

WORKSHOP: ACHIEVING AND SUSTAINING DIVERSITY IN THE WORK PLACE

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Recent attacks on affirmative action programs require that we continue to remind ourselves and others about why these programs were initiated and why they must continue. This workshop will focus on affirmative action history, identify drivers for a diverse work force, describe barriers to achieving equality, and analyze practices that work towards achieving the goals of affirmative action.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION HISTORY

The history of affirmative action begins with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and was influenced by the U.S. Supreme Court Case of Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson issued Executive Order 11246, and government took a leadership role to make equal opportunity a reality. [The order was amended in 1967 to include women.] In addition to prohibiting federal contractors from discriminating in employment on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin, this executive order required that employers take affirmative action to insure that minorities were recruited and eventually promoted.

In 1969, the U.S. Department of Labor exposed widespread racial discrimination in the construction industry. This led President Nixon to incorporate a system of "goals and timetables" to evaluate federal construction companies' compliance with affirmative action. The "goals and timetables" system became guidelines for companies to follow in implementing affirmative action regulations.

In the 1970's, President Ford extended affirmative action to individuals with disabilities and to Vietnam era veterans, although no goals or timetables were required for these groups. The focus of affirmative action was equal opportunity that required outreach efforts in recruiting, accessibility, and accommodations. In 1978, President Carter created the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP) to insure compliance with affirmative action regulations.

Many groups have been included under the umbrella of affirmative action -- and Vietnam Era veterans, individuals with disabilities, minorities and women have made gains in the work force as a result. Affirmative action is a tool to make equal opportunity a reality. Affirmative action is not about preferential treatment, nor does it mean that unqualified persons should be hired or promoted over other people.

DRIVERS FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/DIVERSITY

Changing Demographics

By the mid 21st Century, "people of color" may equal white Americans in number. Hispanics will outnumber African Americans in the next 15 years, causing a major shift in America's racial and ethnic composition. The following chart depicts U.S. population in 1980, 1995, and projected for 2025.

By Race/Ethnicity	1980	1995	2025
American Indians	.6%	1%	1%
Asian Pacific/Islanders	1.6%	4%	7%
African Americans	11.8%	13%	14%
Hispanics*	6.4%	10%	18%
Whites	85.9%	83%	78%

*Note: Hispanic origin may be of any race.

The number of employees with disabilities will also increase. People with disabilities are the nation's largest minority, and each person has a 20% chance of becoming disabled at some time during his/her working life. According to Census reports, the employment rate of persons with disabilities has declined over the last three years.

	1970	1980	1990
In the Labor Force	43.8%	38.1%	39.3%
Out of the Labor Force	56.2%	61.9%	60.7%

A 1994 Harris Poll survey of individuals with disabilities reported that 79% of the respondents who are not working wanted to work. Eight out of ten believed they would have the kind of career they wanted if not for their disability.

Education and Information Technology

The effect of information technology on future education skills for the work force has already impacted the United States. Minorities and women are encouraged to pursue scientific and engineering careers because of their potential for opportunities. Hot job markets are in the computer science and information technology. The National Science Foundation reports many gains in educational enrollment, achievement, and employment for women, minorities and individuals with disabilities.

Science and engineering doctorates awarded to women increased from 25% in 1983 to 30% in 1993. Minorities earned 11% of total science and engineering doctorates in 1993, compared to 4% in 1983. Asians make up the largest proportion, earning 9% of total science and engineering degrees; African Americans 3.5%, Hispanics 3%, and American Indians .02% of total science and engineering degrees. Individuals with disabilities received less than one percent of the total science and engineering doctorates. It's important to note that the Hispanic high school drop-out rate continues to be a critical concern for industry given the projected increase in the population in the coming years.

The Role of Women in the Work Force

Although women's population rate remains constant, their participation in the work force continues to increase. In the 1970's, approximately 38% of the paid work force were women, compared to 58% today. These changes are due to the increase in the number of single families where women are heads of households, the need for two-income partners, and the educational attainment of women and their pursuit of careers.

