Elements for recruiting and retaining diverse apprentices

Three Principles of Effective Recruitment

1. Repeated contact with your intended audience.
2. Clear next step for them to take.
3. Build relationships for trust and word of mouth recruiting.

Five Key Actions to Recruit for Diversity

1. A marketing plan that reaches your desired audience with a message targeted to them.
2. Nurture diverse applicants so they feel welcome and stay motivated throughout the sometimes long application process.
3. Keep diverse applicants connected to your industry, so they continue to be interested and gain industry knowledge and skill.
4. Feed the pipeline by reaching the younger generation.
5. Build relationships with those your desired audience trusts.

Action One
Reach Your Desired Audience with a Targeted Message

• Target with the image itself; show successful women and minority workers from your industry. This makes it clear you are interested in reaching those groups.

• Target through where it is posted or sent or presented. For instance to Girl Scouts, minority advocacy or service groups, minority or women oriented news media, or minority or women oriented events.

• Target by who gives the message. Women and minorities from your industry are the best recruiters and spokespeople to reach a diverse audience.

• People need to hear/see the message more than once in order to respond. Cultivate your audiences with regular repeat messages over time.
Action Two

**Nurture Your Female and Minority Applicants**

- Have women and minorities from your industry be part of orientations. This shows women and minority applicants that they are welcome and can be successful. It connects them to important mentors for when they get started.

- Inform applicants that women and minorities are welcome and successful in your industry during orientation or application. This message from a respected industry leader sets the tone for the whole group as well as the individual minority or female applicant. This message can help applicants stay interested and motivated throughout the sometimes long and difficult application process.

- Encourage those who do not score well to apply again through a letter or phone call; call or write again periodically or just before your next opening to encourage re-application. You have worked hard to get minorities and women thru your door, make this effort continue to pay off by retaining potential candidates. Make sure they know of actions they could take to improve their scores or chances of being selected.

Action Three

**Keep Female and Minority Applicants Connected to Your Industry**

- Ask your employers to hire the best female and minority candidates in entry-level positions such as material handler, warehouse or yard helper so that they gain skills and remain interested.

- If your industry has a women’s group or minority caucus, send the applicant an invitation to their next meeting.

Action Four

**Feed the Pipeline by Reaching the Younger Generation**

- Adopt a school that has a large minority population, and sponsor their team.

- Teach workshops about your industry at schools or youth groups; taught by women and minorities from your industry. Target youth groups that serve minorities or girls.

- Host field trips to your offices or to job sites for groups of young women and minority youth.

- Provide summer internships for high school aged young women and minority youth.

Action Five

**Build relationships with those your audience trusts**

- Join organizations that represent various minority groups such as the Urban League, Metropolitan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Tribal organizations, etc.

- Send a representative to speak about your industry and opportunities.

- Attend and support events such as dinners, International Women’s Day celebrations, Martin Luther King Day events, pow-wows, etc.
Example: 5-Step Marketing Plan for Reaching Diverse Applicants

• Ads featuring photos of women and minorities from your industry with a message inviting women and minorities to apply – run 4-6 times a year in general news media as well as news media that serves minorities or women.

• Create a poster and brochure with photos of women and minorities from your industry and mail 4-6 times a year to community groups, employment offices, libraries, community centers, etc.

• Brochures and cover letter mailed to women and minorities in your industry several times annually asking them to refer their family and friends – take advantage of word of mouth recruiting.

• Post images of women and minorities and a welcoming message on your web site.

• Staff your career fair booth and orientations with women and minorities from your industry.

Five Key Action Steps Apprenticeship Programs Can Take for Effective Retention of Women and Minority Apprentices

1. Orientation: Provide an orientation or “boot camp” for new apprentices that helps them prepare for industry expectations and culture around attendance, performance, appropriate work behavior and work ethic, as well as deepen their understanding of the trade and job site environment.

