

Some Notes on Recruiting and Retaining Minority Volunteers

By Brenda White Wright

Most of our organizations exist to address community needs and to improve our quality of life. The problems are often complex and staggering. We need all the talent we can muster.

An organization's credibility is enhanced when its volunteers come from all sectors of a community. In addition, our personal experiences are enriched by interacting with people whose backgrounds, opinions and experiences are different from our own.

Diversification is a process. It is an attitude of acceptance, an environment of inclusion, a culture and a commitment to a vision of your organization's future. It is a process that requires thought, planning, time, resources, risk and *change*.

When recruiting minorities as volunteers, it is important to consider your retention efforts *first*. Minorities in the workplace and in the volunteer sector enter and leave through a revolving door often because there was a greater priority placed on recruitment.

How do we keep them once we get them? The answer requires an examination of organizational goals and "culture." Is the objective only to diversify a mono-cultural organization, or is it to become a *multi-cultural* organization. Your answer directly correlates to your effective retention and recruitment strategies.

Multi-cultural perspectives increase an organization's decision-making capabilities and its insight into needs and services.

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MONO-CULTURAL FOCUS

1. The "majority" culture is viewed as the "norm" or accepted standard.
2. Appearance
3. Exclusive
4. Tokenism—Lose "one," get another "one"
5. Tolerance
6. Apathy
7. Membership
8. Minorities asked to "change" or assimilate
9. Insensitivity
10. *Resignation*

MULTI-CULTURAL FOCUS

1. Each individual's gender, culture, religion, and ethnic group are valued and respected
2. Atmosphere
3. Inclusive
4. Value—We each give our best time and energy where we are valued.
5. Acceptance
6. Involvement
7. Leadership
8. The organization "changes"
9. Sensitivity
10. *Retention*

Tactics for Increased Minority Involvement

1. Provide opportunities for creative, challenging and flexible placements based on *volunteer* needs.
2. Do a motivational analysis of your volunteers. Are they motivated by affiliation, achievement or power? Discuss the motivation theories—Maslow, Hertzog, McClellan-Atkinson.
3. Reward volunteers! What gets rewarded gets done!
4. Pay attention to where/how people group themselves at meetings.
5. Advertise your agency's projects, programs and outreach goals in the minority media in your community.
6. Provide "sensitivity" training for your leadership.
7. Conduct a demographic survey of your community and adjust your "minority" involvement strategies accordingly.

8. Incorporate diversity objectives into your long-range plans at all organizational levels.
9. Pay attention to subtle and overt sexist/racist slurs and jokes used in the organization and in your presence.
10. Make sure that your organization's calendar is developed in consideration of ethnic/religious holidays; i.e., Rosh Hashana, African-American, History Month, Cinco de Mayo, etc.
11. Examine your organization's publications for their use of ethnic photographs. How is your organization reflected in the community?
12. How is your commitment to multi-culturalism reflected in your organization's culture; i.e., art, magazines in lobby, posters, pictures, decor, etc.?
13. Identify and support minority vendors.
14. Collaborate with a diverse group of organizations.