

Dispelling the **Myths** about **Diversity**

Many falsehoods about managing a heterogeneous workforce abound. Here's how forward-thinking companies are tackling the issue.





A generation ago the pursuit of diversity, or affirmative action, as it was more generally referred to, was perceived by many in the business community as the heavy hand of government grabbing industry by the shirttails and slowing its pace with cumbersome “do-gooder” rules.

The perception has changed radically. “There is a sequence of logic that diversity has passed through,” says Bruce Tulgan, president of Rainmaker Thinking, a New Haven, Conn. consulting company. “The first level

was, ‘Gee, we have to honor diversity because we are required to by laws and regulations.’ The second level was that diversity would be good for business because it would bring in fine employees who might otherwise be overlooked. Now we are at the level at which we see that the collaborative result of bringing minorities together with traditional employees makes the company better than it was. There are fewer blind spots; there is innovation.”

So diversity has progressed from being a per-

ceived handicap to becoming a recognized competitive advantage. “Diversity is the bridge between the workplace and the marketplace,” observes David Thomas, senior associate dean at Harvard Business School and a leading thinker in strategic human resource management. It’s becoming clear, achieving diversity is a strategy as vital to success in the tough and unforgiving contemporary marketplace as lean management, outsourcing, and websites on the Internet.

But despite the evidence that diversity helps



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keep a company strides ahead of rivals, a wall of myths still surrounds diversity—fixed ideas that don't yield easily. Until corporate leaders are able to break down those barriers and persuade followers within their companies to appreciate and cultivate the landscape now open to them, their companies will not be able to take advantage of diversity, and their competitive edge will be blunted. What follows is an examination of some of the most prevalent myths, and the strategies corporate champions of diversity are using to dispel them.

their own welfare, not concerned with the well-being of the company. "When those other workers feel animosity toward support groups it's generally because management has not made it clear to everyone the advantages of having a diverse workforce," says Judith Katz, executive vice president of Kaleel Jamison Consulting in Washington, D.C., a firm that advises companies on diversity issues. "The problem is that most managers don't have a lot of good skills when it involves talking to people about differences. Organizations haven't invested in giving people new skills. It's not an age issue; it's one of mindset. Even young people can be set in the old way of doing things."

Indeed, far from being divisive, diversity can be a factor for unity, for pulling everyone in the company together in the common cause. At Monster, the huge online employment agency, everyone is welcome to join the company diversity council, be they white males, black women, or disabled Asians. "We want this council to be mainstream," says Steve Pemberton, Monster's chief diversity officer. "Everyone has something to bring and something to learn."

What traditional employees come to appreciate, for example, is how important it is for Monster to attract minority job seekers, because Monster's corporate clients are eagerly searching for those candidates; of 104 companies named tops for diversity in several



