

DIVERSITY NEWS

April 2006

Yvonne: It's a competitive world out there! Not only is it difficult for the job SEEKER who looks to find that perfect position, but it is just as challenging for EMPLOYERS who want to be able to select workers from a wide and diverse pool of talented applicants.

Thomas: Employers want to be able to attract and retain the best and the brightest! In order to do this, they want to be known as an “employer of choice.” This month on Diversity News, we'll be talking about what it takes to be (or become) an “employer of choice.”

Yvonne: We'll look at the ways employers keep their employees happy and productive, and how companies remain competitive in attracting and retaining talented, well-qualified, high-performing employees.

Thomas: Following that, we'll take a look at the Diversity Calendar—to check important observances, conferences, and other events and activities in April.

Yvonne: Fortune Magazine recently released its ninth annual list of “The 100 Best Companies to Work For.” Fortune selects companies based on their responses to a cultural audit questionnaire and on their EMPLOYEES' responses to a survey that measures the level of credibility, respect, fairness, pride, and camaraderie in the workplace.

Measures of CREDIBILITY include open and accessible communications, the competent coordination of human and material resources, and consistency and integrity of corporate vision.

Measures of RESPECT include supporting professional development, demonstrating appreciation, collaborating with employees on relevant decisions, and caring for employees as individuals with personal lives and outside interests.

Measures of FAIRNESS include balanced treatment for all, the absence of favoritism in hiring and promotions, and the lack of discrimination and a process for appeals.

Measures of PRIDE address attitudes toward employees' jobs, their individual contributions, the work produced by teams or work groups, and their organization's products and standing in the community.

And CAMARADERIE: a socially friendly and welcoming atmosphere, a sense of “family” or “team,” and the ability to be oneself.

Thomas: Since 1998, Fortune Magazine has also produced a list of “The 50 Best Companies for Minorities.” The list recognizes companies that are most successful at incorporating people from diverse cultures into their workforce.

Fortune bases the rankings of “The 50 Best Companies for Minorities” on information such as the number of minorities in the company and on the company board of directors, the rate at which minority employees are hired and fired, the availability of diversity programs, the diversity of suppliers, the company’s charitable contributions to minority organizations, the company’s interaction with outside minority communities, and whether (and how) managers are made accountable for the hiring, promotion, and retention of minorities. Fortune Magazine reporters also talk to company employees to gain an additional perspective.

Yvonne: For the past five years, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has published an annual list of the Best Employers For Workers Over 50.

In order to identify employers with exemplary policies and practices to hire, retain, and promote mature workers, AARP looks at company answers to questions in seven key categories: recruiting practices, workplace culture, continued opportunities for training and development, employee benefits, retiree benefits, workforce statistics, and innovative practices.

Alternative work arrangements that are particularly attractive to OLDER workers include telecommuting, flextime, and phased retirement (in which employees continue to receive full-time benefits while working fewer hours).

Thomas: Every year for the past twenty years, Working Mother Magazine has published a list of companies that successfully help employees balance the demands of work and home life.

Working Mother’s list of 100 Best Companies is determined by company responses to questions in six categories: company culture, employee demographics, work/life policies, women’s advancement opportunities, the availability and tracking of family-friendly programs, and the accountability of managers.

Within the category of work/life policies, Working Mother places special emphasis on the availability of child care, paid parental leave, and flexibility in work arrangements.

The types of flexibilities that working moms care most about include flextime, telecommuting, job sharing, elder-care, compressed work schedules, employee assistance programs, child-care referral services, adoption assistance, and lactation areas.

Yvonne: For BLACK women, Essence magazine contacts firms with reputations for being good companies for women and people of color and asks them how they address the needs of Black women in six key areas: work-life balance, career advancement,

commitment to diversity, community involvement, workforce representation, and employee satisfaction.

“Work-Life Balance” focuses on the opportunities that companies offer for working from home, job sharing, and other “family-friendly” benefits.

“Career Advancement” addresses formal mentoring and management training programs.

“Commitment to Diversity” asks about the availability of diversity training, Black female board members, and the company’s commitment to purchase goods and services from minority vendors.

“Community Involvement” has to do with investing time and money in community activities and non-profit organizations focused on improving the quality of life.

“Workforce Representation” tracks the number of Black women employees in the organization, the number hired in the last year, and the number among the company’s highest-paid employees.

“Employee Satisfaction” measures the perceptions of Black women workers as to how their company delivers in the other five areas of measurement.

Thomas: Through an annual survey, Hispanic Magazine compiles a list of the top 100 companies offering the most opportunities for Hispanics. The companies are selected for their recruitment efforts, diversity training, minority business initiatives, philanthropic funding that helps Hispanics, and minority leader representation.

LATINA STYLE magazine also has an annual survey, sent to the CEOs of nearly 600 major U.S. companies. Company responses are evaluated and scored according to the magazine’s readers’ responses to a survey about what THEY think are the most important elements in an employer.