Aging Work Force

In 1995, the median age of the U.S. population was 34.3. In 2025, the median age is projected to be 38. The non-Hispanic white population is projected to be the oldest segment of the population. Many post-WWII baby boomers will begin turning 50 this year, increasing by 50% this age group from 1996 to 2006. The number of people age 65 and over is projected to increase to 20% of the total population by 2030, compared to 13% now.

Minority and Women Businesses

The Urban Institute in Washington (October 1996) completed a study on minority owned-businesses and found a large disparity in obtaining public contracts. They concluded that minority firms received 57 cents for every dollar they would have been expected to receive based on their composition within all contracting firms. The institute concluded that government affirmative action policies should remain intact

and not enough evidence justified eliminating policies that promote minority participation in government contracting.

According to the National Association of Women Business Owners, women own 40 percent of small businesses and employ more than 12 million people. Yet, they received only 2 percent of all federal procurement contracts during 1993. Again, clearly a message that affirmative action policies are still needed.

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING EQUALITY

The 1995 Chicago Area Partnerships (CAP) report on "Best Practices to Shatter the Glass Ceiling" identified barriers that affect the recruitment, selection, and retention of women and minorities in corporations. In the area of recruitment, barriers include: pipelines lack women and minorities, therefore, upper-level vacancies, which are filled from within companies, are not diverse; positions continue to be filled through networking and word-of-mouth recruiting; and interviews and job offers are made outside the formal process. The report cited that there are fewer developmental opportunities for women and minorities because criteria used to identify "high potentials" are based on exposure and comfort level of managers. Furthermore, women and minorities tend to be placed in staff positions with little authority, lessening their opportunities for top decision-making positions. The Partnership report revealed other barriers such as inadequate record keeping with regards to recruitment, employment, promotions, monitoring developmental plans and appraisal and compensation systems, poor career planning and development, an unsupportive work environment, unequal pay, and that women and minorities are held to different standards of performance than white males.

PRACTICES THAT WORK TO ACHIEVE EQUALITY

Chicago Area Partnerships reported a number of steps that corporations must take to achieve equality in order to shatter the glass ceiling. Of utmost importance are leadership and management support as the initial step. To affect real change, leaders must demonstrate commitment to equal opportunity, affirmative action, and diversity through actions. These actions include integrating EEO into daily management practice, involving top management in monitoring the results of EEO/AA/Diversity efforts, supporting training, and encouraging high-level management participation and interaction with employee groups. Senior management should be held accountable for EO/AA/Diversity results through performance appraisal standards and connecting compensation to results in meeting these initiatives in hiring, promotion, and retention. Management should constantly communicate diversity initiatives to employees, vendors, and community organizations. Companies need to develop succession planning systems that identify and track high potential women and minorities. Other developmental recommendations include mentoring programs, rotational assignments, and implementing training initiatives to ensure that women

IMPACTING CHANGE THROUGH COLLABORATION

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and minorities' competencies, skills, and abilities are appropriate for future career opportunities in the work place. These same actions hold true for recruiting and retaining individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, the CAP report made recommendations that minorities and women need to put in the extra time and effort to learn the business; demonstrate competency in visible jobs; find a mentor; network; be flexible and open to opportunities; know oneself – strengths and weaknesses; and solicit feedback on performance and advancement.

Attracting and retaining older workers will be of utmost importance as the number of workers decreases. Employers may need to retrain this group on new technology. At the same time, however, they need to utilize their years of experience to train less experienced people.

CONCLUSION

Successful employers in future years will be those who hire and retain sufficient numbers of high quality workers. They understand the dynamics of future work force trends, value diversity, and are creative in their approaches in the recruitment, selection, and retention of employees.

Minorities and women must take personal responsibility to collaborate and incorporate changes in the work place. To work together more effectively, each must celebrate and acknowledge the success of all women and minorities -- view each other as supporters and stepping stones toward opportunity for all. Each woman/minority should be accountable for mentoring another individual. Mentors have proven effective in retaining minorities and women in the work place. Through community outreach, women and minorities provide role models to children at risk and promote positive social development. By preparing students for the work place, with encouragement to further their education and providing internships for experience, we can ensure an adequate pipeline of qualified individuals for the future.

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