



Gretchen Fri, APR
Public Relations Manager
(330) 670-5079
Gretchen.fri@infocision.com

Matthew Feltrup
Public Relations Coordinator
(330) 670-5089
Matthew.feltrup@infocision.com

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Implementing workplace diversity initiatives a sound business decision

InfoCision sees far-reaching benefits by embracing its diverse workforce

Akron, Ohio, October 18, 2010 – When it comes to human capital, businesses want to have the most productive workforce possible, and many invest heavily in training programs and team building in an effort to create an atmosphere where employees can succeed. But there is another way to boost employee productivity that many businesses overlook: diversity initiatives.

Investing in diversity and inclusion programs might seem to some companies like a luxury it cannot afford in today's economy. But these initiatives are beneficial from more than just an ethical standpoint; they also have far-reaching business benefits that can positively impact productivity, according to Tina Myles, Director of Human Resources at InfoCision Management Corporation.

"Diversity programs are about creating and maintaining an inclusive environment where no matter what an employee brings to the table, it is valued and celebrated," said Myles. "When you embrace everyone's strengths, the organization as a whole is more productive; and it also helps managers to better manage their teams because they have a better grasp on what their employees do well."

InfoCision began its diversity program about two years ago when President [Carl Albright](http://InfoCision Management Corporation) brought Myles in to head the human resources department, in large part due to her expertise in developing and promoting corporate diversity. About five years ago, Albright implemented work/life balance programs at InfoCision to give employees convenient tools for improving their health and making their lives easier. In this spirit, Albright knew that InfoCision possessed a wide collection of diverse and excellent employees, and wanted to make sure the company was providing a comfortable workplace for all of them.

But diversity programs must be undertaken slowly to ensure they are done the right way, because they must include everyone regardless of ethnicity, religious beliefs, political views, disabilities, etc. In addition, changes that are made in the workplace too rapidly without proper planning run the risk of being resisted by current employees.

"For the program to be successful, it must fit in with the company's current corporate culture, not attempt to change it," said Myles. "So starting slowly is key to getting employees to buy in to the program. We started with a calendar that highlights our diverse collection of employees and tells their stories. It was given out to every InfoCision employee, and it has been very well received."

Starting diversity programs may seem like a daunting task for companies that don't have an expert in the subject matter, and especially for smaller companies without a great deal of resources. In fact, according to the Workforce Diversity Network, just 34 percent of all businesses have diversity initiatives, but 67 percent of large companies have such initiatives.

For employers that want to start a diversity initiative but don't have a lot of time or resources to invest, Myles offers the following easy and low-cost tips:

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1. Spotlighting diverse employees in a company newsletter or calendar
2. Offer brown-bag lunch lectures on a diversity topic – many groups will speak for free
3. Create affinity groups to support a specific segment of the workforce (such as women, Asian-Americans, workers with Military experience, etc.)
4. Have a potluck where workers bring in foods and recipes from their ethnic heritage
5. Announce local events that support diversity on your bulletin board or intranet

There are many community resources available to help companies of all sizes that want to harness the power of embracing diversity.

“We have worked with the [Diversity Center of Northeast Ohio](#), and I and another employee have graduated from their LeadDIVERSITY program,” said Myles. “We have also been involved with the Greater Cleveland Partnership Commission on Economic Inclusion Diversity Professional Committee, which promotes creative problem-solving and sharing of best practices on diversity issues between senior-level staff members at various organizations. The more we learn and share ideas, the more effective we can be as leaders.”

In addition to engaging current employees, diversity programs can be extremely helpful for hiring and retaining new employees. When new or potential employees encounter an environment that embraces all of their skills and attributes, that employee is more likely to feel comfortable with the company and enjoy their job right away; and be less likely to leave and waste the cost of training. InfoCision’s 90 day retention rate is 99 percent, and its overall retention rate is among the lowest in the call center industry. And hiring from a diverse pool of talent enhances an organization’s ability to bring in the best workers.

“By expanding your pool of applicants to include everyone, regardless of sex, ethnicity, economic status, religious views, disabilities or anything else, you are giving your organization an advantage over the competition, because they aren’t finding the same quality of applicants,” said Myles. “We work with local organizations such as [the Cleveland Sight Center](#), [El Barrio West Side Ecumenical Ministry](#), the [Akron Urban League](#), the [Summit County Developmental Disabilities Board](#) and many others that might not be traditional places you might think to recruit. But by doing this, we have found some great employees.”

And beyond employee and productivity issues, embracing diversity can have other benefits for your company. For instance, InfoCision has several clients that are embracing diversity, and they appreciate the fact that InfoCision has done so as well.

“We think our diversity initiative makes us a more attractive company in every aspect; not just to potential and current employees, but to potential and current clients, suppliers and community partners,” said Myles. “In today’s competitive business climate, diversity is a strategy that’s too important to overlook.”

About InfoCision

Founded in 1982, InfoCision Management Corporation is the second largest privately held teleservice company and is a leader in customer care services, commercial sales and marketing for a variety of Fortune 100 companies and smaller businesses. InfoCision is also a leading provider of inbound and outbound marketing for nonprofit, religious and political organizations. Headquartered in Akron, Ohio, InfoCision operates 32 call centers at 12 locations in Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. InfoCision has been named one of the top ten best employers in Ohio by the state chamber of commerce. For more information on InfoCision please visit www.infocision.com.