

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

*Selected February 2007 Dates to Remember
(from the Multicultural Calendar 2007)*

- *Black History Month in Canada and the US*
- *Feb 2: Imbolg (Wicca)*
- *Feb 4: National Day (Sri Lanka)*
- *Feb 14: Random Acts of Kindness Week through Feb 20*
- *Feb 18: Chinese New Year*
- *Feb 25: People Power Day (Philippines)*

*(win a **free** calendar at the February 20 meeting...)*

BUILDING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY

So...why should we, as HR professionals, champion Diversity in our workplaces? While most of us agree it's the *right* thing to do, an increasing number of employers say: "*Diversity is good business practice, period*". They feel it gives them a competitive edge and that it's becoming less about what they "should" do and more about who they are. Further, customers and employees are demanding it.

The fact that visible minorities possess \$76 billion worth (that's with a B not an M!) of combined purchasing power in Canada speaks volumes! These people are current and prospective customers, future business owners and a new source of talent. Yet London's visible minority population (2001 census data) is 9% as compared with Toronto @ 37%, Ontario @ 19% and Canada @ 13%. Recently a number of us participated in mock interviews at WIL (www.wil.ca) where we saw firsthand how well educated these people are yet they struggle to gain recognition for their education, skills and work experience in our community.

Converted employers say that, by mirroring the community in which they do business, they are able to:

- Select from a bigger talent pool
 - Improve recruitment: increase the range of resources, skills and ideas among employees especially as older workers retire
 - Increase employee creativity and productivity: provide a more tailored service
 - Improve staff retention: lower stress through inclusive, cross-functional teams and avoid claims of unfair treatment or discrimination
 - Operate more efficiently, effectively and economically: lower recruitment and training costs
- Attract a broader range of suppliers: provide a wider range of products
 - Bring fresh perspectives and diverse points of view to old business issues
- Attract a wider customer base: increase organizations' sustainability or profitability
 - Meet the demands of current markets and create new ones
 - Be responsive to customers and draw in a much broader base
 - Translate global cultural experience and understanding into service techniques and policies that champion cultural sensitivity that engages diverse customers and business partners

Consider two financial institutions that plan to establish branches in the same community whose demographics are predominantly Asian:

- One follows its standard template: a typical business-y looking facility, 9-5 Monday through Friday business hours, whatever staff it can muster
- The other consults with local stakeholders, integrates the principles of feng shui in the design of the new facility, implements extended business hours to include Saturday evenings and Sundays when customers are used to planning business activities around dim sum with family and friends at a nearby restaurant and initiates a targeted outreach recruiting program to ensure front line staff reflect current and anticipated customers

There's no question which bank will meet...and quickly surpass...its business goals!

Interested in More Resources?

Please go to Links and check under the Diversity header. We also hope you'll share *your* favourites with us.

In **March** look for more information on "***Accommodating Differently Abled Employees***".

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