



Executive Summary:

SSM Health Care has been committed to diversity inclusion for many years. However, while creating its formal strategic plan in 1998, SSM Health Care analyzed the demographics of the communities it served and realized that the organization's workforce was not adequately representative of the diversity of its patient population. Diversity inclusion is an integral part of the organization's mission, so a plan was created that included specific strategic initiatives focusing on increasing the number of diverse professionals and managers, creating a climate welcoming to all ethnicities and cultures, partnering with other organizations dedicated to diversity inclusion, and establishing a Supplier Diversity program. The Supplier Diversity program identifies vendors that are small business or f or minority-owned, and encourages SSM Health Care's purchasers to conduct business with these vendors whenever possible. The program's goal was ten percent of the organization's discretionary spending dedicated to these vendors, and has grown significantly.

SSM Health Care also created a mentoring program for diverse individuals. Mentees are people of color who are paired with a senior-level executive to help them enhance their professional and leadership skills and prepare them for potential leadership positions within the organization. The organization also established a Diversity Forum for minority managers and executives to meet and discuss their perception about barriers to success and how the organization could remove those barriers. These programs, combined with other initiatives, have helped SSM Health Care exceed its goal of ten percent of its professionals and managers representing diverse individuals. It was through the use of the Baldrige model that SSM accomplished its diversity success, and was one of the contributing factors in making SSM the first health care organization to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 2002.

Organization Size: 20 Acute Care Hospitals

Program/Initiative Description:

SSM Health Care established its own employee diversity initiative by utilizing best practices and benchmarks identified by Fortune 500 and Fortune 100 companies with successful diversity programs. Based on its research, the organization established four strategic initiatives:

- Increasing the number of professionals and managers that are diverse individuals;

- Creating a climate and an environment that is welcoming, encourages diverse individuals in the community to want to work for SSM Health Care, and achieves low turnover in diverse individuals;
- Partnering with other organizations whose mission is to bring about inclusion; and
- Supporting small business, minority-owned businesses, or women-owned business, or referred to as Supplier Diversity.

Using its strategic plan, SSM Health Care developed programs to meet the goals of all four of its strategic initiatives. One program established was a mentoring program, which provides career development and skills to diverse individuals. Individuals in the program complete a personality assessment that measures their strengths and opportunities, and they are then paired with a senior-level executive for one year. The program is not used for promotion, but rather to enhance the professional skills of minority employees. The program's success was measured by tracking participants' satisfaction rates and ensuring that individuals did not withdraw from the program.

The development of the Supplier Diversity program began by earmarking ten percent of the organization's discretionary spending for vendors that are small businesses or are owned by a female or a minority individual. The organization spent over \$1.5 million with these vendors in the first year, but realized it was still missing many potential vendors because either the purchasers were not aware of the vendors or the organization's database did not flag the vendor as a small, minority or woman-owned business. As a result, SSM Health Care identified potential vendors by contacting the local chamber of commerce and small business and minority groups as well as sending out flyers to vendors in the area, encouraging them to register on the SSM Health Care Web site. The organization then updated its internal supplier directory to help purchasing managers identify potential small businesses or minority businesses to contract with when ordering discretionary items such as food, flowers, consulting and distribution services.

The organization also established a Diversity Forum, bringing groups of managers and executives together with common cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The goal of the Diversity Forum is to bring together decision-makers with a common bond, and invite them to talk about their barriers to success and how the organization can help them overcome those barriers. The Forum helps the participants to achieve greater professional success and aids the hospital in identifying how to become more inclusive with employees and patients.

Establishment of Program/Initiative: 1998

Racial or Ethnic Disparities Problem the Program/Initiative Was Designed to Address:

- During its strategic planning process the organization analyzed the demographics of the communities it served, and realized that despite its diversity efforts the system's workforce did not represent the changing community populations
- SSM Health Care's mission has always centered around inclusion and addressing diversity issues, resulting in a need for the system to establish goals addressing specific diversity needs in the organization and the communities it serves

Major Objectives:

- Establish a workforce that mirrors the communities served, including representation at the management and executive level
- Broaden the understanding of hiring managers about who may be qualified for specific positions, rather than limiting hiring decisions to individuals who may be similar to the manager in culture, diversity, or personality type
- To begin to address issues of health care disparities

Significant Results:

- SSM Health Care established a four-year goal in 2000 to have 10% of its professionals and managers representing diverse individuals; this goal was reached in September 2003
- The organization became the first health care recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 2002
- Satisfaction among participants in the mentorship program is at 90%, with attrition rate at 2.7%, which is solely due to changes in employment status
- The Supplier Diversity program grew 202% from the first to the second year, and 900% from the first to third year

External Partners in the Program/Initiative:

- Diversity councils at the chamber of commerce in each region
- The Urban League and NAACP when they hosted job fairs and other functions
- Other local community organizations emphasizing diversity and diversity initiatives

Limitations or Problems Encountered: At times the organization was criticized for placing too much emphasis on diversity; however, this was addressed by explaining the organization's mission, values and changing demographics and the need to better reflect the community it serves.

Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date: The changes were implemented through SSM Health Care's regular Human Resources programs, and the organization incurred minimal costs. Most activities required a change in emphasis rather than the establishment of a new program, such as advertising in different target areas and adding new components to training and education.

Advice to Other Organizations That May Want to Start a Similar Program

- It is essential to create an inclusive environment to prevent non-minority groups from feeling threatened; however, the environment created should mirror the communities from which employers attract employees and customers
- Organizations must respect the people and the talents that each individual brings, seeking the best talent for each position, regardless of who the individual is
- Customize your diversity program to fit your organization

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