



# DIVERSITY WORKS!

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## JUMP START YOUR DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

Welcome to the first issue of Diversity Works!, an e-letter of Diversity @ Work in London. In every issue we hope to inspire employers to take a serious look at the business benefits of diversity, in sharing best practices in diversity management, as well as highlighting local employers of choice.

Diversity @ Work in London was started for several reasons; but fundamentally because of a basic belief that all people should have an equal chance to find employment, and that once businesses learn the human potential that can be unleashed from diverse groups, their businesses will flourish with added innovation, knowledge of new markets, enhancements to technology etc. There are so many untapped human resources in our community that once discovered could bring much more prosperity not only to London, but also to those individuals whose skills are being ignored or are under-utilized.

Our Vision Statement reads: *Individuals from diverse communities will have greater opportunities to find meaningful employment thus contributing to the economic success of our community. Businesses will*



*realize the economic and social benefits of creating inclusive workplaces and of marketing their services and products to a wider/ consumer business market.*

In March, I had the opportunity to attend a Diversity Conference sponsored by the Ivey Business School in Toronto where diversity leaders and academia met to discuss diversity research and practice. It was an enlightening day, as I saw "Spirit" do the Tango with such mastery, finesse, passion and beauty. Within seconds the image of the wheelchair disappeared and all I could see was an incredible artist. I was deeply moved and wished that the whole world could see her performance; since for me, it really made me rethink and challenge

what I imagine when I hear the word "disabled". I was challenged throughout the day as I saw so many individuals with "disabilities" who had carved out very rewarding careers as film makers, human resource professionals and accessible accommodation experts. I also listened and reflectively watched Mary Lou and Dan Smokes' aboriginal opening ceremony as they gave thanks to the Creator and blessed the day.

These were only two of the many examples of diversity that day that were memorable for me. I was also impressed by the many businesses throughout Canada that were successfully implementing diversity

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## ATN: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

ATN for Persons with Disabilities provides opportunities for individuals with injuries or physical, sensory and learning disabilities to gain access to employment or reach their learning goals through a variety of assessment, skills, upgrading and personal development services.

ATN for Persons with Disabilities would like your Pentium III or higher, working order computers that you no longer use. We will put them to use in our ITAT (Inclusion Through Access to Technology) program which makes it possible for people with serious disabilities to learn about computers in their own homes.

Factors such as inaccessible classrooms, limited transportation and expense are some of the reasons

people with disabilities are unable to be involved in traditional training available in our computer labs. With your generous donation of used equipment, we are able to provide the equipment, the volunteer, and the support to make this program work. A fair market value charitable tax receipt is available for your kind donation.

To donate, please contact Brenda Sword at 519-433-7950 ext. 372 or email [itat@atn.on.ca](mailto:itat@atn.on.ca)

Imagine developing and offering employee orientation, product training, or any course you can imagine, online!

ATN for Persons with Disabilities invites you to attend the launch of Academ-e Online Classroom, an online learning platform

developed with affordability, versatility and accessibility in mind.

Academ-e Online Classroom is also a social enterprise initiative. It not only represents a new way of offering online instruction, it represents a new way for non-profits and businesses to develop and deliver services in our community.

The product launch and live product demonstrations will be held on Wednesday, May 16 from 1:00 – 3:00 pm at the Best Western Lamplighter Inn & Conference Centre, 591 Wellington Road South.

Please call today to RSVP: 519-433-7950. For more information visit our Academ-e webpage contact Vicki Mayer at the above number.



## CHILDREACH SEEKS BOARD MEMBERS

Childreach is seeking an individual with financial expertise to join their Board of Directors in June 2007. The Board is responsible to oversee the operations of the organization including establishing policies, guidelines and limits for agency operations and ensuring transparency and financial accountability. Board Positions are available for keen individuals who enjoy working as a team, enjoy leadership

opportunities and supporting the vision and mission of a busy community resource. Briefly stated, the Board's role is to ensure that Childreach establishes and maintains the trust of the community by being clear in its mission, prudent and ethical in its activities, and accountable for its actions. Meetings focus on planning, policy-making, and assessing our progress in achieving our Strategic Plan goals. They are guided in our actions by

our fundamental belief in the service value of commitment to families, excellence, and partnership.

If interested in this leadership opportunity, please contact the Administrative Assistant, Nadine Reeves, at 519-434-3644 Ext. 43 for more information. Nominations will be accepted until May 31, 2007.



