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## **NEW report says white men crucial to diversity efforts**

Nearly 8 in 10 surveyed say white men have advantage in CPG/retail

CHICAGO (November 13, 2009 -- Too many companies' diversity and inclusion efforts treat white men as problems that need to be "fixed," instead of partners who need to be engaged, according to "White Men: Enrolling the Dominant Culture in Diversity and Inclusion," a new report issued by the Network of Executive Women, Consumer Products and Retail Industry.

White males, who hold the vast majority of leadership positions in corporate America, are too often misinformed, misunderstood, underestimated or stereotyped, the report concluded.

"Successful diversity and inclusion efforts have real bottom-line advantages for every business person," noted Alison Kenney Paul, president of the Network of Executive Women and a principal at Deloitte. "But not enough white men are given the opportunity to both understand their role in diversity as well as participate as partner in the solution. Diversity programs often miss the chance to enroll white men in the process. "

Many white men do not appreciate the hidden advantages granted by their gender and skin color or understand the invisible barriers faced by women and people of color, the report noted.

An online survey last August of 635 NEW members and supporters revealed nearly eight in 10 believe white men have an advantage in hiring and promotions in the consumer products and retail industry. Thirty-seven percent believe white men have a clear advantage, while another 40 percent believe white men have "somewhat" of an advantage. The remaining 23 percent believe "the playing field is level."

Seventy percent of survey respondents, all affiliated with the consumer products and retail industry, were white women. Sixteen percent were nonwhite or Latina women, 12 percent were white males and 1 percent of respondents were nonwhite or Latino males. Nearly half (45 percent) of NEW survey respondents believe the performance of white men on diversity and inclusion issues in their organization "needs improvement." Nearly as many (42 percent), however, rated white men's performance in this area as "good." Another 9 percent believe white men's performance in their organization's diversity/inclusion efforts is "excellent," while 4 percent rate their performance as "poor."

One way to help white men better identify with their diverse colleagues, the report says, is to educate them about their own diverse characteristics, such as ethnic heritage, age, religion, veteran status and political views. This approach moves their perspective from white/black and male/female and encourages a better understanding of the multicultural and multigenerational workplace, which leads to more open communication, stronger teamwork, more creative solutions to business issues and greater input from diverse perspectives.

Only 5 percent of NEW survey respondents believe the consumer products and retail industry is doing an "excellent" job at implementing diversity and inclusion as a business strategy. More than half (53 percent) believes the industry is doing a "good" job. Nearly 40 percent, however, said the industry "needs improvement" in regard to diversity and inclusion efforts. Another 2 percent believe the industry's implementation of diversity and inclusion programs is "poor."

"White Men: Enrolling the Dominant Culture in Diversity and Inclusion" is the eighth report in NEW's Best Practices series and the first to focus on the role of white men. It includes interviews with diversity experts, industry executives, original research and an action plan for white men who want to get more involved in diversity and inclusion.

The 12-page report is available to members of the press by contacting Rob Wray, Communications Director, Network of Executive Women, at (323) 664-3198 or [rwray@newonline.org](mailto:rwray@newonline.org).

The mission of NEW is to educate leaders in the consumer products and retail industry about the benefits of gender diversity and provide best practices to help achieve that goal. NEW directly supports the career development of the senior-level and emerging industry leaders who comprise its membership.

### **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 58 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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