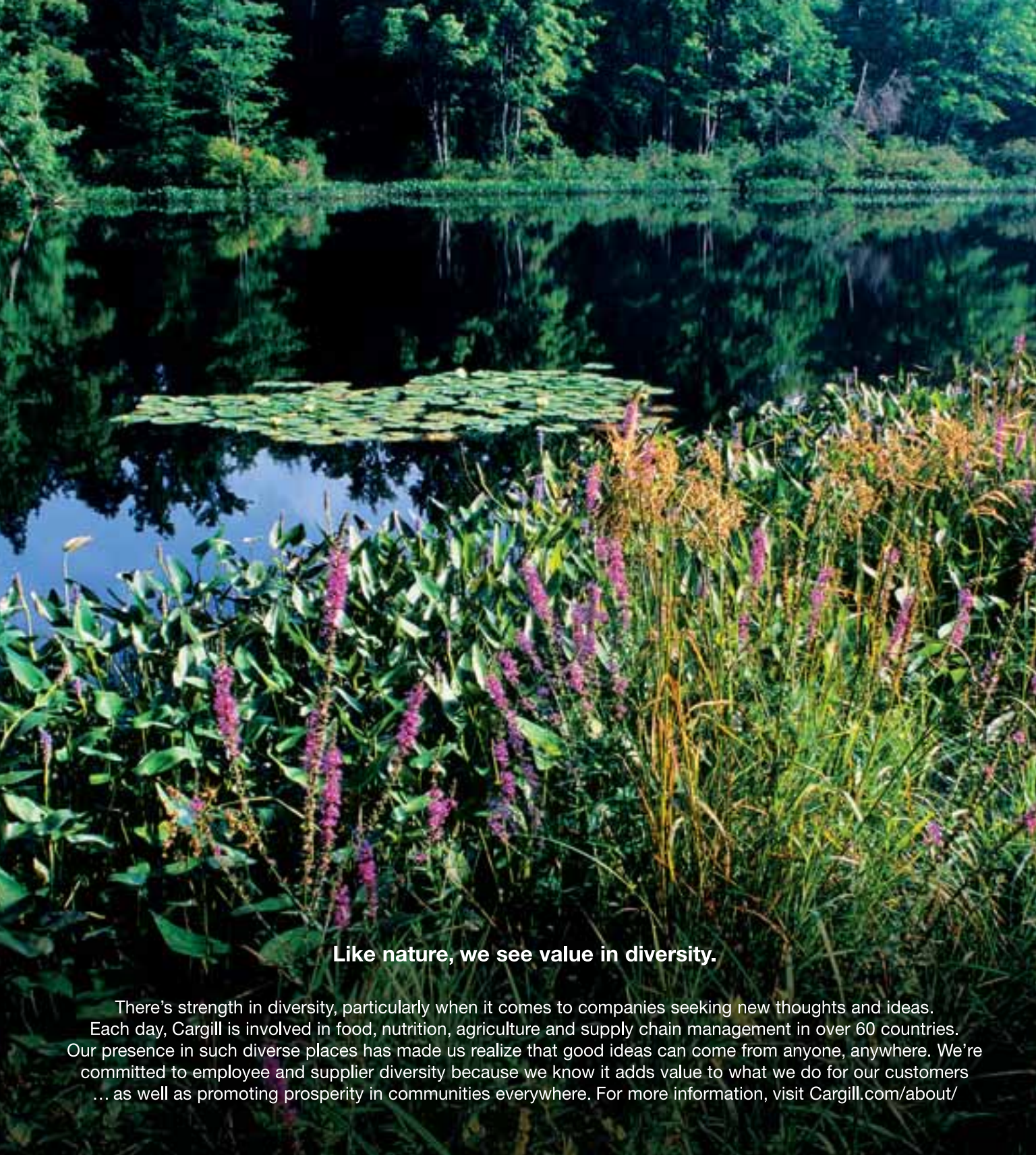
magazine surveys, 96 are Monster clients. How do those minority job seekers expect to be treated by Monster staffers trying to match them with employers—do they want to be identified as minorities? "We have done research on this question," says Pemberton. "About half want to be identified as being diverse, and the other half do not." So job applicants have a choice of entering their résumés in a general channel, or mailbox, or entering them in a special diversity and inclusion channel. Another interesting piece of information that has come out of Monster research is the heartening news that almost half of white men and women

(46%) express a preference for finding a place in a diverse, rather than traditional, workplace.

Southern California Edison currently has nine formally recognized affinity groups. Beyond the traditional celebrations honored by the company, the groups host events celebrating such occasions as Ramadan, Nowruz (Persian New Year), and the Los Angeles and Long Beach, Calif. Pride parades. "These events are attended by affinity group members, other employees, and executives—which sets a tone of inclusion throughout the company," says Frank Quevedo, vice president for equal opportunity at the electric utility company.

<p>No.</p> <h1>1</h1>
<p>MYTH</p> <p>Diversity is divisive.</p>
<p>REALITY</p> <p>The reality is that if properly explained by management, diversity can bring a unifying esprit to a company's efforts.</p>

AS MINORITY employees join support groups, other workers may be inclined to view them as separatists, interested only in



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No. **2**

MYTH

There is a single business case for diversity.

REALITY

The reality is that each company has its own business case story.

male instructors in a relaxed atmosphere.

MGM MIRAGE, one of the world's leading hotel and gaming corporations, wants to position its 23 properties in Nevada, Mississippi, and elsewhere as destinations of choice for emerging markets of minority consumers. The company believes its workforce should reflect the guests it serves.

