



Steps Toward a Diverse Public Workforce

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Abstract: *This article summarizes best practices for organizations seeking to improve the diversity of their organizations.*

The population of the United States—the “great melting pot”—is already racially diverse and is becoming even more so. Data from the Census Bureau reveal that “[m]inorities now account for 36.6 percent of the total population,” and that Hawaii, Washington D.C., California, New Mexico, and Texas” are majority-minority jurisdictions.² Indeed by 2042, the country as a whole is expected to become minority-majority.³ The population of the United States is diverse in other ways, too: age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, region of origin (East Coast, Texas, etc.), and marital and parenthood status constitute but a few examples of the many other, non-racial, characteristics that individuals use to define themselves.⁴

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² Doris Nhan, “Census: Minorities Constitute 37 Percent of U.S. Population,” NATIONAL JOURNAL (May 17, 2012), available at <http://www.nationaljournal.com/thenextamerica/demographics/census-minorities-constitute-37-percent-of-u-s-population-20120517> (last visited Nov. 3, 2012).

³ *Id.*

⁴ See Mary E. Guy & Meredith A. Newman, *Valuing Diversity*, in HANDBOOK OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, 143-44 (Stephen E. Conduy ed., 2d ed., 2005).

Given the increasing diversity of the population, “the subject of diversity [has] emerged as a topic of national interest” among employers.⁵ By and large, employers have come to believe “that managing diversity effectively is a business necessity.”⁶ Thus, at a symposium on diversity in the workplace, “400 executives agreed that diversity programs help to ensure the creation, management, valuing and leveraging of a diverse workforce that will lead to organizational effectiveness and sustained competitiveness.”⁷ Diversity also furthers important societal values, particularly for public organizations. This paper will summarize best practices for organizations to use to improve their diversity, if they wish to do so.

When executives, human resource managers, and diversity consultants discuss diversity, the discussion typically revolves around the need to obtain and retain the best employees. Diverse organizations may find it easier to recruit new diverse prospective employees and help retain their highly qualified workers, thereby lowering overall personnel costs. Research shows that employees who do not feel integrated into an organization are more likely to leave than are other employees.⁸ To that end, Corning—a ceramics and specialty glass company—implemented a diversity management program in the 1980’s to ensure its diverse employees felt valued after it discovered that “women and people of color were resigning from the company at more than twice the rate of white men, costing the company \$2 to \$4 million a year to recruit, train, and relocate replacements.”⁹ As a result of its program, “Corning estimated a savings of \$5 million by reducing the attrition rate [for each] 100 people.”¹⁰

For those organizations actively working toward a diverse workforce, the literature suggests several best practices:

- Create and distribute a policy statement about diversity. Because diversity will not be a priority of lower management and rank-and-file employees if it is not a priority for upper management, organizations should “[d]evelop and distribute to all employees a policy statement from the [organization’s leader] that commits to a fair and equitable work environment for all, encourages openness and innovation, and expects high standards of performance.”¹¹ That policy statement should also be posted on the organization’s web site “as a public statement of the organization’s commitment to diversity.”¹²
- Establish a diversity council.¹³ A diversity council represents a visible organizational commitment to fostering diversity. To that end, it should meet regularly. Among

⁵ EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DIVERSITY OFFICE, UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT, PUB. NO. ES-DO-5, BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A DIVERSE, HIGH-QUALITY WORKFORCE, 3 (June 2000).

⁶ Thomas Kochan, *et. al.*, *The Effects of Diversity on Business Performance*, 42 HUMAN RESOURCE MGMT. 3, 4 (Spring 2003) (discussing view of former CEO of Hewlett-Packard Lew Platt). The academic literature

⁷ Nancy R. Lockwood, *Workplace Diversity*, SHRM RESEARCH QUARTERLY, NO. 2, 1, 3 (2005).

⁸ See R.T. Mowday, *et al.*, Employee Organization Linkages 129 (unknown publication date), *available at* http://www.iupui.edu/~speain/courses/v561/Multimedia/Absenteeism_Part_3.pdf (last accessed Nov. 3, 2012) (recounting research indicating that the “notion of subjective normative beliefs, or how those around an individual would feel about his or her leaving...may, in fact, explain a greater proportion of the turnover variance than job attitudes”).

