A special report on diversity

THE FUTURE OF AMERICA "IN A GLOBALIZED ECONOMY WITHOUT A COLD WAR WILL REST WITH PEOPLE WHO CAN THINK AND ACT WITH INFORMED GRACE ACROSS ETHNIC, CULTURAL, AND LINGUISTIC LINES. AND THE FIRST STEP LIES IN ACKNOWLEDGING THAT WE ARE NOT ONE BIG WORLD FAMILY, OR EVER LIKELY TO BE.... IN THE WORLD THAT IS COMING, IF YOU CAN'T NAVIGATE DIFFERENCES, YOU'VE HAD IT." — ROBERT HUGHES, *TIME*, FEBRUARY 1992

Navigating the Differences

Thrust into the limelight by President Clinton, diversity was topic one during the selection of key officials for the new U.S. administration. Will politics give diversity the urgency it has lacked until now? Will an administration that "looks like America" be a model for business organizations?

Julie O'Mara, co-author of the book *Managing Workforce 2000: Gaining the Diversity Advantage,* says Clinton is "modeling the behavior other executives need and setting a good example." She believes that his selection of women and minorities for key positions "is an answer to the argument that only experience gained in the pipeline is sufficient for leadership."

Progress through the pipeline hasn't been good for women and minorities in the last 12 years. Presidents Reagan and Bush put affirmative action on the back burner, signaling that it wasn't important. One result was that blacks on the fast track found their careers coming to a halt, says Richard Clarke, president and founder of Richard Clarke Associates in New York, the nations's oldest black-executive recruiting firm.

The elimination of thousands of middle-management jobs has also wiped out much of the proving ground for minorities and women. In many companies, economic hard times appear to have overshadowed workforce diversity as a critical issue.

some of their most able employees" if women and minorities are "limited by the continuing 'norm' of white able-bodied males as the ideal."

For some companies, the result of ignoring diversity has been more than a loss of potential. The downside of not having a diversity strategy can be high turnover costs, dissatisfied workers who sabotage quality, or costly settlements in discrimination cases.

Companies that have figured out how to capitalize on diversity believe they have an advantage. At U.S. West, diversity is one of six priority business issues. President and CEO Richard D. McCormick says, "There is some self-interest here; it's the right thing to do and it's also good for business."

At Monsanto, management believes that the business will be more successful if managers establish a collaborative work environment in which everyone can succeed, says diversity director Thomas Cummins. Monsanto's Chemical Group in St. Louis, Missouri, has an aggressive strategy for making everyone more comfortable *and* more productive. (See the story on page 44.)

Diversity, a changing picture

In a recent review of new television shows, *New Yorker* critic James Wolcott noted that "rugged individualism has been put out to pasture.... Few shows are built around strong, laconic personalities chewing on a

43 percent minority: 25.8 percent Hispanic, 9.6 percent Asian, 7.4 percent black, and 0.8 percent native American. That's similar to the ethnic and racial mix the Census Bureau projects for the United States by 2050. By the turn of the century, 85 percent of net additions into the labor force will be "diverse" in one way or another.

Still biased after all these years

Helping companies deal with diversity is already a multimillion-dollar business for anthropologists, psychologists, and consultants, according to the *New York Times.* Their services range from "audits" of diversity to full-scale strategies for gaining maximum benefit from a diverse workforce.

According to various industry reports, says the *Times,* 40 percent of American companies have some form of diversity training.

Diversity consultant Julie O'Mara confirms that "Business has really picked up, for me and for other people in the field. I see lots of new people moving into it."

For all the good they do, diversity programs have yet to make a dent in what most experts consider to be the number-one impediment to advancement for women and minorities: lingering and deep-seated prejudice.

Psychologist and professor Jack Dovidio, at Colgate University, says racism persists in part because it's based on such normal psychological processes as grouping people into categories and making assumptions about them. His research shows that even white people who want to act fairly will discriminate unconsciously against people of color. (See the story on page 50.)

Other researchers claim that the myths about minority groups are part of what holds them back. A popular myth about women, for example, is that things will get better for them in the workplace in due time.

A report called "Empowering Women in Business" by the Feminist Majority Foundation, Washington, D.C., refutes this and other myths about women in business. The report cites evidence that equality at the top is not just a matter of time. According to the report, it will take

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D IVERSITY PROGRAMS HAVE YET TO MAKE A DENT IN THE NUMBER-ONE IMPEDIMENT TO ADVANCEMENT: LINGERING PREJUDICE

Whether management paid attention or not, workforce diversity grew steadily during the last decade. Today, women, people of color, and immigrants hold more than half the jobs in the United States.

R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr., president of the American Institute for Managing Diversity, argues in *Differences Do Make a Difference* that "corporations do not benefit from the full productive potential of

toothpick. What the new television series accent is ensemble casts, diverse ethnics, shared references ('The Brady Bunch' was a big signifier), spiritual rebirth, and a historical sense of redress to oppressed minorities. The message is We the People are in this endless recession together."