Similarly, at Time Warner (parent company of FORTUNE's publisher), one persuasive business case for diversity is to expand the audiences for its movies, television shows, publishing titles, online services, and cable offerings among the growing minority population. Having diverse executives in senior positions not only helps the

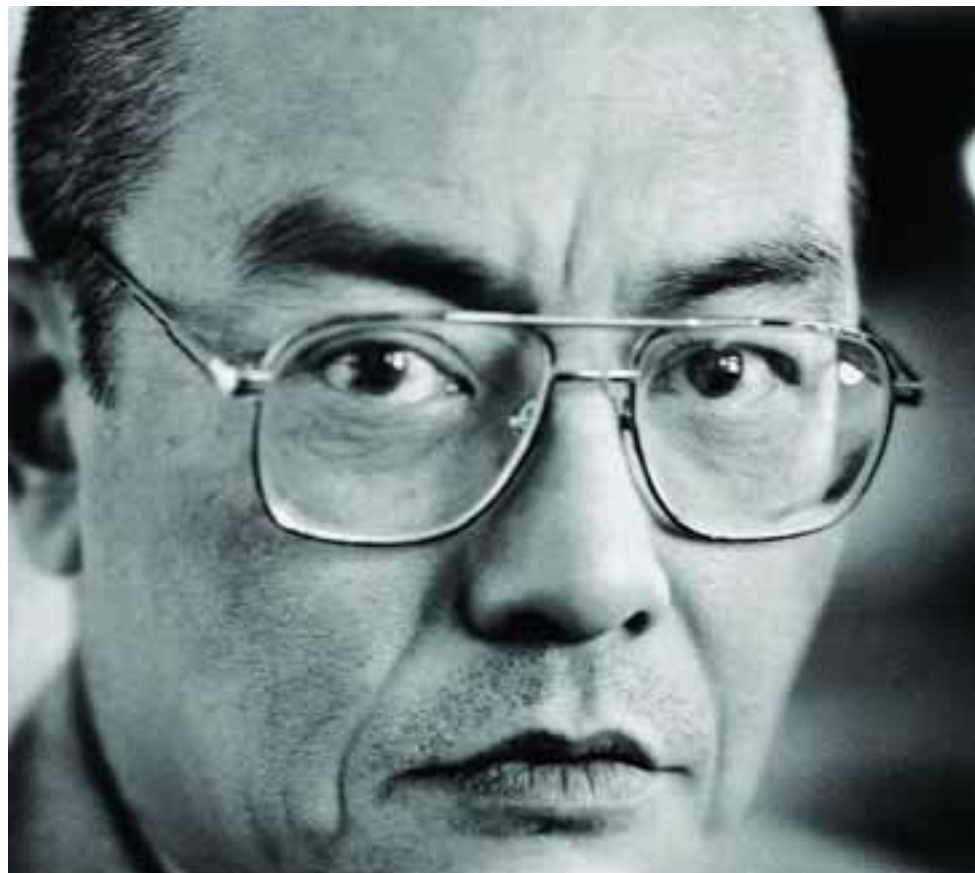
company spot opportunities it might otherwise have missed, it also helps avoid costly mistakes.

In 1996, the company launched the Spanish-language version of its enormously successful *People* magazine, *People en Español*. The initial temptation was to simply translate the English-language version into Spanish. Hispanic executives and others within the company familiar with the target market pointed out that that could be a serious misstep. "A Hispanic woman might be less interested in Jennifer Aniston and Brad Pitt than she is in the star of one of the telenovelas on Spanish-language television," observes Lisa Quiroz, Time Warner's se-

nior vice president for corporate responsibility. So the magazine and website are written and edited with the tastes and interests of the Hispanic woman in mind.

With its record of bold and original programming, the company's HBO network not only attracts an increasingly diverse audience, but increasing numbers of minority creative artists are contributing to it, as well. Among them is filmmaker Spike Lee, who brought his idea for a documentary about New Orleans, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* to HBO, which aired the film in September. "In order to stay competitive in our various industries, we recognize the business

FOR IBM, part of the business case is in the search for technical talent. David Thomas has studied IBM and notes that the company is wondering where the talented mathematicians it needs to fill its ranks will come from in the future. In recent years IBM has found a ready source of some of those highly skilled workers in job seekers from India and China. But as these two countries advance, more of their young people are inclined to stay home. So IBM is making a serious effort to enlarge the pool of American candidates for its jobs, especially expanding the number of female candidates. For the past few years, IBM has sponsored a program that sends middle school girls to a week of summer camp, where they learn about math and science from IBM fe-



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need to seek out the best writers among underrepresented populations, such as women, gays and lesbians, and people of color," says Quiroz. To help accomplish that goal, HBO sponsors the Black Filmmakers Foundation Summit, which brings together filmmakers and executives of top studios. Time Warner is also planning to launch the Time Warner Storytelling Advancement Fund with the Sundance Institute to support the development of projects that highlight the diversity of our common experience.

