



Atlanta Human Resources Association

Newsletter



www.ahraonline.com

July 2002

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"Exciting News from the President"

To: Atlanta Human Resources Association Members

It is with great pride and pleasure that I announce that effective January 1, 2003, the Atlanta Human Resources Association (AHRA) will officially become the National Association of African Americans in Human Resources (NAAHR) - Atlanta Chapter.

The transition is occurring as we speak; a very competent and able team has been established to facilitate the process. Sylvia Culver will lead this transition, as Kevin Cruse, Wanda McMullen, Derrick Hemphill, and Nicole Wise work with Sylvia to ensure a smooth and dynamic new beginning for the organization.

I, for one, am extremely excited about this decision to move forward. With your help, it is my intent to continually propel the organization in a direction to reach even greater heights. We can make it happen with your support and dedication to the primary mission of the group...simply stated, to advance and develop minority human resources professionals through strategic initiatives and programs, coaching, mentoring, and most importantly - networking. By becoming NAAHR - Atlanta, we will have an even broader networking base to accomplish our mission.

This is an exciting time for the organization and a great time for everyone to become involved. Thanks again for all of your continued hard work and devotion.

Onward, team!
William Riddick Jr., PHR
President, AHRA

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Search Support

If you are new to the Atlanta market or in transition currently, please make plans to attend the search support meeting.

Where: Right Management Consultants
3290 Northside Parkway
Suite 700
Atlanta, GA 30327

When: Every 2nd Monday of the Month
5:00-6:30 p.m.

To confirm your attendance and for directions, please call John Mixon at 404.504.5116

The AHRA Mission is three-fold:

- Ø To advance knowledge in the theory and practice of human resource management - for all levels.
- Ø Provide a "real" forum for professional growth and development.
- Ø To exchange innovative as well as traditional information and/or technology which directly impact the human resources field.

Visit the AHRA out on the web at www.ahraonline.com to find a wealth of resources that can help YOU further your career!



This Month's Speakers



F. Valerie Rusk

Born and raised in the Washington, D.C. area, Valerie earned her B.B.A. at James Madison University, majoring in economics. She spent two years living in Northern Virginia and working in consumer banking branch management before attending law school at the University of Georgia.

Valerie joined Ford & Harrison upon earning her J.D. in 1999. She practices employment law with a focus on litigation, including discrimination and harassment cases, EEOC charges, and contractual issues.



Julie Simmermon

Julie Simmermon was raised in Atlanta, Georgia. She earned her undergraduate degree from Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts and her law degree from Georgia State University. During law school, Julie was actively involved with the Moot Court Board and the Student Trial Lawyers Association where she served as President.

Julie joined Ford & Harrison's Atlanta office in 2000 and is working on the employment litigation team. She is a member of the Georgia bar and is admitted to practice before the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia.

FORD & HARRISON^{LLP}
Creative Workplace Solutions

We will see you at our next meeting !

Date: Wednesday, July 10 2002
Time: 5:00 p.m. Networking
6:00 p.m. Program Begins

Keynote Speakers:
F. Valerie Rusk
Julie Simmermon

Location: Georgia Power Company
241 Ralph McGill Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30308

Admission: Free for paid members
\$10.00 for guests

Refreshments **Free Parking**

Communication Central

Very special thank you to last month's speaker Roi Johnson of the Gordian Group, Inc.

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A huge AHRA congratulations to Tom Franklin on the success of this year's Golf Tournament. We were able to make a substantial contribution to the Scholarship Fund.

.....
Also, a hearty thanks to the Golf Tournament committee members, participants, volunteers and sponsors. You are the reason for the Golf Tournament's success!

.....
If you have news of a recent promotion, office move or any other good news that you would like to share with the AHRA, let us hear from you! Contact Derrick Hemphill at 404.521.2666.

Workplace Diversity: Descendant of Affirmative Action?

by Nicolle Fogleson

Since Lyndon Johnson coined the term "affirmative action" three decades ago, workplaces have slowly transformed from mostly white male, heterosexual arenas to culturally diverse enclaves. And companies are now finding ways to implement programs addressing this shifting working environment.

Diversity And Affirmative Action: Should We Draw A Line?

While workplace diversity programs are becoming the norm rather than the exception, many people don't distinguish between "diversity" and "affirmative action." According to Fran De La Torre, diversity consultant and CAREERMagazine's Focus On Diversity columnist, there is a

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This Month's Meeting Sponsor



A concerned and responsible supplemental insurance provider, we stand apart from other supplemental insurance companies through our benefits communication, service standards and supplemental insurance portfolio.



