

Preface

Managing diversity has been challenging employers for decades, but in the past 20 years companies have begun to realize that differences in gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age and other factors can be leveraged to the advantage of an organization, not just managed to avoid lawsuits. In fact, forty years after the civil rights movement led to the development of a complex framework of antidiscrimination legislation in the United States, leading companies have gone far beyond the nondiscrimination requirements mandated by law to try to leverage the differences among their employees to recruit and retain the top talent available regardless of difference. Recent attention to the economic benefits that can be derived from diversity has moved the discussion from companies taking a moral stance on diversity (doing it is "the right thing to do") to a business case approach to the issue. The fact of ever-increasing diversity in the workforce, through immigration and demographic shifts, has made it a top priority of leading companies around the world.

The phenomenon of globalization has added another layer of complexity to workforce management, and has moved diversity to the forefront of issues faced by global as well as American and European companies. Whether managing multicultural teams, ensuring effective cross-cultural communications, developing and retaining a global cadre of leaders, or merely trying to comply with myriad local workforce laws and regulations, human resources

professionals are increasingly dealing with issues that fall under the heading of global diversity.

Global diversity is still a relatively new concept for most companies, but for multinationals, interest is rapidly growing. In a survey of about 100 diversity professionals in *Fortune* 500 companies by ORC in 2003, fewer than 10% cited global diversity as an area of interest or responsibility. A short two years later, a 2005 survey of the diversity professionals in the same companies revealed that almost 25% of those companies said global diversity was now a priority for them.

-- Editor