Weyerhaeuser, the big forest products company based in the state of Washington, makes a multifaceted case for diversity. For one, honoring diversity is not just a business imperative, it is consistent with the company's dedication to valu-

ing people. "And if you look at global demographics, increasingly the talent pool of engineers, chemists, and other people we need is increasingly diverse," notes Efenus Henderson, the company's chief diversity officer. Another factor in Weyerhaeuser's commitment is that the investment community increasingly demands corporate transparency and honorable reputation, which is reinforced by diverse leadership at all levels of the organization. Finally, customers are becoming more diverse and their tastes and preferences are therefore evolving, especially in the demand for homes, the construction of which is a large and growing part of Weyerhaeuser's business. Single women, minorities, and recently arrived immigrants do not necessarily have the same

housing requirements as the traditional American family of four. Having diverse teams makes Weyerhaeuser more aware of emerging needs and gives the company an added ability to innovate.

Too often, minority workers lack the networking connections within the company that more traditional workers have. So the minorities miss out on opportunities, fail to get promotions, become discouraged, and frequently quit. "I have looked at a number of major organizations over the past 15 years, and if they had the same retention rate for blacks as they do for whites, they would have twice as many blacks as they actually have," says Harvard's Thomas. "Too often the corporate culture is not focused on advancement, so advancement is left to chance."

No. 3

MYTH

The hardest part of diversity is recruitment.

REALITY

The reality is that the hardest part of creating a diverse workforce is retention.

THE HIGHEST attrition rate occurs during the first three or four years a worker is on the job, ob-

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serves Weyerhaeuser's Henderson. How the new arrival gets along with his or her immediate supervisor is a crucial determinant in whether to stay or leave. "The relationship with that supervisor is the most important factor in turnovers," he says. "Employees don't leave companies. They leave supervisors." Henderson also stresses the positive potential in the initial encounter: A good first supervisor is an enormous help in welcoming, engaging, and integrating a newcomer into the company. So Weyerhaeuser makes it clear to those first-line managers how important they are. Turnover is not only demoralizing, it is also expensive.

Southern California Edison says it is committed to workforce diversity and has successfully retained minority employees. "We have an outstanding track record," says diversity chief Quevedo. "We attribute this to several factors, among them our affinity groups, which help employees feel valued and allow them to share their cultures with all employees." The company also claims an extensive leadership development program and mentoring programs that help open doors for minority employees to new opportunities within the company.

The executive leadership, management certification, and future leaders programs, which are over-

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seen by senior management, help prepare Edison employees for potential opportunities and positions that will be available to them tomorrow. Through activities like brown-bag lunches and

networking events, all employees are encouraged to share their points of view and backgrounds with others. This helps foster a culture that ensures that all employees feel supported and valued.

DIVERSITY HAS A MASCOT

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Monte Carlo • New York-New York • Luxor • Excalibur • Circus Circus
Railroad Pass • Primm Valley Resorts • Silver Legacy • Circus Circus Reno
Colorado Belle • Edgewater • Gold Strike • Nevada Landing
Outside Nevada: Beau Rivage • Gold Strike - Tunica • Grand Victoria • MGM Grand Detroit



No. **4**

MYTH
Diversity requires lowering standards.

REALITY
The reality is that diversity can lead to bringing out the best performance in everyone.

ONE ASSUMPTION is that minority workers are of a lower caliber than others and will be inferior performers. Judith Katz maintains that often the reason workers fail to live up to standards is that their managers are not competent. "In our experience working with companies we've concluded that about 30% of them are not up to what their jobs require these days," she says. "They rose to management ranks because of their technical skills, but they are not able to coach and get the best efforts out of their subordinates."

