

Rogue Valley Chapter

DECEMBER 2011

We will not be hosting a program in December, but please stay tuned for our upcoming programs in 2012. We wish you a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!

2012 Oregon Minimum Wage Increase

The Oregon minimum wage for the 2012 calendar year is \$8.80 per hour.

The current (2011) minimum wage rate is \$8.50. Based on an increase in the CPI of 3.77% from August 2010 to August 2011, the calculation used for determining the minimum wage rate for August 2010 is as follows:

$$\$8.50 \times .0377 = \$0.32045, \text{ rounded to } \$0.30$$

Oregon employers are required to post minimum wage posters. Downloadable posters for 2012 reflecting the new minimum wage will be available on BOLI's website in December, 2011

Diversity and Human Resources Today

In 2008, SHRM convened its first Global Diversity & Inclusion Leaders Summit. The topic of diversity has become increasingly relevant in the world where businesses and individuals are more connected and interdependent than ever before. By 2010 the Diversity & Inclusion Standards Taskforce was formed by SHRM to keep focus on research and information gathering about diversity issues.

What does diversity really mean? The dictionary definition is *differences*. Thus, workplace diversity can encompass an infinite range of individuals' unique characteristics and experiences.

The first step is to acknowledge that diversity exists in any organization even in those where the employees appear to be relatively homogenous, for instance, of the same gender, race and nationality. An all female, white, US born team in a small gift basket business may seem like a case where no attention to diversity issues is necessary. In reality, this may or may not be the case. One employee could be a lesbian, another a veteran with mild PTSD, and the company's receptionist could be an animal rights activist. Would any of that matter for the success of this business?

SHRM defines workplace diversity as the collective mixture of differences and similarities that includes **individual and also organizational** characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences, and behaviors.

Some individual and organizational characteristics are more visible than others. For instance, skin color, race, gender and age may be visible. Formal organizational structure is usually well documented in the employees' handbook. Other characteristics like religion, sexual orientation, disabilities, beliefs, etc. may not be so obvious. The informal organizational structures and behaviors can be hard to detect, yet they can have a powerful presence and the capacity to impact the well being of employees and the organization as a whole.

While many businesses and organizations have some diversity programs in place, usually encompassing gender, age, race and religious differences, there is more to diversity.

SHRM considers some organizational factors as part of diversity as well, for instance, in workplace arrangements. Is there flexibility in workplace arrangements to suit customers and employees? Or is there only a simple and rigid workplace structure that may not work well in today's business environment?

According to SHRM's research, the need for workplace flexibility has been driven by the growing need from customers to access service 24/7, but also by the workforce. In many organizations that have more flexible arrangements, this happened at request of the workers. Arrangements like job sharing and part time statuses (instead of layoffs) have been particularly relevant in difficult economic times.

Telecommuting is an increasingly popular and successful form of flexible workplace programs. Though it was novelty at first, studies have clearly shown that productivity increases significantly and absenteeism decreases for telecommuters.

In addition, SHRM suggests paying special attention to veterans as a group in a diversity program for the following reasons:

Veterans are a group that is significantly different from the "dominant group" (i.e. civilians) in American workplaces;

The number of veterans has increased in recent years;

Veterans hail from a distinct and definable culture;

48% of employers cite difficulty transitioning from military culture to civilian culture as a significant challenge for hiring and retaining veterans;

According to SHRM survey, nationally about 50 percent of employers have made a special effort to hire veterans;

There are several reasons why religion AND spirituality need to be included in a diversity program:

Though 78 percent of all Americans identify themselves as Christians, the US population and workforce is very diverse when it comes to religious

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Diversity and Human Resources Today continued...

and spiritual practices, sometimes even within the same religion. The remaining 22 percent represent a wide variety of religious, spiritual and atheist beliefs;

The religious identity is fluid in the US, ie it can change over time. About 28 percent of all Americans left the religion they were born into for other religions or none at all;

There were a record 3,790 complaints of religious discrimination filed with the EEOC last year

Why a diversity program?

According to SHRM, a diversity program in an organization is designed for the purposes of inclusion. Inclusion is *the achievement of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization's success.*

Diversity management is thus defined as a *comprehensive organizational and managerial process for leveraging diversity and achieving inclusion that maximizes the potential of all employees.*

Diversity management is a continuous process of developing knowledge, appreciation, acceptance and skills which can be used to discern cultural patterns (in your own and other cultures) and incorporate several different world views into problem solving, decision making and conflict resolution to achieve effective results.

In other words, with careful and skillful diversity management program, all the differences in an organization can be utilized in the organization's success.

Does your business have a diversity program?

The Rogue Valley SHRM Board will be asking members to participate in a diversity

survey planned for March of 2012, which will follow our March 15, 2012 program "Why Diversity and Inclusion are Good for Business". The seminar will be presented by Eric Peterson, SHRM's Manager of Diversity and Inclusion (more details to come).

Table 1 features some of the population characteristics in Jackson and Josephine counties, compared with Oregon and the US.

Oregon Employment Department compiles demographic data called Affirmative Action packets for those businesses on government contracts or any business that would like to compare the demographic composition of its workforce with the population in the community.

For more information or demographic data, contact the Rogue Valley SHRM Chapter Diversity Director Ainoura Oussenbec at (541) 776-6060*233 or Ainoura.Oussenbec@state.or.us.

Table 1: Population characteristics in Jackson and Josephine counties, Oregon and the US (from 2009 ACS data, US Census)

	Females	Hispanics	Veterans, civilian population 18 years and over	Median age	Bachelor's degree and higher, population 25 years and over	Disability status of the civilian non-institutionalized population
Jackson	51.6%	9.4 %	16.5 %	42.4	25.2 %	16.1%
Josephine	52.3%	5.7%	16.1%	47.2	16.0%	16.6%
Oregon	50.9%	11.2%	11.7%	38.0	29.2%	13.0%
US	50.7%	15.8%	9.5%	36.8	27.9%	12.0%