Who are "We the People" going to be? California, a bellwether for national trends, is already more than

Diversity Grows More Diverse

Most discussions about diversity tend to focus on race and gender. But there is another aspect to workplace diversity that has gone largely unrecognized—invisible, some people say. It concerns sexual orientations or alternative lifestyles.

An organization that is addressing that and other aspects of diversity is Eastman Kodak Company, through its Diversity Framework. The framework is divided into six arms: external relations, communications, improving representation, career development, education, and workforce-support systems. A work/life initiatives program—which falls within the support-systems category—addresses such issues as dependent care, alternative work schedules, and family-leave policies.

WSS also encompasses five employee networks: for women, working parents, African-Americans, Hispanics, and gays and lesbians.

The gay/lesbian network, with about 50 members, is still taking shape. According to member David Kosel, the network began when Kodak decided to revise family benefits. The company wanted to make sure it didn't overlook gays and lesbians in determining what constitutes a family. Kodak asked Sue Connolly, then director of workforce development, to find gay and lesbian employees in the company and ascertain their needs. She looked. Then she reported to her boss that there weren't any gays and lesbians among Kodak's 65,000 employees. "Look again," he suggested.

By chance, Connolly and Kosel met at a diversity seminar in California—far from Kodak's offices in Rochester, New York. They joke that they had to cross the country to find each other.

Back home, Connolly started the ball rolling with a diversity workshop that included single parents and working women. Kosel, a financial assistant, and his male partner decided to participate in the workshop—in effect, helping to introduce the issue of being gay into the diversity umbrella at Kodak. Afterwards, says Kosel, many co-workers came forward to show their support. As for management, the message from the top was that Kodak would not discriminate against any employee.

The gay/lesbian network had its first meeting in November 1992. The obstacles have been few, but Kosel says that members anticipate some problems as the network becomes more visible. Visibility will increase soon, when the network makes a planned appearance on KB-TV, an in-house television station that is broadcast on hall monitors in company facilities.

Kosel says the human resource department has assured network members that it is prepared to deal with any situations that may arise. Early on in the diversity program, Kodak designated an HR person to address the day-to-day concerns of gay and lesbian employees.

Asked for recommendations on starting a gay/lesbian network in another company, Kosel advises management to find people and make contacts—and then to turn things over to the members of the new network. "Gay people need to know the water's safe."

The important thing is for organizations to help overcome gay and lesbian employees' fears about other employees' reactions to them. Kosel usually refers to those concerns as "perceived" fears. Often, it turns out that the reactions aren't as bad as gay and lesbian employees expected, Kosel says.

Even when management shows support for gay and lesbian employees, some of those employees believe that "coming out" is risky. They worry about being passed over for promotions or receiving poor performance appraisals. Kodak was sensitive to those concerns, says Kosel, and left it up to the network to decide whether it wanted to aim for formal recognition from the organization. When Kodak officially endorses an employee network, the network gains such privileges as access to company facilities for meetings.

"Diversity is not just about counting heads to see who's this or that," says Al Brakoniecki, manager of media relations at Kodak. "Our goal is to enhance diversity. We're trying to reach a desired state in which all elements of diversity are supported and valued."

In Kosel's view, Kodak's gay/lesbian network provides support and serves as a listening and sounding board to help other employees understand gays and lesbians.

"A year ago, the company assumed we weren't here," Kosel says. "Today, it knows we're here, it has been very supportive, and it is willing to move forward in a slow, positive direction."

"As gays and lesbians become more accepted into the mainstream, I hope our productivity will increase," Kosel says, "and that people can go to work and it won't make a difference who they're with."