BellSouth, the big Atlanta-based telecommunications company, demands that its supervisors create a climate that is welcoming and reassures new employees that they are candidates for promotion regardless of their

gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or disability. "The message we convey is that we believe in differences," says Valencia Adams, BellSouth's chief diversity officer. "If your differences were not important to us, we would not have hired you." BellSouth wants its labor force of more than 60,000 to be as varied as its customers and suppliers. "We want to present, inside and out, a company that embraces diversity," says Adams.

MGM MIRAGE believes that diversity raises standards. "Diversity is key to tapping maximum motivation and maximum performance from our teams at every level, top to bottom; in all of our disciplines; across all of our properties and businesses," says CEO Terry Lanni. "Our premise is simple: An organization that values the contributions of all people will derive the contributions of its entire workforce."

Safeway Stores, with headquarters in Pleasanton, Calif., is also convinced that diversity raises standards. "The benefits of a diversity of ideas and approaches are a broader palette of opinions, which results in better decisions," says executive vice president Larree Renda, who is chief strategist and administrative officer. "We also need to have the commitment to teamwork in leveraging and integrating the wealth of ideas presented."

The supermarket chain's approach has been to reward managers who successfully identify and develop women and people of color, she says. "We

encourage managers to identify nontraditional styles of leadership in their groups and develop a mentoring relationship," adds Renda. "Employees who know they are valued, especially when their styles are different from others', are more likely to be productive contributors over the long term."

No. **5**

MYTH
If the CEO is on board, diversity will succeed.

REALITY
The reality is that if the rest of senior management is not committed as well, diversity will fail.

WITHOUT QUESTION, the strong support of the CEO is essential, but it is not sufficient. What is often overlooked is the importance of involving the rest of senior management in the diversity effort. "If those just below the CEO don't feel ownership and accountability, very little happens," says David Thomas.

Adams of BellSouth agrees. "The CEO must set the course and establish the tenor," she says. "But

no one person can carry out the program alone." The telecommunications company requires all senior managers to attend diversity training courses. The CEO is chairman of BellSouth's diversity council and 12 other senior leaders sit on it, as well, including the heads of human resources, external affairs, and marketing. "This is not just a nice thing to do," says Adams. "The senior leaders confer on which diversity projects to focus on." Among their other responsibilities, senior leaders are charged with making sure that managers below them mentor their subordinates.

Safeway makes sure that operating division presidents are fully engaged in the diversity effort. "We have diversity champions in each division who serve on our network diversity groups, and as diversity trainers," says chief strategist Renda. "Moreover, we have implemented a formal process for identifying and sharing best practices across our business." Safeway believes that an important advantage of its integrated approach is sustainability. "Programs at some companies get introduced with a lot of fanfare only to die on the vine when a subsequent priority takes diversity's place," says Renda. "By giving diversity a voice at all levels of management we have avoided that trap."

This article is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all the myths about diversity; there are others. Most of the myths listed began early on in the movement toward diversity and have



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persisted for years. Other myths have appeared more recently. One of them is that diversity does not include white males. "You can't have diversity without them," points out consultant Katz of Kaleel Jamison. It would be ludicrous and ultimately self-destructive for a company to behave as though the talents and views of white males were expendable

simply because they are traditional and familiar.

Another myth that has grown with the diversity movement is that simply because the boss resembles the employee—female, or Asian, or disabled, for example—he or she can automatically see the world through the employee's eyes. That's not necessarily so: A female boss might not be any more patient



DIVERSITY EXPERTS

BLACK DIAMONDS LIFESTYLE GROUP

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UNITYFIRST.COM, a multicultural e-news service that shares information with the diverse community and media, recently launched the Business World Index to deliver business information to both diverse and mainstream companies, consumers, and professionals. The UnityFirst.com Network—including UnityFirst.com TV/Online News, Business World Index, and African American Newswire—reaches over two million people of diverse heritage in the U.S. and abroad. To receive Business World Index, send an email to: info@unityfirst.com.

WIPP is a bipartisan public policy organization representing over half a million women business owners on the issues that impact their business growth. Network, get involved, and grow your company. Visit us on the web at www.WIPP.org.

than a male with a female subordinate who stays home to take care of a sick child; a boss who is a father might be more sympathetic than a single woman.