2. Welcoming job site environment: Assist your employers to create a respectful and welcoming job site environment, including defining expectations of employers who have the privilege of using apprentices, teaching about best practices for training apprentices, and providing employers with information about the economic costs of apprentice cancelation (a 2009 study of apprentice retention in the Cincinnati area estimated that apprentice attrition was costing local industry over $7 million annually). A job site that helps new apprentices feel welcome, confident in what is expected of them, a part of the crew, and knowledgeable about how to work safely, gains a more productive worker.

3. Skills training: Make sure your employers provide apprentices with the opportunity to learn more technical aspects of the trade on the job; carefully monitor to make sure minority and women apprentices don’t solely do grunt work and are learning the practical on-the-job skills that lead to being a valued worker. Women and minority apprentices may find themselves relegated to sweeping up, moving materials or doing simple repetitive tasks. In order for minorities and women to become good hands, employable, and confident in their skills, they need to learn more technical aspects of the trade. While not practical to train every apprentice on every aspect of the trade on the job, apprenticeship programs can set the standard for on the job training and carefully plan with their employers for all apprentices to grow in their skill.

4. Help for issues or concerns: Make sure apprentices know where to get help for issues or concerns that might arise. Apprentices need to know who to go to if they experience difficulties. This could be an apprentice rep, the apprenticeship coordinator, an apprentice liaison, apprenticeship instructors, a job steward, an employee assistance program or a mentorship program. In general, women and minority apprentices have trouble speaking up for themselves and don’t want to rock the boat by complaining, so need to have spelled out for them very clearly the safe and proper channels to get help.
5. **Fair Amount of Work:** Watch out for, and discuss with your employers if you find that minority and female apprentices are getting laid off sooner and thus not getting the hours to advance. With lay-off choices sometimes being the responsibility of a mid-level foreman or superintendent, unintended biases or personal friendships may influence unknowingly their lay-off choices, resulting in fewer work hours for apprentices from underrepresented groups.

6. **Relationships & mentoring:** Most apprentices work in a teamwork or crew environment. Thus, an apprentice’s ability to have a good working relationship with their co-workers is critical for the apprentice to learn, perform and be successful. When the relationship-building is left to chance or to the apprentice, barriers of race and gender may get in the way of the apprentice becoming a true part of the work crew. The following mentorship elements could contribute to apprentices from underrepresented groups gaining the crew connections and social guidance needed to be successful.

- **New worker job site orientation:** Very complete orientation to the job site and its expectations on the first day/week on the job: how to be safe, attendance expectations, appropriate work behavior, etc. Best for those giving the orientation to follow a check list – sometimes job site expectations are so assumed by the established worker that they are not communicated and they trip up a new worker. (see checklist from the State of Wisconsin’s “Transition to Trainer” job site mentoring curriculum at the end of this document).

- **New worker has an assigned go-to journey worker.** May not work every day with them, but is that experienced worker’s responsibility to help the new worker understand expectations, get questions answered, be safe, get settled in.

- **Culturally or gender-specific mentoring for women and minority groups,** such as the IBEW Electrical Minority Caucus, Carpenter’s Sisters in the Brotherhood, organizations such as Oregon Tradeswomen. A chance to learn survival and success skills in a safe environment from those from the underrepresented group who have been successful.

- **Harassment-prevention:** JATCs can train employers on prevention techniques, set the tone at related-training, and thru curriculum designed to train apprentices on the value of a harassment-free environment.

- **Ombudsperson – a person of authority,** recognized by the JATC, to be an apprentice liaison, to assist the apprentice with apprenticeship or job site issues that come up such as low scores on math test, harassment on the job, understanding construction culture, make sure the apprentice is receiving adequate training, as well as assist the employer in communicating job site expectations or mediating worker to worker conflicts.

- **Transition to Trainer:** This curriculum was developed by the State of Wisconsin apprenticeship system to assist with retaining apprentices. It is designed to teach experienced workers how to pass on their skills to the new worker, and is available to use free of charge, “a gift to the apprenticeship community from the State of Wisconsin.”

Note: Apprenticeship Programs have little direct authority to mandate on-the-job aspects of retention, but could have standards for training agents, training for new training agents, provide forums for their training agents to discuss best practices in training and in retaining minority and female apprentices, and could have trainings for employers that would include how to develop retention processes.