



insights

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ABOUT US

Bridge Partners LLC is a retained executive search firm that was established nearly 9 years ago, with the conviction that diversity is (and will continue to be) a major component in an organization's search for the best talent available.

We are particularly convinced that a diverse leadership team is critical in today's consumer-facing sectors, as senior management teams see the need to reflect the customers they serve, their employee base, and their various community constituents.

We know diversity is a business imperative. As a minority-owned business, it is an intrinsic component of what Bridge Partners LLC does. It is a core value and is embedded in every aspect of our culture and practice.

Our brand and reputation has been built on consistently achieving superior results in the execution of our assignments. We have an unrivaled ability to successfully and efficiently execute senior-level search assignments, bringing to each project a focus on ensuring that our clients are presented with a diverse slate of candidates, while recognizing that ability is the top priority, regardless of race, gender or any other defining characteristics.

Our track record of successfully attracting and placing senior level diversity candidates proves our ability and commitment to building our clients' management strength and social responsibility.

Additional information on our firm, as well as PDF versions of our quarterly "Insights" publication, which focuses on issues related to HR and diversity, can be viewed on our website (www.bridgepartnersllc.com).

Needless to say, if you have an interest in learning more about our capabilities, we would be delighted to discuss in greater detail how we might help.

Thank you for your consideration.

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DIVERSITY IN THE RETAIL & RESTAURANT SECTORS

Pursuing Opportunity Through Talent

As people-driven businesses, the retail and restaurant industries were early adopters of formal corporate diversity initiatives. They used to be considered high-profile innovators and drivers of diversity recruitment programs, as well as diversity-focused employee engagement programs.

But can that still be said today? Did these sectors rest on their laurels following early diversity "wins," only to become less proactive in advocating and innovating in the diversity arena?

This would appear to be the case, with both sectors falling behind other industries such as healthcare, professional services and consumer products companies in regard to innovation around diversity and inclusion. For example, the 2011 DiversityInc Top 50 companies for Diversity@ list features just one retailer - JC Penney - and no restaurant organizations at all.

One could argue that, as early adopters, diversity has been woven into the day-to-day operations of the retail and restaurant sectors and so no longer requires proactive focus (unlikely). Or that these sectors have suffered significantly in the recent economic crisis and therefore lack budgets to fund significant diversity initiatives (a short-sighted excuse).

However, all is not yet lost. There is a crystal clear business case for re-energizing retail and restaurant diversity programs - one that becomes more important during times of economic challenge, not less so - BUYING POWER and NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES.

In order to attract diverse customers, organizations must work to establish a relationship with those individuals.

The first step is to do some homework. Natalie Weathers Nixon, associate professor in the fashion industry management department at Philadelphia University, is quoted in a 2009 WWD article: "The misperception that all minorities in America live in the same place and... [buy] the same types of things is slowly but surely starting to break down." Acknowledging, studying and understanding the variances in generation, geographic location, style, size and personal needs/preferences of a diverse consumer-base is critical.

But even with the right product at the right time, price and location, companies that lack diversity in their employee base will remain a step behind their competitors who have built diversity into the framework of their corporate culture. Consumers are more likely to shop, eat and spend where they feel most comfortable and welcomed, which is reflected not only in the merchandise displayed or menu choices but also in the environment - the store location, the demographic of the sales associates, the signage and the store format.



...and the challenge does not stop with the customer-facing employees – it should be reflected all the way to the top of the organization. Not only is leadership diversity critical in recruiting top talent for all levels of an organization, but it is a generally acknowledged fact that diverse teams drive better results – diversity is not just an HR issue, it's a business and profits issue.

In conclusion, retail and restaurant chains that are struggling to find a competitive edge in today's tight economy might find significant opportunity in reviewing their diversity and inclusion practices (or lack thereof). What does the executive leadership team and board of directors look like? Is it representative of the current US demographic? How diverse are the store management teams? Are they knowledgeable of the local population's cultures and preferences? What brand messages are being communicated to consumers both in-store and in the media? Are buyers, visual merchandisers and product development/design teams being included in existing multicultural and diversity initiatives?

We don't intend to suggest that these issues are not being considered at all, but there is still so much more that these sectors could do to innovate with regard to multicultural and diversity initiatives. They can't afford to just sit back and wait for a demographic change to filter through to the employee base or they will lose top talent. Increasing investment in a diverse leadership team will help retail and restaurant companies recruit and retain a diverse employee base, as well as stand out from competitors in connecting with a diverse consumer base - a key economic driver that they will ignore at their peril. Certainly, if they do not innovate in the face of a clear population trend, they will not benefit from the opportunity.

SAMPLE RECENT SEARCHES

Director Hispanic Marketing

Bluestem Brands

Regional Vice President

Burlington Coat Factory

VP Talent Management

Foot Locker, Inc.

VP Marketing

Foot Locker, Inc.

Director Construction & Facilities

Foot Locker Europe

Head of Industrial Relations

Foot Locker Europe

Creative Director

Fossil, Inc.

DMM, Jewelry

Fossil, Inc.

Director Brand

Fossil, Inc.

VP Global Diversity Policy &

Advocacy, General Manager

Foundation

Starbucks Corporation

Director Diversity & Inclusion

Starbucks Corporation

Senior Managing Director, Diversity and Inclusion

TIAA-CREF

DVP Merchandise Manager

TJX Companies

Executive Director Buying, Europe

TJX Companies

General Merchandise Manager

TJX Companies

VP Learning & Development, Europe

TJX Companies

Director Brand Management

Wendy's Corporation

Director Corporate Strategy, Planning & Analysis

Wendy's Corporation

SELECT CLIENT LIST

Alcatel-Lucent

American Eagle Outfitters

Barnes & Noble

Brown Shoe Company

Burlington Coat Factory

Campbell Soup Company

Choice Hotels

Colgate-Palmolive Company

CVS Caremark

Federal Reserve System

Foot Locker

Fossil

General Electric Company

GNC Corporation

Grant Thornton International

Jackie Robinson Foundation

Jimmy Choo

Kaiser Permanente

Macy's

Medco Health Solutions

Microsoft

Prudential Financial, Inc.

Sodexo

Starbucks

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide

Sullivan & Cromwell

TIAA-CREF

TJX Companies

Tommy Hilfiger

Travelers

USAA

Walt Disney Company

Wendy's Corporation



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