Tulgan of Rainmaker believes that he has detected an emerging myth among some of the workers of Generation Y, those 30 and younger: that diversity in any form is good. "Some Gen Yers think that every difference has to be honored—bad attitude toward the job, coming in late, whatever," says Tulgan. The business case for this bizarre, or at least unusual, perspective is foggy—psychotic employees will better relate to psychotic customers, perhaps? That's a shaky premise, at best, and why would a company seek out psychotic customers? The demands of the mar-

ketplace require companies to hire and promote people regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, age, or sexual preference—not regardless of their attitude or competence.

Myths, once they have taken hold, are as enduring as they are damaging. Each day new ones about diversity permeate corporate America. So it's the job of management, especially senior management, to keep identifying and eradicating these falsehoods as quickly as possible. The cost of not doing so is a hobbled company. Organizations who meet this challenge—the champions of diversity—will be in far better competitive positions to lead their industries. —Lee Smith

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The Way to the Top

How does a company make it into the elite tier of diversity leaders listed on the following pages? "It starts with focusing on diversity as an area in which the company wants to be best in class," says David Thomas, senior associate dean at Harvard Business School, who helped The Diversity Network compile the Top Companies for Minorities list (below). "In

every other dimension CEOs and senior managers set out to be the best, but when it comes to diversity they compare themselves to others in their industry and settle for being average. That's not the route to success."

A common mistake that companies make in creating the right climate for diversity is relying too heavily on magic-bullet

solutions, such as mentoring programs, Thomas continues. "When those programs don't address the full spectrum of factors as to whether people are integrated into the company, they won't work."

One of the reasons that middle managers resist diversity efforts is that no one in senior management tells them what they

are supposed to be doing differently, says Thomas. No one answers for them the question: What will it look like if my area of authority is an inclusive rather than exclusive environment?

Companies that face such shortcomings and dispel the myths included in the accompanying story will be in the running to be champions of diversity.



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STEWARDS OF DIVERSITY

To find out how committed America's largest companies are to advancing diversity within their own organizations, the Diversity Network surveyed the universe of companies with annual revenues of \$500 million or more. To find corporate stewards of diversity it reviewed each company's minority supplier programs, and looked at

the percentage of diverse employees in its workforce, including the C-suite. It also examined the extent to which diversity is an integral part of each corporation's business strategy, and how its top executives are held accountable for their diversity efforts in terms of performance evaluation and compensation.

TOP COMPANIES FOR MINORITIES

ABBOTT	DUPONT	MARRIOTT	COCA-COLA
AFLAC	FEDERAL EXPRESS	MERCK	TIME WARNER
ARAMARK	FREDDIE MAC	NIKE	UPS CORPORATE
AT&T	HILTON HOTELS	NORDSTROM	WAL-MART STORES
BRINKER INTERNATIONAL	HSBC-NORTH AMERICA	NORFOLK SOUTHERN	XEROX
CITIGROUP	JPMORGAN CHASE	PG&E	YUM! BRANDS
COLGATE-PALMOLIVE	LIZ CLAIBORNE	PROCTER & GAMBLE	
DAIMLERCHRYSLER	LUCENT TECHNOLOGIES	SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON	

LEADING COMPANIES FOR A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

ALLSTATE INSURANCE	GANNETT	MEADWESTVACO	SAFEWAY
ARCHSTONE-SMITH COMMUNITIES	H.J. HEINZ	PEPCO HOLDINGS	UNITED TECHNOLOGIES
DUPONT	INTEL	PRUDENTIAL FINANCIAL	U.S. CELLULAR
EMC	JPMORGAN CHASE	QUALCOMM	

The Diversity Network's core mission is to help U.S. companies diversify their workforces so the full spectrum of America's demographic mix is represented at all levels, including management.

The Diversity Network's focus is threefold:

- to help corporations attract and hire the talent they need to be-

come more competitive and develop new markets through diversity;

- to work closely with a multicultural talent pool of candidates and identify career paths that leverage their experiences and ambitions;
- to match experienced and qualified minority suppliers with purchasing managers seeking a broader pool of suppliers.

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DIVERSITY LEADERS

For over five years Diversity Best Practices has been tracking diversity leadership issues of CEOs and CDOs, and is proud to work with more than 300 companies and organizations. DBP publishes lists and reports. DBP annually recognizes the top CEOs against 14 specific criteria, and chief diversity officers advancing minorities in the workforce, workplace, marketplace, and supplier base.