⁹ Robinson & Dechant, *Building a Business Case for Diversity*, 11 THE ACADEMY OF MGMT. EXEC., NO. 3 at 28.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ NAT’L ACADEMY OF PUB. ADMIN., ACTION PLAN TO ACHIEVE A DIVERSE WORKFORCE, 39 (Nov. 2005).

¹² Lockwood, *Workplace Diversity*, SHRM RESEARCH QUARTERLY, NO. 2 at 8.

¹³ NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE, DIVERSITY PRACTICES THAT WORK: THE AMERICAN WORKER SPEAKS II, 13 (2009), *available at* http://www.nul.org/sites/default/files/Diversity_Practices_That_work_2009.pdf (last visited Nov. 3, 2012).

other things, an effective diversity council might supervise mentoring programs for minority employees, ensure that the organization's promotional materials reflect the diversity of its employees, and help the organization "avoid embarrassing mistakes, like scheduling mandatory training sessions for [employees] on Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday or Yom Kippur."¹⁴

- Hold management accountable. "To succeed in developing and sustaining strong diversity initiatives, agency heads should hold their executives, managers, and supervisors accountable for achieving results."¹⁵ Because leaders who want to achieve results quickly take charge rather than delegate, the overall responsibility for meeting diversity goals should not reside with the diversity council.¹⁶
- Recognize diversity successes. As a positive end, diversity should be celebrated. Accordingly, rather than merely holding managers accountable for failures to achieve the organization's diversity goals, organizations "should also remember to recognize [managers'] successes" in "building and maintaining a diverse, high-quality workforce."¹⁷
- Maintain and analyze diversity data. Because managers cannot be held accountable for failures—or rewarded for successes—that are not measured, organizations should "[r]egularly monitor the...workforce profile[,]...adjust[ing] recruiting strategies and other workforce planning initiatives as needed."¹⁸
- Recruit from multiple sources. Organizations can only be as diverse as their recruiting permits. They should ensure that their recruiting sources reach a wide pool of applicants, so they can find the best employee for the job.¹⁹
- Create a supportive working environment. Sometimes, highly qualified diverse applicants face barriers to working a typical 9-5, Monday through Friday schedule. Thus, the EEOC believes that "worklife initiatives...[can be] effective policies that advance the interests of a diverse workforce," including, for example, alternative work schedules, job sharing, and dependent care programs.²⁰
- Train the workforce about the importance of diversity.²¹ The training should include, but go "well beyond[,] basic awareness by including strong skill-building components," and should be provided not only to existing employees but also to new employees as part of their orientation.²² Because the organization should constantly strive to better manage its diversity practices, the training sessions should be recurring—not one time affairs.

¹⁴ Phillip L. Harris, *Confronting Race*, 30 CHI. LAWYER, No. 7, 8 (July 2007).

¹⁵ EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DIVERSITY OFFICE, BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A DIVERSE, HIGH-QUALITY WORKFORCE, at 23.

¹⁶ Harris, *Confronting Race*, 30 CHI. LAWYER, No. 7, at 8. Of course holding management accountable should not involve the imposition of quotas or other illegal race preferences. See generally 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(a) (prohibiting discrimination in employment on the basis of "race, color, religion, sex, or national origin"). Rather a persistent failure to recruit, hire, and retain a diverse workforce may suggest hidden problems in human resource functions that management can and should resolve.

¹⁷ EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DIVERSITY OFFICE, BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A DIVERSE, HIGH-QUALITY WORKFORCE at 23

¹⁸ *Id.* at 22.

¹⁹ See NAT'L ACAD. OF PUB. ADMIN., THE QUEST FOR TALENT: RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES, 15-20 (2000) (discussing various recruitment sources).

²⁰ EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DIVERSITY OFFICE, BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A DIVERSE, HIGH-QUALITY WORKFORCE, at 20.

²¹ NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE, DIVERSITY PRACTICES THAT WORK at 13.

²² *Id.*

From the best practices described above, organizations should select those that best fit their particular circumstances. “There is no ‘best way’ to manage diversity.”²³ Whichever practices the organization does select must be accompanied by a sincere commitment from senior management to implementing them effectively.²⁴

²³ Lockwood, *Workplace Diversity*, SHRM RESEARCH QUARTERLY, No. 2, at 10.

²⁴ *Id.*