## PILLAR NONPROFIT NETWORK'S BOARD DIVERSITY PROJECT

Funded by Canadian Heritage, as part of their Multiculturalism Program, the Board Diversity Project by Pillar Nonprofit Network seeks to strengthen our community, helping organizations increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their programs and services and by engaging diverse communities. We offer professional development for organizations on inclusiveness and anti-racism

frameworks in order for them to better attract skilled volunteers from diverse communities onto their boards. We also provide a board orientation program for interested volunteers from diverse communities on the roles, responsibilities and duties of board members.

Due to the success of our Board Diversity workshops, we will be offering a second round to interested nonprofit organizations. If your

organization is committed to diversity and would like to become more representative of the community, this project is for you.

For more information, please visit [www.pillarv.com](http://www.pillarv.com) or contact Nana Yanful, Project Coordinator at: [diversity.coordinator@pillarv.com](mailto:diversity.coordinator@pillarv.com) or 519-433-7876

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programs and reaching new ethnic and niche markets because of their diverse employees. They were cutting edge companies that were creating workplaces that were accommodating the vast array of employee needs.

In this issue and in future issues, Diversity Works! will answer your tough diversity questions, and keep you up-to-date on the latest news in diversity management and professional development opportunities available through Diversity @ Work. We hope to make this a community newsletter and invite our subscribers to submit their questions. We will post the selected questions anonymously. Moreover, we want Diversity @ Work to be a place where companies will want to boast about the success of their diversity initiatives. We also want to be able to post some local opportunities for promoting diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace. So write us a line,

and let us know about the exciting things your company is doing to jump start diversity in London!

We are pleased to report that two additional services have been added:

(1) The Small Business ***HR and Ethnic Marketing Package*** which will help small businesses to obtain a competitive advantage through ethnic/niche marketing and diverse hires.

(2) Most recently, Diversity @ Work has contracted the services of Leah Straatsma to provide Elocution and Presentation skills for immigrants who are interested in accelerating their career or helping them with their business communication skills. Leah has obtained a Bachelor of Education in English and Communication Skills in The Netherlands. It was here that Leah learned the fundamentals of the English language, its components and its characteristics that are

unique to it and its second language learners. Leah has many years of professional experience as an ESL, English and Elocution teacher. In addition, Leah has a strong background in the dramatic arts. Having followed dramatic courses through The Trinity College of London, England, she has won numerous awards in Speech and Drama and is an accomplished actress of both stage and screen.

In this newsletter, you will find several opportunities for you to get involved in the community. Check the opportunities out and see how you can lend a helping hand whether it is donating a computer to help a person with a disability obtain employment skills or serve on a board.

## LOCAL BUSINESS CASES FOR DIVERSITY



*... "The benefits of hiring a diverse workforce are endless ..."*



“Canada is a diverse melting pot of cultures, races and ethnic groups. Immigration contributes significantly to our population growth and our economy has begun to depend on this growth. A healthy economy makes for a healthy community, but for the formula to work we must embrace diversity and be cognizant of the unique needs and communication styles of many different people. Even those with the best of intentions can get caught up in stereotypes or miscommunication that undermines our goal of an inclusive and healthy community. Now more than ever, diversity training is critical to the success of business, our economy and our social well being.”

*Steve Pellarin,  
General Manager,  
Small Business Centre*

“Diversity is a strategic priority at WCH. We recognize that in order to meet the diverse

needs of abused women in the community, our staff must be diverse. This means we hire women from many ethno-racial communities who are multi-lingual, women with disabilities, and lesbian women. Our staff is regularly trained in diversity issues. Our facilities are accommodating with accessible housing, food that meets a wide range of dietary and spiritual needs. Almost 50% of the staff that were hired for our new shelter on Clarke Road, were culturally diverse.”

*Kate Wiggins  
Executive Director  
Women’s Community  
House*

“Clearly in recognition of our totally diverse customer profile, embracing a diverse workforce is essential to the present and future growth of our business.”

*Allan Greenslade  
Human Resource  
Consultant  
Angelo’s Bakery & Deli*

“I believe that diversity enriches a workplace – at the London Unemployment Help Centre, although we have only 30 staff, we have a highly skilled workforce comprised not of disabled persons, but of brilliant people with physical challenges; we are able to provide service to our clients in over 10 different languages due to the diversity that our staff bring to the agency. The benefits of hiring a diverse workforce are endless and when employers start looking at what people have to offer as opposed to their obvious differences, they too will benefit from a culturally rich and physically aware and sensitive workplace.”

