

Best Practices

Retention

Strategies:

10 Strategies to Retain Diverse Employees

Strategy 1

Get Management Buy-In

Make sure that the commitment to diversifying the workforce involves every member of the business or organization, especially those in top management positions. The point of having a diverse workforce is not simply to have diverse skin colors in the building, but to take advantage of the presence of diverse ideas. If peer-level employees are left to struggle with different ideas, with no support or involvement by management in the incorporation of those ideas and the emergence of a stronger whole, the minority employee is going to feel like an outsider and is never going to feel welcome or accepted.

Strategy 2

Provide Community Orientation

Follow up on the introduction to the community that you made during the recruiting phase. Support the employee's efforts to obtain housing, register children for school, find employment for a spouse, and locate local stores and services. Introduce the employee to people in the community who can help him or her become involved in activities of interest. Personal involvement is critical, since an employee who is not familiar with the majority culture or is uncertain of a welcome may not feel comfortable striking out on his or her own. Include the employee's family in your orientation, because their comfort level with the community environment will have direct bearing on your employee's satisfaction.

Strategy 3

Provide Mentors

Continue efforts to welcome the new employee beyond the first week. Recruit mentors for the new employee from both the employee's minority group and the white majority. A minority mentor would be particularly effective at sharing experiences and serving as a sounding board. A majority mentor could interpret hidden rules and provide networking opportunities. Both can help by supporting the adjustment to "Minnesota nice" and pointing out community resources.

Strategy 4

Be Prepared for Differences

Recognize that differences and misunderstandings will arise and that differences can lead to positive growth rather than conflict. Build a culture that supports openness and listening and create structures to encourage and support the active resolution of issues. Convene periodic focus groups of minority employees to find out what is working for them and what is not.

Strategy 5

Avoid “Tokenism”

Don’t make diverse employees feel like their only contribution to the organization is their skin color or their representation of a minority group. Encourage their involvement on committees or in decision-making groups based on their interests and strengths, not their diversity. In addition, do not assume that the minority employee speaks for his or her entire minority group.

Strategy 6

Be Open to New Points of View

Don’t assume that “the way it’s always been” is the best way. New people bring new ideas and perspectives to the table that create new revenue streams and different business opportunities. Diverse perspectives are healthy for businesses and organizations in our global economy, even though it’s sometimes hard to change.

Strategy 7

Provide Opportunities

Support continuing education and be sure that promotion opportunities are transparent and open to minority applicants. Demonstrate that diversity is welcome in all levels of the business or organization.

Strategy 8

Require Diversity Training

Promote collegiality by requiring regular diversity training that promotes understanding of different life experiences and points of view. All employees of a business or organization—both majority and minority—need to increase their ability to work as a team with people from different backgrounds. Recognize that many in your workforce have not come into contact with people culturally different from themselves and need relevant education that emphasizes understanding, empathy, and critical thinking skills and builds their ability to succeed in a multicultural environment.

Strategy 9

Respect Different Perspectives

Recognize that the cultures and experiences of people from other backgrounds are just as valid as yours and just as important to them as yours are to you. Synergy happens when all people believe their opinions are respected and their perspective is valued.

Strategy 10

Walk the Talk

Demonstrate by doing. The example of managers and leaders in the organization sets the tone for all employees. Realize that appreciation for diversity needs to be woven into all aspects of the organization. It is not a one-time or “flavor of the month” occurrence.