

## BEYOND RACE AND GENDER: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF YOUR TOTAL WORK FORCE BY MANAGING DIVERSITY

By R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr.; New York: AMACOM, a division of the American Management Association, 1992; ISBN 0-8144-7807-7.

**B***eyond Race and Gender* discusses how to use the entire workforce through managing diversity rather than through assimilation. In the 1990s and at the beginning of the new century companies have been coming to the realization that there are three major differences in this area. The first is the globalization of companies; the second is the greater diversity seen in today's workforce; and the third is the unwillingness on the part of employees to assimilate. Because of these changes, companies must be able to manage all people, not just their "model" employee.

Thomas does not confine diversity to race and gender, noting that "it extends to age, personal and corporate background, education, function, and personality. It includes lifestyle, sexual preference, geographic origin, tenure with the organization, exempt and nonexempt status, and management or nonmanagement." Once it is cognizant of these differences, the company can begin developing a culture that can use them to best advantage. Throughout the book, the differences between affirmative action, valuing differences, and managing diversity are discussed, and attention is given to the way in which each of these approaches should be used in creating a productive working environment. Thomas's main point is the need for companies to shift from supplemental programs, along the lines of affirmative action and approaches that value differences so as to effect short-term solutions, to managing diversity, that is, looking at root causes in order to make long-term, lasting changes in the culture of the organization.

Most companies are familiar with affirmative action and programs that value differences. Affirmative action generally increases the diversity of a workforce but does little to change the culture of a company. New employees still have to assimilate into the current workforce to succeed and move up the corporate ladder. Programs that value differences generally make members of the workforce more aware of cultural differences so that the various constituent groups feel more comfortable working together. However these programs change the current culture only slightly and create merely short-term effects. While both of these programs have shown that they can produce results, they are often terminated when their goals have been attained. Because the culture of the company has not changed in a fundamental way, the

company reverts to its initial position. The groups that were targeted with these programs rarely move past entry-level positions or rise above lower management positions. Some may move up the corporate ladder through mentoring and similar programs, but because of the company's culture, those employees eventually leave for a variety of reasons.

Drawing on studies carried out by the American Institute for Managing Diversity, *Beyond Race and Gender* explains how programs for managing diversity can solve problems that are beyond the reach of affirmative action programs and programs that value differences. Managing diversity is a long-term program, one that looks at the roots of the company's culture and pinpoints the problems that are blocking the creation of a comfortable work environment for a diverse workforce. The key to managing diversity is that "it begins with taking a hard look at the system and asking the questions that were not asked: Why doesn't the system work *naturally* for everyone?" On the basis of what they know about managing diversity, companies may decide the implementation time is too long. By comparing the time commitment, up to 20 years or more, for managing diversity with the quality management implemented in the 1980s, the implementation involves not just adding another program but acting in a manner that can improve the survival of the company and give it a distinct competitive advantage. Managing diversity and quality management can both be seen as a journey into the future rather than as a final destination. Because of the time frame required for implementation, Thomas points out that programs for managing diversity may work best when used in conjunction with affirmative action and programs that value differences. Another requirement for managing diversity, as is true of any program, is that it must be supported by upper management. If the leadership does not come from upper management, entry-level workers can hardly be expected to embrace the program. Affirmative action and programs that value differences are supplemental to the company's culture. Managing diversity is looking at and making changes to the culture so that such supplemental programs will not be needed.

The American Institute for Managing Diversity, led by R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr., is taking a whole new approach in leveraging diversity. The steps Thomas outlines to manage diversity will take time to implement, but the end result will endure and allow the company to be more productive and competitive because its entire workforce will truly be empowered.

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