

FORBES INSIGHTS STUDY IDENTIFIES STRONG LINK BETWEEN DIVERSE TALENT AND INNOVATION

Survey pinpoints the need to create a clear business case for supporting diversity and inclusion programs worldwide

NEW YORK, NY (July 13, 2011) – As innovation becomes more of a key differentiator for the world’s largest companies, organizations increasingly see having a diverse and inclusive workforce as critical to driving the creation and execution of new products, services, and business processes, according to a new study released by Forbes Insights (available at www.forbes.com/forbesinsights).

“Fostering Innovation Through a Diverse Workforce” is based on an exclusive survey of 321 executives at large global enterprises (\$500 million-plus in annual revenues). All respondents had direct responsibility or oversight for their companies’ diversity and inclusion programs. The study was sponsored by AT&T, L’Oréal USA, and Mattel.

According to the survey, a diverse and inclusive workforce is necessary to drive innovation and promote creativity—85% of respondents agreed (48% strongly so) that diversity is crucial to gaining the perspectives and ideas that foster innovation. As importantly, more than three quarters indicated that their companies will put more focus over the next three years to leverage diversity for their business goals, including innovation.

“Companies have realized that diversity and inclusion are no longer separate from other parts of the business,” said Stuart Feil, editorial director of Forbes Insights. “Organizations in the survey understand that different experiences and different perspectives build the foundation necessary to compete on a global scale.”

The Forbes Insights study also looked at how companies in different regions of the world approach diversity and inclusion, what programs fall into these initiatives, and what structures work most successfully. Other key findings include:

- A diverse and inclusive workforce is crucial for companies that want to attract and retain top talent. Most companies (65%) have programs in place to recruit diverse employees, but fewer follow that up with diversity-focused development programs (53%), and diversity-focused retention programs (44%).
- Just about every company surveyed had some kind of diversity and inclusion program, and many go beyond gender and race. Gender diversity programs are the most common (81%), followed by programs focused on ethnicity (77%), age (72%), and race (70%). Regionally, Asia-Pacific companies are more likely to have programs that focus on age and nationality, and European companies are more likely to look at disability or sexual orientation.

- Not all diversity plans within a company are identical. Half said that their organizations have a global plan that allows for different strategies to address regional or cultural differences, while about a third said their strategies allow for minimal regional deviation.
- Responsibility for the success of a company's diversity/inclusion efforts lies with senior management. Seven out of ten companies reported that the buck stops at the C-level and their board of directors.
- There are still some impediments to companies' diversity efforts. Respondents felt they've made progress in gender diversity, but they feel they've fallen short in areas such as disability and age.

About Forbes Insights

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