These executives have integrated diversity objectives into their core business strategy. In addition, DBP conducts surveys to uncover those companies that are the champions of diversity in their industry sector, and those that have the most extensive global diversity initiatives in place—such as cross-cultural competencies.

LEADING CEOs EXEMPLARIES

ABBOTT Miles White	GE Jeff Immelt	PITNEY BOWES Michael Critelli	TIME WARNER Dick Parsons
COCA-COLA Neville Isdell	HEWITT Dale Gifford	PROCTER & GAMBLE A.G. Lafley	WACHOVIA Ken Thompson
CUMMINS Tim Solso	KAISER George Halvorson	SODEXHO Dick Macedonia (USA); Michael Landau (Global)	WEYERHAEUSER Steve Rogel
DELOITTE Barry Salzberg	LOCKHEED MARTIN Robert J. Stevens	THE CALVERT GROUP Barbara Krumsiek	XEROX Anne Mulcahy
EASTMAN KODAK Antonio Perez	PEPSICO Steve Reinemund *		<i>* Effective Oct. 1, Indra Nooyi will be CEO, Reinemund will be chairman</i>

LEADING CDOs EXEMPLARIES

ALLSTATE Anise Wiley-Little	HEWITT Andres Tapia	MCDONALD'S Pat Harris	SODEXHO Rohini Anand
BELLSOUTH Valencia Adams & Bob Reed	JOHNSON & JOHNSON JoAnn Heffernan-Heisen	MERRILL LYNCH Subha Barry	STARBUCKS May Snowden
CITIGROUP Ana Duarte McCarthy	JOHNSON CONTROLS Charles Harvey	MGM MIRAGE Punam Mathur	VERIZON Magda Yrizarry
COLGATE-PALMOLIVE Philip Berry	KAISER PERMANENTE Ron Knox	MONSTER Steve Pemberton	WACHOVIA Rosie Saez
DAIMLERCHRYSLER Monica Emerson	L'OREAL Edward Bullock	MOTOROLA Candi Castleberry-Singleton	WAL-MART Charlyn Jarrels-Porter with Esther Silver Parker
DELOITTE Redia Anderson Banks	MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL Wendy Lewis	PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS Chris Simmons	WEYERHAEUSER Effenus Henderson

GLOBAL CORPORATE LEADER EXEMPLARIES

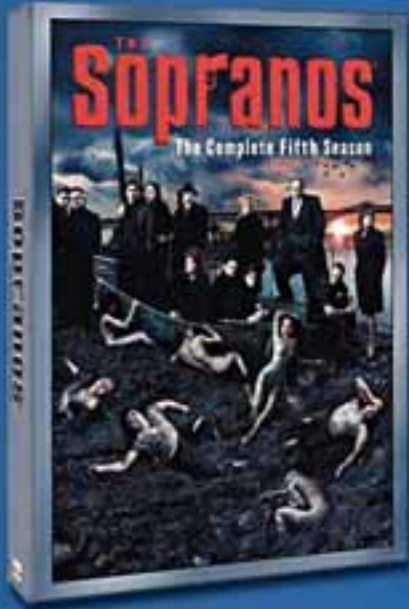
COLGATE-PALMOLIVE	INTEL	PFIZER	XEROX
COCA-COLA	JOHNSON CONTROLS	PROCTER & GAMBLE	
IBM	L'OREAL	SODEXHO	

LEADER COMPANIES BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

AEROSPACE & DEFENSE Lockheed Martin	FOREST PRODUCTS Weyerhaeuser	MEDIA Time Warner	TELECOMMUNICATIONS Verizon; BellSouth/Cingular
CONSUMER PRODUCTS Procter & Gamble; Colgate-Palmolive; L'Oreal	HEALTH Kaiser; Johnson & Johnson	NONPROFIT AARP	UTILITY Exelon
DISTRIBUTION Sodexho	HOSPITALITY Marriott; MGM MIRAGE	PHARMACEUTICALS Abbott	
FINANCE CitiGroup; Wachovia	HUMAN CAPITAL Hewitt; Monster; Hudson; Adecco	SPORTS Major League Baseball	
FOOD McDonald's	MANUFACTURING Xerox	TECHNOLOGY IBM; Motorola; CISCO	

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Members receive: publications; special reports and white papers; research studies and surveys; benchmarking and competitive analysis; access to a password-protected website; invitations to best-practice management sessions; help with branding; and counseling services.



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