

Changing Demographics – Why it Matters and What You Can Do

A Tool for Leaders and HR

Organizations should have a good understanding of changing demographic trends in order to develop effective strategies for recruitment and hiring in the years ahead. Hiring officials and human resources professionals who stay on top of the latest data will be in a better position to make decisions that will directly impact the quality of new hires and the well-being of their organizations.

To remain competitive, it is not enough to simply know the data. As leaders, hiring officials and human resources staff can take specific actions and adopt strategies commensurate with the changing times to make the most of emerging trends and position their organizations as models of sound recruitment/hiring practices.

What can leaders and HR do?

- **Achieve a balance in accommodating the world-view and attributes of each of the four generations of workers.** Continue to engage and develop more experienced workers in the organization while preparing and training newer workers to come up to speed (i.e., succession planning is critical). For example, use mentoring programs to develop newer workers and pass on institutional knowledge.
- **Develop and offer attractive work/life programs** that accommodate the needs and values of different generational groups, and workers from diverse backgrounds. For example, telework and alternative work schedule programs appeal to the desire of some workers for a higher level of autonomy or control over their schedules, while others value Employee Assistance Programs, or health and wellness programs.
- **Seek to understand variations in how different generational groups view work** in order to find creative ways to attract them to apply for positions and to retain them once hired. What motivates workers in each generation? Do they generally place greater value on taking charge of their careers; clear-cut assignments, expectations and communication from management; developmental opportunities and recognition; etc.? How do these values differ and how can you take advantage of those differences?
- **Find ways to communicate that each worker's specific talents, regardless of generation, are valued** and make a difference to the organization's success. Involve employees in decision-making to the extent possible, and demonstrate management's commitment to each person's learning and development.
- **Engage in careful workforce planning prior to posting jobs to determine the best mix** of sources and ensure the widest diversity in the applicant pool, drawing from all segments of society.
- **Consider the practical consequences of diversity-related trends and convert that information into strategies to attract, recruit, hire and retain the best workers.** For example, plan ahead for filling

positions that require language skills by developing sources of talent that include multi-lingual students or workers; or offer work/life programs that offer a broad range of choices for individuals entering the workforce at different life stages.

- **Provide appropriate training to prevent discriminatory practices in hiring** and to promote understanding of differences and perceptions based on factors such as, race, ethnicity, gender and culture.
- **Stay up-to-date on the many ways to ensure reasonable accommodation of employees with disabilities** (e.g., the Job Accommodation Network, and Department of Defense Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program).
- **Create partnerships with community colleges, vocational schools, four-year colleges, and corresponding student organizations with diverse memberships** to build talent pipelines. This can lead to connections to students with language skills who can be tapped at the time they are ready to graduate.
- **Develop relationships with community-based organizations serving diverse populations** to establish additional talent pools.