

# Dominos in Business

*By Al Vivian*

Al Vivian is the President and CEO of Basic Diversity, Inc. (BASIC). BASIC is a full service cultural diversity training and consulting firm that has been operating nationally for thirty (30) years. Their client list includes Ford Motor Company, McDonalds, N.C. State University, U.S. Army and various municipalities. Vivian learned about managing diversity very early in life via personal interactions with members of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s staff (Andy Young, Jesse Jackson, Dorothy Cotton .etc.). At Linkages Summit on Leading Diversity, Vivian will be leading the 1.5 day immersion program: "Diversity Competence Education for Line Managers. As the leader of the is program Vivian will deliver the principles of managing a diverse workforce, unveil the keys to creating an inclusive work environment, provide tactics to drive innovations, access diverse markets, and link diversity to productivity, and offer strategies for effectively managing diverse work teams.

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The game of dominos with its black and white pieces is one that involves knowledge, forethought and strategy. So too is the reality for the game of business. In dominos the only thing at stake is the players' egos or a small side wager. With business and America's *Demographic Dominos* however, the consequences of one miss-step can mean the difference between market dominance and complete organizational shut-down. And in business the game pieces are far more diverse than just black and white. They are also yellow, red and various shades of brown. They follow different religions, and speak with a myriad of different languages and dialects. And unlike the pieces in the game of dominos, they are human beings with emotions, mind-sets and the ability to make their own moves.

By now every smart organizational leader has come to the realization that the aforementioned group is their future workforce. What most employers have not yet realized is that in the very near future they may need these workers more than these workers will need them. You may ask, "*How can this be? .... After all, unemployment is so high and the economy is so tight that there is practically a sale on qualified workers*". Do I have a crystal ball that is foretelling the future? No. But I do have the ability to read, count and notice trends. According to the *U.S. Department of Labor*, there is a massive global talent shortage just around the corner that is so large it will control employment trends no matter what the economy does.

Beginning as early as 2008 there will be a 29 million personnel shortage on the North American continent alone. 10 million of those unable to fill jobs will be here in the U.S. In other words, starting as soon as 5 years from now there will be 10 million more jobs, than there are qualified people to fill them. This will shift the balance of power away from the employer and into the hands of the employee. What's causing this shortage? "**Baby Boomers**" are starting to retire and the trend will last up to 20 years. Additionally, people had fewer children globally from 1966 to 1984, as a result there is no projected back-fill. Baby Boomers currently make up 60% of the "Prime-age Workforce" (those workers 25-54 years old). Not even a mass influx of immigrants can fill this gap. Add to that, the bulk of these retiring Baby Boomers will be white males (the only major demographic group that is decreasing in our workforce) and the majority of people entering the workforce will be everything but.

## Ready Or Not ... Here They Come

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As we try to fill these positions the only group we can turn to is our youth, who are increasingly more diverse. Consider the fact that every child that will enter the workforce over the next 20 years is already in school (K5-12). Thus, taking a look at America's student population can give us an indication of what our workforce will probably look like for the next two decades.

Seven states, to include California and Texas which are the most populated states in the country, now have more racial minority students than white students. 16 other states closely follow with 30%-49% minority populations. If you add this increase of racial diversity to the already existing hues; coupled with the decrease of white baby boomers, it totally changes the complexion of the game.

## Other Demographic Dominos are Falling

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*Gender* - the baby boomers transitioning into retirement are predominately male. Their departure automatically increases the female percentage of the workforce which is already close to half (47%).

*Generations* - because the new employee base is younger it will also impact the generational balance. Other demographic dominos (*language, sexual orientation, work/life balance, etc...*) will begin to play a more dominate role as our workforce transforms. All of these dominos intersect and impact each other. To succeed, organizations must learn to create the "*natural environment*" - an environment where people can be successful, productive and collaborative while being who they naturally are.

## Fair Well -v- Farewell

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Your organization will not be the only one competing for this talent. And as these diverse groups, each with their own set of motivators, realizes their significance to the success of every organization in the country they will begin to organize and position their demographic game pieces in a very strategic manner.

Keep in mind these groups are made up of people who have been consistently labeled as non-traditional workers; and they are no longer settling for being seen as "*outsiders*" and/or "*others*". As a result, they will seek and place a premium on choosing employers who have already created the *natural environment*. Organizations that have a proven track record of providing this inclusive setting for all types of people will *fair well*. Those who do not will be saying *farewell*. Organizations that have not already developed and implemented a strategic diversity plan may have already forfeited their competitive edge and are currently operating from a deficit position.

The only guaranteed thing is that the *Demographic Dominos* are going to fall - and there will be a ripple effect. The important question is, "**Will those dominos fall in your favor?**"

# Linkage

Linkage is a global organizational development company that specializes in leadership development. We provide clients around the globe with integrated solutions that include strategic consulting services, customized leadership development and training experiences, tailored assessment services, and benchmark research. Linkage's mission is to connect high-performing leaders and organizations to the futures they want to create.

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