The “LATINA STYLE 50” questionnaire addresses several principal topics: the number of Latina and Latino executives (and board members), the availability of mentoring programs and management and leadership development programs, educational opportunities, dependent and child-care support, leave for childbirth, alternative work policies (such as flexible work time, telecommuting, and compressed work schedules), benefits (like vacation plans, child care and elder care, maternity leave, and adoption assistance), women’s issues, and Hispanic community relations.

Yvonne: Each year since 1998, as part of its Asian Entrepreneur of the Year Awards program, Asian Enterprise magazine has recognized the Top 10 Companies for Asian Americans.

The selection committee for the awards program uses answers to the following categories of questions in their evaluation of nominations:

ENHANCEMENT: How does the company enhance or contribute to diversity in the workplace? What events, programs, or activities does the company engage in to enhance diversity?

EFFECTIVENESS: What are some specific results of the company's efforts? To what extent did the results meet or exceed expectations?

IMPACT: How does the company impact ethnic diversity in terms of best practices? Is the impact visible or highly recognizable to the general public and to the communities that the company serves?

UNIQUENESS: Does the company exhibit uniqueness in the support and advancement of ethnic diversity within its ranks?

LONGEVITY: How long has the company been active in enhancing supplier diversity?

And **COMMITMENT:** Is the company volunteering resources, people, and time? Does the company demonstrate initiative? What means does it utilize in outreach?

Thomas: The Human Rights Campaign Foundation calculates a "Corporate Equality Index" as a measure of how equitably companies are treating their gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees, consumers, and investors.

Companies are rated on a scale of 0 to 100 percent based on whether they:

Include "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" or "gender expression" "in their primary written non-discrimination policy.

Offer health insurance coverage to employee's same-sex domestic partners.

Officially recognize and support a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employee resource group (or have a diversity council whose mission includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression diversity).

Offer diversity training that includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in the workplace.

Engage in respectful and appropriate marketing to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community.

Provide support to health, educational, political, or community events for gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender people.

Refrain from actions that would undermine the goal of equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

Yvonne: Each year, the National Business and Disability Council presents Awards of Honor to recognize employers, employees, entrepreneurs, and advertisers who have made a significant impact on people with disabilities—as employees and consumers.

A committee of judges selected by the National Business and Disability Council reviews nominations and judges them based on the extent to which the nominated company demonstrates policies, practices, and innovations which: promote the hiring and advancement of people with disabilities, expand opportunities for people with disabilities, promote universal design and other accommodations for people with disabilities, establish accessibility for employees and customers, integrate people with disabilities in media campaigns, and demonstrate that people with disabilities are valued customers and employees.

Thomas: There are dozens of other organizations that recognize exemplary employer practices. On the Diversity Management Web site, you can find links to many of them. Just click on the link to “Diversity Best Practices.”

Yvonne: In the diversity calendar this month, the Conference Board is holding two Women’s Leadership Conferences: The first will be on April 4th and 5th in New York, and the second will be on April 26th and 27th in San Diego, California.

Thomas: The Great Place to Work Conference will be in Boston, Massachusetts, April 5th through the 7th.

Yvonne: The annual conference for Multiple Perspectives on Access, Inclusion, and Disability will be in Columbus, Ohio, April 17th and 18th.

Thomas: DeafNation Expos are scheduled for April 8th in Austin, Texas; April 22nd in St. Louis, Missouri; and April 29th in Pomona, California.

Yvonne: The Summit on Leading Diversity will be April 10th through the 12th in Atlanta, Georgia.

Thomas: An Abilities Expo will be held in Edison, New Jersey, April 21st through the 23rd.

Yvonne: Careers and the disAbled Magazine’s Career Expo for People with Disabilities will be in Boston, Massachusetts, on April 26th.

Thomas: You can find more information on those events, and on other observances and conferences, on the Diversity Management Web site at the address shown below. Just click on the link to the calendar.

Yvonne: That's all we have for this edition of Diversity News. Be sure to check back next month when we'll be talking about the business case for diversity management: That is, the rationale for creating a work environment in which individual differences are understood, appreciated, and—where necessary—accommodated, so that ALL employees can reach their potential and maximize their contribution to meeting the organization's strategic goals and objectives.

Thomas: Until then, for more frequent doses of diversity news, sign up for our free weekly e-mail news service: NewsLink. Just send an e-mail message to the address shown below, with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line.

Yvonne: And check out our bimonthly newsletter, Diversity@Work, available as a download on our Web site or by e-mail from our office.

Also, we want to hear from you! If you'd like to share your story ideas, comments, or suggestions, please e-mail us at dmeeo@va.gov with the words DIVERSITY NEWS in the subject line.

Until next time...

Both: Have a great month!