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			Verizon

The Current State of Diversity in the Workplace

A recent study shows that much remains to be done

// by HILDY MEDINA

HUMAN RESOURCE AND DIVERSITY PROFESSIONALS IN U.S.

companies are calling for a new definition of "diversity" within the workplace – one with "greater emphasis on relationship to business results and expanding focus away from affirmative action," according to a recent report published by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

The report, based on a survey of 1,400 HR and diversity professionals nationwide, also indicated that even as the definition of diversity is evolving into its second generation, many companies haven't even defined it in its initial stages. This inaction may be adversely affecting their overall domestic production, and their ability to compete in the global marketplace, the study found.

Only 30 percent of HR professionals reported having an official definition of diversity in their organizations. Companies with 500 or more employees are more likely than small organizations to have at least created an official definition. Yet, even these definitions need updating, according to the "SHRM 2007 State of Workplace Diversity Management" report.

"From my experience, the most significant change is increasing the relationship to business results," wrote



respondent Peter Bye, President of MDB Group, a diversity consulting firm in Livingston, New Jersey. "When a diversity and inclusion strategy directly aligns with, and helps achieve key business objectives, many of the other factors...will follow

naturally."

Eric Ellis, president of Integrity Development a diversity consulting firm in West Chester, Ohio, and a respondent, noted that more has to be done about the business case for diversity. »