*Nancy McQuillan,  
Executive Director  
London Unemployment  
Help Centre*

**CONTACT US ABOUT HOW YOUR BUSINESS/ ORGANIZATION CAN BE FEATURED ON THIS LIST!**

## ASK A CONSULTANT

### SPEARHEADING A DIVERSITY COMMITTEE IN THE WORKPLACE

Dear Diversity @ Work:

My boss just asked me to spearhead a diversity committee at work. My boss has always known that I am really interested in diversity issues so, I was a natural choice. The problem is that I don't think the company is really serious about diversity, but they just want things to "look good on paper". What do you suggest I do?

Sincerely,  
Confused

Dear Confused:

Unfortunately, the situation that you have described happens all too often. Enthusiastic employees donate time to a diversity initiative that they feel will really make a difference in the workplace, only to find out that the organization superficially embraces diversity. Here are a few suggestions we would like to make:

First of all before you jump to conclusions, it would be a good idea to ask your boss, a few questions to find out if the company is serious about diversity such as:

- What does he or she see are the objectives of the committee?
- Are there going to be any senior managers on

the committee? If not, ask why. Sometimes senior managers delegate diversity programs to staff, feeling that it is not worth their time. It is important that a senior manager is on the committee who can keep the CEO informed about the Committee's happenings, progress, and obstacles. It also sends a clear message that the company is serious about diversity.

- What is the budget for your diversity committee? If a budget does not exist then you need to ask why? All important company initiatives have a cost attached to them.
- How do you think diversity can contribute to the company's strategic objectives?
- How do you define diversity? If your boss sees diversity only on the basis of race and ethnicity, he/she could use some help with understanding the business benefits of also employing people with disabilities, older workers, women, immigrants and people of colour, gays and lesbians and so on, as well as tapping into non-mainstream markets.
- How often and how long are you expected to meet?
- How are you expecting to convey the proceedings of the meetings and keep other employees informed?

If your boss has been able to satisfactorily answer these questions, your committee certainly has a chance at making a difference. If not, your company needs to get clearer about their commitment to diversity. A successful diversity program requires support from the CEO and senior management to make it happen. Thanks for your letter and congratulations on your appointment, I am sure you will find the work that you do on your Diversity Committee to be very rewarding.

### EMPLOYEES WHO FAIL TO MEET COMPANY'S ENGLISH SPEAKING STANDARDS

Dear Diversity @ Work:

I am in charge of Human Resources at our downtown office. As of late, I have noticed that a lot of prospective employees fail to meet our English speaking standards. I realize of course that many Canadians first language is not English; however, we want to be able to hire employees who are understandable.

I do not feel that we are picky when it comes to grammar, but most often our prospects lack intonation – many times it sounds like a



*"A successful diversity program requires support from the CEO and senior management to make it happen."*

# ASK A CONSULTANT, CONTINUED FROM PG. 5

few sentences or ideas are run-on sentences and its hard to determine when one word starts and another finishes. Of course, my first language is English, so it is easier for me to try and decipher what they are saying.

My concern is that should we hire them, the people they will be working with may have trouble understanding them, particularly prospective clients. This is too great a risk for us; we want to hire people who will be able to communicate effectively with clients. How our employees represent themselves is a reflection of our company.

We understand the challenges many English as a Second Language speakers face, so how can we address the problem with our employees before it becomes one? And how can we effectively help our current employees whom we feel may need some extra help regarding this issue?

Sincerely,  
Concerned

Dear Concerned,

We applaud the fact that you are committed to hiring employees of all backgrounds. The fact that you have come to us with your question shows your desire to want the best for

your company. Investing in good employees has many benefits, regardless of their backgrounds or language barriers.

However, we understand your concern. You are right: Canada is a multi-cultural society and the fact is that many Canadians first language is not English. Many new Canadians often enter the country without having to take specific tests

jobs require them to be on the phone a lot, have meetings or be out into the field, are also of great importance.

You are correct in that first impressions can seal or break a deal. You want to ensure that your employees are competent enough in their language skills for clients to understand them and to understand your product clearly.



Should you feel that your current employees are lacking such skills, it may be an option to offer them Elocution or Language Development classes. Do not be afraid to confront your current employees regarding this; remember that you are willing to support them in their professional development.

Be supportive in your approach. Remind them of how important they are for your company. Perhaps it may be wise to pinpoint one or two achievements that they have done to convey that. Let them know that their presence is a great asset for the company and you would be willing to help them enhance that through developmental classes.

Ask your employees what they feel are their weaknesses and strengths in their current position. Through your diagnosis, you may be able to determine whether or not they can convey this to you in an effective way. Let them know that you would like to

to prove their language skills, especially if they are sponsored through family. This can create a variety of problems, more so for companies who are looking to hire qualified employees.

Remember that your employees or prospective employees are very skilled at what they do; this is why you have hired them and/or why you are considering hiring them. Their past employment record is their foundation.

