomfortable behavior, even if it is not illegal?

» **Are your company's values clearly stated on the website and internal documents?**

Is the value of diversity and inclusion front and center, and easily understandable? How often is it communicated? Is it emphasized by senior leaders?

» **Are your resource groups used for cultural-competence education?**

Are the groups open to everyone? Is their value to the organization demonstrated? Do you know how to join a resource group or how to obtain information from them?

2 Retention and Promotion of Those Most Qualified

Are promotions distributed equitably among all groups, including women, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, American Indians, LGBT people and people with disabilities? Are the opportunities for being placed in a high-potential spot (and for exposure to senior leadership) equitable? Do your employees from underrepresented groups feel they can ask to be promoted into management jobs or ask for the necessary training and/or education?

Conversely, is your organization losing more people from these groups than it is losing white men? Retention of ALL employees is very dependent on how inclusive employees perceive your corporate culture to be, the messages sent from senior management (www.DiversityIncBestPractices.com/visibility), and, most importantly, the opportunity for recognition and advancement.

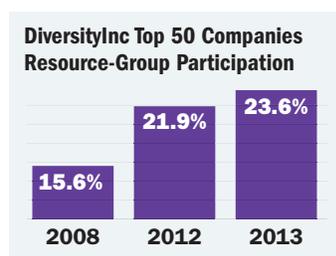
Critical ways to ensure equitable retention and promotion include:

Mentoring and Sponsorship • www.DiversityIncBestPractices.com/mentoring



Increasingly, companies are using formal, cross-cultural mentoring programs involving senior leadership to expose high-potentials from underrepresented groups to the people and the assignments they need to stay and succeed. While sponsorship is usually not formalized, it is critical in leveling the playing field, since political advocacy of promotable employees traditionally occurs between people from the same background. Cultural-competence training for mentors and mentees is essential.

Resource Groups • www.DiversityIncBestPractices.com/employee-resource-groups



Resource groups are a proven way to both find and develop talent from underrepresented groups. They have also been extremely effective as a means of increasing engagement and retention, and identifying and improving areas within the company that may contribute to regrettable loss. Key to this is exposure of resource-group leaders to senior management, often through rotating positions on the executive diversity council. Resource groups are also excellent ways to cross-functionally train people in leadership roles.

Guided Questions for Employees



» Are you a mentor or a mentee?

If so, is the relationship cross-cultural and what teachable moments have occurred? If not, have you considered being in a mentoring relationship? How easy is it to become a mentor or a mentee at your company?

» Have you considered taking on a leadership role in a resource group?

How easy is it to join resource groups or move up in them? Do managers at your company allow employees time to work on resource groups during the day? Are remote or hourly workers allowed to join and lead resource groups?

3 Customer Service

For both consumer-facing and B-to-B companies, relationships with the clients require managers who are representative of the marketplace and who understand cultural nuances. To start having culturally competent customer service, it's key to make sure you hire (www.DiversityIncBestPractices.com/recruitment), retain (www.DiversityIncBestPractices.com/retention-worklife), and promote (www.DiversityIncBestPractices.com/talent-development-mentoring) people who look like your customer base. Then, it's essential to LISTEN to their insights about the marketplace and to train your workforce (www.DiversityIncBestPractices.com/meeting-in-a-box), especially public-facing employees, about people not like them and how best to relate to them.

A critical way to train employees is to involve resource groups (www.DiversityIncBestPractices.com/employee-resource-groups). Increasing numbers of companies now use their resource groups as vital parts of their diversity-training packages, guiding their curriculum on what's relevant to the groups' constituencies. In our recent resource-group web seminar (www.DiversityIncBestPractices.com/resource-groups-web-seminar) with MasterCard and Dell, we discussed the value of resource groups in training and in finding and promoting talent.

Guided Questions for Employees



» **Is the public face of your company as diverse as the marketplace?**

Discuss why and how the marketplace is changing and the relevance of having people interacting with consumers/clients who understand their background.

» **What are the hallmarks of culturally competent customer service?**

What qualities do organizations with really effective customer service have? In your own experience as a consumer, what do you think is most important in understanding and dealing with customers?

NEXT MONTH

We'll address two more topics: **LGBT Pride Month** (for all employees) and **Succession Planning** (for D&I staff, HR and Talent Development leaders and staff, Legal staff, recruiters, and resource-group leaders).