

# **BARKS & BITES**

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## **Diversity in the Workplace: *What's it REALLY mean?***

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Gather 10 people in a room, all from different companies, different ethnicities, and ask them one simple question: *What does diversity in the workplace mean to you?* And you'll get at least 10 different answers.

Whenever we get an assignment from a client and we're told the company places emphasis on workplace diversity and diversity hiring, we never presume to intuitively understand what they're talking about. One of our clients challenged his employees to define "diversity," and he offered a very specific view: If everyone in your department or division comes from within our industry, then we don't have diversity."

Diversity has been on the hot list of subjects for quite some time. For many of those who are of color, like me, it's always been a hot topic. But more recently, it's getting more attention. Look at the charges made against some of the top ad agencies, for example. And then there appear to be more Heads of Global Diversity at corporations now more than ever. If you attend any of the Black PRSA conventions and meetings, you will see a good number of companies and agencies attending who support diversity hiring. I'm sure if you give it a quick thought, you can come up with at least one other recent encounter of "Diversity" in action.

So is diversity simply a trendy conversation point, great for cocktail chatter at the next gathering of PR pros? Why *is* diversity so important...to you...to your company...to the rest of the world? Consider the following factoids:\*

- From a global perspective, "traditional majorities are becoming minorities."
- Diverse populations are the majority in America's ten largest cities.
- 95% of the world's population is outside of the United States and majority growth in the global workforce is from non-Caucasian workers.
- Hispanics, numbering 42.7 million as of July 1, 2005, are now America's largest minority.

Now consider the following stats from PR Week's 2005 Diversity Survey: among PR agencies and corporations, ethnic diversity comes in neck-and-neck at just under 20% of total employee population.

Our world is rapidly changing. Are we truly doing our part to step up the pace? Are we each doing our part to help ourselves, our companies, our clients to be leaders in a diverse world, going forward?

Simply put, endorsing and enacting ethnic diversity in the work place is not only the right thing to do, it's the intelligent thing to do. Consumers, here in the U.S. and beyond our borders, are diverse, not only by ethnicity, but by age, gender, sexual orientation, and mental and physical abilities...for starters.

I came across one neatly worded definition for diversity that I like a great deal: Diversity is all the ways in which we differ. Going a step further, for me, it is also all the ways in which we make a difference.

\*Gathered from U.S. Census Bureau and AIRS Human Capital Solutions.