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Preparing For a New Economy of Inclusion

3 Labor Force Trends to Know:

- **1 out of every 5 people in Wisconsin will be over the age of 65 by the year 2030.** This is a higher percentage of older adults than live in Florida today.
- **Younger Wisconsin workers are more racially and ethnically diverse than previous generations of workers.** 24% of kindergarteners in the Fond du Lac School District this year were Native, Black, Hispanic, and Asian.
- **There are fewer younger workers.** Local employers will need to recruit employees from outside the region to stay competitive.

-WAHCE Pool Training, 2010; WI Department of Workforce Development, 2008; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009

Fortune 500 companies, multinational organizations, and small businesses around the country and world will soon be losing many of their best workers as baby-boomers retire. The “silver tsunami” will affect all employers in the United States, including companies in Fond du Lac County. There are simply not enough younger, local workers to meet projected needs in coming years. An employer’s ability to hire and keep good workers will become even more critical to the overall success of a business. Younger workers will have many choices about where to work, and companies will compete for the best. One approach that many of the most proactive companies are taking to prepare for a changing workforce is inclusion.

It is common to use the terms *diversity* and *inclusion* synonymously. However, Miller (1998) distinguishes between the two concepts this way.

“Diversity describes the make-up of a group. Inclusion describes which individuals are allowed to participate and are enabled to contribute fully in the group.”

Miller also states that inclusion “broadens the bandwidth” of a group or a company by tapping into previously unused, overlooked, or excluded attributes team members bring to the work.

Looked at from this perspective, the traditional way employers have thought of worker diversity shifts from optional to critical for business success. There is no sense in paying someone to use only half of their

skills on the job. It is the employer’s role to create an environment where each worker can participate at their best capacity.

Effectively using inclusion in an organization means:

- Successfully employing and promoting people of different races, ethnicities, genders, and religions.

AND planning work processes so that:

- Introverts can be as effective as extroverts;
- Single parents can earn promotions as easily as married or non-parenting employees;
- Employees from all areas of the organization are able to offer input into the way work is done;
- Employees' unique talents are valued and used to improve outcomes.

Research and company success stories show that inclusive practices allow organizations to increase profits, increase innovation, and access all the skills that all employees bring. It is also widely accepted that leadership styles, such as Servant Leadership, that foster inclusion allow companies and employees to make stronger decisions, be more resilient through difficult times, and decrease turn-over. Many news and industry articles have documented the success companies have had when focusing on inclusion-related issues within their workplaces. (Institute of Management and Administration, 2007; Selko, 2008; Bowker, 2008; Cox, 2004; Dolezalek, 2008; Gatland, 1997; Kucyznksi, 1999; Kulik & Roberson, 2008; Miller, 1998; Pelled, et al., 1999;).

To assist local companies with talent attraction and retention needs, Fond du Lac County UW-Extension has developed a survey to measure workplace culture with respect to inclusiveness. The survey is confidential for employees to take, and the results are confidential for employers. The results give companies an idea of what is working great, what isn't working as well, and areas for improvement in employee engagement and retention abilities.

So far, results from a few participating companies show that there are statistically significant relationships between how included employees feel at work and their:

- Gender
- Type of job
- Commute distance
- Other non-visible dimensions of diversity.

Knowing this, area companies are one step closer to achieving the strong results they can get when all employees are giving at their best. The survey is available on an ongoing to basis to local employers from UW-Extension.