

## DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

***Selected April 2007 Dates to Remember***  
*(From the Multicultural Calendar 2007)*

- ***Multicultural Communications Month***
- *Apr 02-10: Pesach-Passover (Jewish)*
- *Apr 08: Easter/Pascha (Christian, Coptic and Eastern Orthodox Christian)*
- *Apr 14: Songkran/New Year (Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand)*
- *Apr 15: Yom Ha-Shoah – Holocaust Memorial Day (Jewish)*
- *Apr 22: Earth Day (International)*
- *Apr 25: Administrative Professionals Day (Canada, USA)*

### **WELCOME TO TWO NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS...**

- Kathleen Ellis, Director Community Programs, WOTCH Community Mental Health Services
- Denise Gold, HR Manager, Home Depot (London East)

### **BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE, DIVERSE WORKFORCE: SHOWCASING SUCCESS STORIES**

Building an inclusive, diverse workforce can be linked directly to an increase in a company's competitive advantage, growth and success. Three very different organizations, which are committed to diversity, have shared with us their diversity initiatives, what they have learned and some of their successes.

#### **Be inspired by LOCAL companies that are championing successful DIVERSITY initiatives!**

At **The Home Depot** we believe that diversity is the collective mixture of cultures, concepts, and philosophies. Diversity and inclusion, one might say, are the nuts and bolts of The Home Depot operation.

The goal of diversity and inclusion within the organization is to provide The Home Depot with a competitive advantage in the global marketplace and align with the company's goals of remaining the retailer, employer, neighbour and investment of choice.

Our core values include respect for all people and our service model deals with mirroring the communities that we work in. So it's part of the fabric of our organization: to be diverse and to reach out to diverse applicants.

It is our mandate to enable and enhance the capability of our organizations to recruit a diverse and talented workforce. We recently staffed up for our spring season, which involved hiring approximately 7,000 new associates in the 155 stores across Canada. A large number of those new employees we hired are mature workers, thanks to CARP, Canada's Associate for the Fifty-Plus, with whom the home improvement leader has an exclusive hiring partnership.

When you look at the changing face of Canada, we have to be leaders when it comes to diversity and inclusion. If we're not, we're not going to hire the best people, and we need the best so we can provide the superior service, our customers have become accustomed to at The Home Depot.

Valuing diversity and inclusion at The Home Depot is a business imperative that is inextricably tied to the company's success.

**3M Canada**, a proud sponsor of the recent Abilities First Conference and a presenter at the Cultural Diversity Conference, addresses Diversity front and centre on the “Our Company” page of its web site ([www.3m.com](http://www.3m.com)): *“We must grow our business and deliver creative solutions to diverse multicultural customers both in Canada and around the globe”*. 3M is equally committed to *employee* Diversity through its umbrella Diversity Committee based in HR and a number of special interest groups focused on specific issues since it is the staff which will deliver the value proposition to customers. *“Diversity is valuable because innovation and learning are the products of differences...different people within the same organization bring different experiences, assumptions, values, beliefs and habits to do their work”*.

3M’s definition of diversity is purposefully broad to be as inclusive as possible. While they wanted to ensure representation of the four key groups (aboriginal peoples, visible minorities, people with disabilities and women), there are also Francophone and Rainbow (gender) interest committees.

The key challenge was building a strong business case for diversity (anchored in Vision, Mission and Values) and providing comprehensive education and training realized generous resources in terms of time, budget and people.

Christine Turner, Chair of the sub-committee devoted to people with disabilities, shared some of their key learnings.

Key successes include:

- Surveying staff to self identify
- Educating/empowering staff to disclose their disabilities and request appropriate accommodations
- Benchmarking with other successful diversity initiatives, e.g. IBM, Hewlett Packard
- Creating a much more aware and inclusive workplace

The best learnings for next time are:

- To engage all stakeholders, clarify expectations, both employer and employee, for what is *needed* as essential services and *wanted* as added value benefits from diversity initiatives
- Most accommodations are relatively easy and cost effective to implement

Other advice for employers considering diversity initiatives

- Let passionate employees drive the process!
- Include people who have not self identified as part of the group to bring balanced perspectives to the committee, e.g. 20% of the group focused on people with disabilities have neither a visible nor an invisible disability

**WIL Employment Connections** ([www.wil.ca](http://www.wil.ca)) has been serving the London region for about 20 years. Working with a very diverse clientele, it is a non-profit organization dedicated primarily to facilitating the economic integration of immigrant women and men into the broader community of London and area. Guided by its values of respect and excellence, WIL is one of the organizations in London that champions diversity and can give testimony to the benefits that a diverse workforce can bring to the business community and community at large.

At WIL, diversity is all about respect and recognition of what each individual has to contribute and championing those differences. This is accomplished through programmes specifically designed for immigrants and internationally trained individuals and partnering with other organizations to assist youth, the disabled and aboriginal populations.

There are many challenges to overcome when championing diversity and one of the biggest challenges faced by WIL is when assisting clients whose qualifications are for regulated professions such as Engineering and Teaching. Regulated professions demand extra steps requiring internationally trained people to demonstrate that their skills and knowledge levels meet Canadian standards. Although the importance of having standards is recognized, the challenges that are presented indicate a need to improve the process; an issue that WIL continues to advocate.

“London is competing with the globe for this talent,” says Lisa Rusal, Client Services Manager, WIL Employment Connections. “We are already losing talent that is migrating to the Western provinces. The competition for the talent pool will only intensify, as we are not replacing the labour force through birth rates. Within profit, non-profit and educational organizations, all pillars and levels must work together to create a welcoming environment and to create a process to attract and retain talent to our city.”

Success stories are very rewarding and provide ongoing inspiration to those who accept the challenge to include and increase diversity in the workplace. Although there are daily challenges, there are also many success stories at WIL such as the story of an Eastern European immigrant who had a university degree as well as extensive background and experience in a very specialized field. She received training through WIL’s Employment Preparation Program for Internationally Trained Individuals in 2006. Through her own research efforts, she found a volunteer work placement to gain Canadian work experience and references. After just a few weeks into her placement, the employer hired her. She is now a valuable member of that organization, sharing her global experience and skills with her colleagues.

A new regional centre opening this month with a mandate of assisting newcomers in accessing regulated professions, the Global Talent Launch and the Immigrant Employment Task Force are all great initiatives underway in London says Lisa Rusal. These initiatives are targeting the issues of attracting and retaining talent as well as integrating diversity. We need to ensure that the momentum keeps building to create an environment that will generate more success stories for individuals, businesses and our community.

**Imagine how you could translate their learnings and successes to your organization!**

In May look for the feature article from the Diversity Committee!

We’d be delighted to showcase *your* organization’s successful business case for diversity in the newsletter; details can be sent to us via HRPLD’s Administrator.