HR...Making a Difference Networking Social and Bowl - for Kid's Sake

Hosted By



**100% of proceeds benefit
Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Metro Atlanta**

- What:** A HUGE HR and Recruiting networking social to benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters! Join us for Cosmic Bowling at AMF Chamblee Lanes! (non-bowlers are welcome too!)
- When:** Thursday, October 3, 2002, 5:00 to 7:30p.m.
- Where:** AMF Chamblee Lanes, Savoy Drive (east of Perimeter Mall). Phone: 770-451-8605
- Why:** Meet other HR and Recruiting professionals and support Atlanta's future!
- How:** Register at www.hrconnections.net and raise a minimum of \$50 in donations! The donations will be collected at the bowling alley.

FOOD, GIVEAWAYS, PRIZES, AND FUN!

Each participant will receive a **t-shirt**, be entered for **door prizes**, and receive **prizes for money raised!**

CATERED BY



**MUSIC
BY THE**



A joint event of these Atlanta HR and Recruiting networking groups:

HR: SHRM-Atlanta: Consultant's PEG, OD PEG, High Tech PEG, Gwinnett GEM, North Atlanta GEM, Buckhead GEM; TAG Human Resources Director's SIG; Atlanta HR Association; Professional Services HR Xchange; Non-profit HR Xchange; Life Sciences HR Xchange; and the Leadership Forum

Recruiting: TAG Recruiting SIG, Southeastern Employment Network (SEN), Atlanta Professional Recruiter's Association (APRA), SHRM-Atlanta Employment PEG, Atlanta Executive Search Roundtable (AESR), Georgia Association of Personnel Services (GAPS), and the Recruiting Director's Roundtable

**To register or for more information
Contact Tom Darrow at tomdarrow@mindspring.com**

or

770-992-3701

Register at www.hrconnections.net.



Bachelor Auction 2002 Friday, July 26, 2002 6:30 p.m. sharp

Hampton Inn
1737 Mountain Industrial Blvd.
Stone Mountain, GA 30083

- R.S.V.P. Required 404-321-0911
- Limited Seating - Evening Attire -
- Bids start at \$50 (cash only) -
- Bidders will receive dinner with bachelor of choice -
- Sponsored by AMEN Ministries Inc.
for P.H.D. Staffing Strategies -

"Eyes Have Not Seen"

We are seeking AHRA Members who are interested in sponsoring a dinner for two (\$75 value) for the upcoming event. With your contribution, your company information will be advertised in the printed program. The deadline is Monday July 15th, 2002. (Program will be sent out for printing). No exceptions.

The proceeds for the function will go toward expanding our resource center wherein we can offer after school and weekend programming to the youth of Metro Atlanta. If you would like to RSVP or you are interested in advertising your organization at this upcoming fundraiser, **please contact Stephanie Harper at 404-321-0911.**



Workplace Diversity: Descendant of Affirmative Action? Continued from page 2

by Nicolle Fogleson

vast difference. Affirmative action essentially entails "bringing in the numbers," while diversity focuses on creating a cohesive team unit in the workforce, based on an understanding of workers' differences and similarities, De La Torre explains.

Things may look just fine on paper, but on the workplace floor strange undercurrents of dissension and misunderstanding can run rampant.

For example, an African American woman would likely have problems with a co-worker who is a member of the Ku Klux Klan, and a young Jewish man probably wouldn't understand the neo-Nazi receptionist in the department down the hall.

De La Torre noticed this enigma within her own company and felt the need to address it. "I witnessed a worker shunned because he didn't attend the company Christmas party," she says. No one discerned he didn't attend because of his Jewish beliefs.

Other incidents preceded this, including a seminar during which De La Torre realized the joke she was going to open a speech with would likely be well-received by a Midwestern audience but not by the ethnically diverse audience she was to address. She blundered when she explained the family benefits plan to a certain ethnic group which has always included distant relatives as part of the "immediate family."

"Lo and behold," De La Torre explains, chuckling, "I had the distant cousins, step-uncles and sisters-in-laws calling me to see how they could get 'their share of the benefits plan.'"

For her, these errors weren't easy to

disregard. While affirmative action had helped to bring about a change in the workplace cultural climate, something was needed to create a culturally considerate workplace atmosphere. "It is a bottom-line issue. I couldn't get through to these people correctly. They were confused by me, I was confused by them, and that creates a confusing place of work."