Of course, their communicative skills, especially if your employee's

*“The first impression can make or break a deal.”*

## ASK A CONSULTANT, CONTINUED FROM PG. 6

offer them specific lessons to help them in their career path. Let them know that you value them as an employee and that you would like to help them develop their skills. Most employees will welcome this idea as they too appreciate investing in themselves.

Some employees may take offense; they may feel that they are getting along just fine and don't need any extra help at all. In these instances, sensitivity is key. You don't necessarily need to agree with them, but reiterate their statements to confirm that you have heard them.

For example:

Employee: I just don't feel that I need anymore education. I've lived here for so long and have gotten along just fine without it. Why all of the sudden should I change that?

You: So what you're saying is that you feel that you are comfortable with where you are at right now and that you don't feel the need to change that?

Typically they will answer with a YES. Your next approach could play out like this:

You: Well, that is great that you feel so comfortable. How about adding to that? We like to see our employees, like you, get ahead in the marketplace. We want to ensure that you are getting the best support and in doing so, we also feel that it will be a great investment

for the company as a whole. If our clients see that we believe in ourselves by helping our current employees such as yourself get ahead and grow, it may just be that they will take another look to see what we can offer them, as well.

Most employees would not want to turn down such an offer. Today's society is such that we all want to be the best that we can be and improve upon ourselves, especially if someone else is helping us get there!

Of course, you may also want to consider having your entire team brush up on their skills. This way it is less intrusive and your whole team can experience this together. This not only will help increase everyone's productivity, but it also serves as a middle-ground where everyone is an equal and can be a great team-building experience.

There are a variety of options. You may want to consider taking some courses that pertain to pronunciation and grammar with some role-playing. You may want to consider taking some classes that practice giving presentations in English. Many of these classes are a wonderful option, especially for large groups as everyone can serve in giving feed-back.

Classes like these can be great fun as they act as a practice ground that can guarantee results. They tend to be stress-free, so students are apt to participating more.

Mistakes are welcome and students should be willing to make them without feeling like a failure. Such classes embrace this and help remove that fear-of-failure by providing a safe-haven in which they can develop their skills more effectively through feed-back and by meeting their personal goals.

While hiring, ask your prospects if they would be willing to participate in developmental classes to increase their productivity. A great candidate would be someone who is willing to invest their time, not only for themselves but for the company as well. This will also help you filter out prospects who may not be so willing to help the company grow and expand in a positive manner.

To conclude, this should be a team effort supported by your CEO or managers. Once they see the benefits, your company can begin to proceed exploring their options in terms of personal development through Elocution lessons, taken through Diversity @ Work in London, for example. Never be afraid to take the step forward in personal and professional development; your willingness to help your company get ahead is just the first of many. Congratulations!

*"This should be a team effort supported by your CEO or managers."*

# RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DATES IN 2007

*(Please contact us if you have any special dates you would like included)*

## May 2007 - National Hearing Month

1	Beltane* - Wicca/Neo Pagan	17	Ascension of Christ - Christian
1	Samhain * - Wicca/Neo Pagan	23	Shavuot * - Jewish
2	Buddha Day Visakha Puja ** - Buddhist	23	Declaration of the Bab * - Baha'i
3	Saints Phillip & James - Christian	27	Pentecost - Christian
4	National Day of Prayer (USA) - Interfaith	27	Trinity - Orthodox Christian
6	Lag B'Omer - Jewish	29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah * - Baha'i

## June 2007

1	All Saints - Orthodox Christian	19	New Church Day - Swedenborgian Christian
1	Trinity Sunday - Christian	21	First Nations Day (Aboriginal Day) - Canadian Native People
7	Corpus Christi - Catholic Christian	21	Litha * - Wicca/Neo Pagan
9	Saint Columba of Iona Day - Celtic Christian	24	Nativity of John the Baptist - Christian
11	Trinity - Christian	29	Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul - Christian
16	Guru Arjan Dev Sahib martyrdom - Sikh		

## July 2007

6	Birth of Dalai Lama ** - Buddhist	23	Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie I - Rastafari
9	Martyrdom of the Bab * - Baha'i	24	Pioneer Day - Mormon Christian
11	St. Benedict Day - Catholic Christian	24	Literary Night - Gay Pride Event (London, ON)
13	Ulambana/Obon ** - Buddhist	24	Tisha B'av * - Jewish
15	St. Vladimir the Great Day - Orthodox Christian	25	St. James the Great Day - Christian
29	Gay Pride Parade (London, ON)		



**Diversity@Work**  
in London

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