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## **Multicultural workforce issues examined by NEW**

Study finds an industry struggling to keep pace with change

CHICAGO (Nov. 12, 2008) -- The workforce of the consumer products and retail industry has changed but much of its leadership has not yet adapted, according to a new report on multicultural workforces released by the Network of Executive Women.

"The Baby Boom generation that has long dominated American business (and culture) is entering its retirement years, and it is being replaced by a far different workforce," the report notes. "Globalization makes the multicultural workforce even more imperative."

The report -- "Multicultural Workforces: Managing and Maximizing America's Rich Mosaic" -- provides best practices for recruiting, retaining and managing the industry's increasingly diverse workforce. It grew out of the Network's 2008 Multicultural Workforces Conference in New York, which was attended by line managers, human resources personnel and diversity and inclusion managers from more than 40 of the industry's top companies.

"Diversity efforts are seen as forced instead of as a source of competitive advantage," attendees of the NEW conference said in a survey. Many multicultural employees do not feel they can bring their whole selves to work but must find ways to assimilate, the respondents said. "Instead of cultural differences being celebrated for their potential, they are being wasted through a culture of assimilation."

"Developing intercultural leadership competencies is critical," according to the session leader Trudy Bourgeois, CEO and founder of the Center for Workforce Excellence. "The multicultural workforce can only be leveraged if individuals are accepted for their differences, encouraged to bring their whole selves to work, and allowed play to their strengths."

The report identifies the benefits of a well-motivated and well-managed multicultural workforce, including increased innovation and productivity; better insights into consumers; the development of new products and services; greater alignment with vendors; improved employee morale; a more robust talent pipeline; increased retention; better alignment with global teams; access to new markets; and increased profitability.

It provides an action plan to help companies move forward, starting with increased CEO and C-level leadership commitment; setting stretch goals; developing core competencies; giving diversity councils and affinity groups responsibility for business objectives; appointing "ambassadors of change"; and moving diversity training from "the head to the heart."

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**About NEW**

Founded in 2001, the Network of Executive Women, Consumer Products and Retail Industry, has more than 2,000 members from more than 400 companies and 53 corporate sponsors in 15 regions nationwide. For more information on the Network of Executive Women and its best practices, education, mentoring, networking and leadership development programs, visit [www.newonline.org](http://www.newonline.org).

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