— **Haidee Allerton**
Associate editor, Training & Development

Comparing Affirmative Action, Valuing Differences, and Managing Diversity

Affirmative Action	Valuing Differences	Managing Diversity
Quantitative. Emphasis is on achieving equality of opportunity in the work environment through the changing of organizational demographics. Progress is monitored by statistical reports and analyses.	**Qualitative.** Emphasis is on the appreciation of differences and the creation of an environment in which everyone feels valued and accepted. Progress is monitored by organizational surveys focused on attitudes and perceptions.	**Behavioral.** Emphasis is on building specific skills and creating policies that get the best from every employee. Efforts are monitored by progress toward achieving goals and objectives.
Legally driven. Written plans and statistical goals for specific groups are utilized. Reports are mandated by EEO laws and consent decrees.	**Ethically driven.** Moral and ethical imperatives drive this culture change.	**Strategically driven.** Behaviors and policies are seen as contributing to organizational goals and objectives, such as profit and productivity, and are tied to rewards and results.
Remedial. Specific target groups benefit as past wrongs are remedied. Previously excluded groups have an advantage.	**Idealistic.** Everyone benefits. Everyone feels valued and accepted in an inclusive environment.	**Pragmatic.** The organization benefits: morale, profits, and productivity increase.
Assimilation model. Model assumes that groups brought into system will adapt to existing organizational norms.	**Diversity model.** Model assumes that groups will retain their own characteristics and shape the organization as well as be shaped by it, creating a common set of values.	**Synergy model.** Model assumes that diverse groups will create new ways of working together effectively in a pluralistic environment.
Opens doors. Efforts affect hiring and promotion decisions in the organization.	**Opens attitudes, minds, and the culture.** Efforts affect attitudes of employees.	**Opens the system.** Efforts affect managerial practices and policies.
Resistance. Resistance is due to perceived limits to autonomy in decision making and perceived fears of reverse discrimination.	**Resistance.** Resistance is due to a fear of change, discomfort with differences, and a desire to return to the "good old days."	**Resistance.** Resistance is due to denial of demographic realities, of the need for alternative approaches, and of the benefits of change. It also arises from the difficulty of learning new skills, altering existing systems, and finding the time to work toward synergistic solutions.

Adapted from Managing Diversity: A Complete Desk Reference and Planning Guide, *by* Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe. Copyright 1993, Business One Irwin.

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475 years for women to reach equality with men in the executive suite. Right now, in *Fortune* 500 companies women make up only 2.5 percent of top executive officers.

And to the argument that any competent women can reach the top "just the way men do," the report responds that "more than half of the board chairmen of the *Fortune* 500 companies are the sons of former chairmen."

These and other hard-wired attitudes are behind the policies and practices that "systematically restrict the opportunities and rewards available to women and people of color," says Ann Morrison, co-author of *Breaking the Glass Ceiling* and author of *The New Leaders: Guidelines on Leadership Diversity in America.* (See page 38 for details of her research on barriers to achieving diversity.)

Even the words that are used in business communications can set up barriers that hold back nontraditional workforce members, say many diversity experts. How business leaders

CHOOSING THE RIGHT WORDS IS IMPERATIVE. IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE BUSINESS SENSE TO ALIENATE EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS

choose to refer to diverse groups of people can actually set the tone for an organization's entire diversity effort.

Few topics have spurred as much controversy in recent years as "politically correct" language. Choosing the right words may take a little extra thought, but it's imperative, says Catherine Petrini in "The Language of Diversity." It just doesn't make business sense to alienate employees and customers.

But while business-related communications should show sensitivity

and respect, they should also be clear and accurate. For Petrini's advice on how to choose language that includes rather than excludes people, see the story on page 35.

What next?

Until there is more diversity in the management ranks, it will be necessary for managers to learn to manage diversity, says James Anderson, dean of undergraduate studies at North Carolina State University. This is impossible, he claims, unless organizations understand or "conceptualize" diversity, affirmative action, and equity. (See page 59 for more about Anderson's thoughts.)

In creating a diverse organization, three stages of evolution play a part, say Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe, authors of *Managing Diversity: A Complete Desk Reference and Planning Guide.* The three stages they cite are affirmative action, valuing differences, and managing diversity. See the chart, "Comparing Affirmative Action, Valuing Differences, and Managing Diversity," for a

summary of the characteristics of each stage.

Diversity "brings a new way of thinking about differences among people," write the authors. "Rather than arguing about how to cut up the pie and which group gets the largest slice, embracing diversity strives for a workplace where there are not only enough pies but also cakes, churros, and fortune cookies for all."

Ann Morrison believes the next step in the evolution of diversity in organizations is to concentrate on leadership development for minorities. "Better, more effective methods of leadership development applied to a larger pool of candidates can enhance organizational productivity, profitability, and responsiveness to business conditions."

Minorities need to be given assignments that challenge them, she says. Challenge, with recognition and support, are the components of the leadership development that Morrison recommends.

She has developed a five-step

> "TO ACHIEVE A RICH CULTURE, WE MUST WEAVE A SOCIAL FABRIC IN WHICH EACH DIVERSE HUMAN GIFT WILL FIND A FITTING PLACE"

action process for developing diversity in organizations.

▶ Discover (and rediscover) diversity problems in your organization.

▶ Strengthen top-management commitment.

▶ Choose solutions that fit a balanced strategy.

▶ Demand results and revisit goals.

▶ Use building blocks to maintain momentum.

Organizations can benefit greatly from learning to develop, manage, and value diversity. "If we are to

achieve a rich culture," wrote anthropologist Margaret Mead, "rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place." □

Reported by **Patricia A. Galagan,** *editor of* Training & Development.

The information in this special section on diversity is the outcome of an ASTD Board of Governors symposium held in October 1992. The symposium was planned and led by William E. Cross, Jr., associate professor at the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University. Reach him at 310 Trip Hammer Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

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