Trevor Wilson, author of *Diversity at Work: The Business Case for Equity*, and a leading authority on equity and diversity management, says, "The issue of fair treatment of people is first and foremost a business issue, not one of altruism or legislation. We are moving into an information age wherein means of production are entirely controlled by the employee; the fair and equitable treatment of the employee becomes the essential management tool."

Deborah May, a diversity consultant with Ibis Consulting Group, sees the metaphor of the lion (the traditional worker) and the "other animals" (those workers who are of a different race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation) in the jungle (the workplace): "Slowly more lamb and deer and elk were allowed entry into the jungle. But they still could neither roam the greenest pastures, nor mingle with the lion packs unless they wore the lion skin."

In non-allegorical terms, the non-traditional worker should be permitted to work in a setting conducive to his/her productivity - this setting may be slightly different than that setting created for the conventional worker. A highly skilled woman cannot possibly work effectively with a group of men who berate her gender; her performance will suffer, and the overall

productivity of the company will deteriorate.

Beginning A Diversity Program

De La Torre began her career as an EAP counselor, but when she displayed a keen interest in diversity issues, her manager asked her to spearhead a diversity program.

"There is no specific or formal diversity credentialing process," De La Torre says. "You learn as you go - what you need as your basis is a strong backing from the company, not just its HR department but from everyone. You should also have a background in multi-culturalism and human resources."

De La Torre began her diversity program by evaluating her colleagues with a "diversity-based" test. "I figured they would know the answers to about half of the questions; although, they protested that they knew all they needed to know about diversity issues. In the end they were all quite surprised at the amount of information they DIDN'T know, and were happy to have a point of reference from which to proceed."

Over her years in the diversity program, De La Torre immersed herself in most of the cultures and differences and similarities reflected in her workplace. She learned and accumulated. Her office filled up with books and publications based on people with a variety of distinctions, from the twice-divorced African American woman to the HIV positive young adult to the elderly worker. She also categorized a "diversity" video library which included the movies *Yentl*, *Awakenings*, *Coming To America* and *Lean On Me*.



Workplace Diversity: Descendant of Affirmative Action? Continued from page 5

by Nicolle Fogleson

Another method is to set aside time to talk to your co-workers. "People are so willing to teach you about their culture - they are so excited to explain to others why they are who they are," she explains.

A diversity trainer must be willing to "live it."

Why Companies Are Reluctant

Most companies tend to set up meager diversity programs - simply going through the motions. The HR department commonly summons employees into a one-day seminar, where a video is presented and a survey is taken. "This is just NOT enough," says De La Torre. "It must be a constant ongoing process for it to work. A one-day seminar will put the idea into their heads, but they forget about it a day later."

According to Katherine Esty, diversity consultant and founder of Ibis Consulting Group, "Policies, procedures, compensation systems, work arrangements, training at all levels, and orientation programs all need to be reviewed and modified to provide support for diversity."

Often, management is reluctant to implement diversity programs for fear of alienating white male workers, who might feel they are being discriminated against. One hiring manager, who asked to remain anonymous, remarks, "It's an unfair, racist, gender-biased idea practically screaming out with the white Caucasian male - do not hire HIM and do not ever say HE is a part of the diverse workforce."

De La Torre counters this statement: "A white male, blue-collar worker, a female and a Chicano man all apply for a posted supervisory position. The Chicano man who has an excellent work record and meets all the requirements is selected. The white male candidate feels he was placed at a disadvantage and the female feels that men still 'have the edge.'"

Anyone has a right to feel discriminated against, she says. "Of course, feelings are not necessarily based on fact. Most CEOs are still white males, but the landscape of the American workplace is in a state of definite change. The pool of candidates is changing, which DOES increase the potential of the selected person for the position to be other than a white male."

Marilyn Loden, author of the book *Implementing Diversity*, writes, "Despite rumors to the contrary, white men are far from becoming an endangered species in the American workplace. In fact, in a 1995 study conducted by a bipartisan U.S. congressional committee, this group was found to hold 95% of senior management positions in industry."

Even so, the American workforce is composed of myriad differences, and it is those very differences which make for a diverse, interesting, productive workplace. A strong, fair-minded, comprehensive diversity program does not isolate the white male worker - it brings each worker into an understanding of his/her coworkers for their mutual benefit. ■