



DIVERSITY PIONEER

Margaret Regan

Diversity 2017: What Does the Future Hold?

As a futurist and member of the World Future Society, I have spent the last 20 years researching and preparing clients for the future workplace, work force and marketplace. As I look at the predictions for diversity and inclusion over the next 10 years, I think our opportunities are in three directions - diving deeper, thinking forward and upward, and expanding sideways.

By Margaret Regan, President and CEO, The FutureWork Institute, Inc.

We will need to go deeper into the traditional issues of race and gender. We cannot move to true inclusion without aggressively addressing the racism and sexism that still permeate the halls of corporate America, entertainment, government and other institutions. The recent incidences with Imus, Michael Richards and U.S. Senator Biden, as well as the backlash of Katrina, 9/11 and the Virginia Tech massacre, sound the alarm to deepen our work, break the silence and push our clients to make real progress on traditional issues.

Expanding our horizons sideways will immerse us in newer issues such as managing religious diversity and generational issues in the workplace. In the marketplace and the workplace, the emerging majority and cross-cultural issues will provide opportunities that many of our organizations are not prepared to meet. The acceptance of GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) employees will continue as societal responses shift. Emerging technologies will enable people with disabilities to contribute more fully. Our job will be to open the doors, minds and systems of organizations we serve, so that they embrace these diverse employees and customers.

And finally, we need to move forward and upward into the future by addressing issues that arise as science and technology give us the ability to change skin color and enhance ourselves through genetic determination or the implantation of brain chips. We will need to plan for a generation that will have 10 careers in a lifetime. We will move to the next era of retirement - rewiring or "reirement" - as 50 becomes the new 30.

As managers witness the death of distance and pervasive computing becomes the new reality, we will need to manage a work force that is virtual and flexible. We will see a dramatic redistribution of the global demographic picture as the population in the developed world declines and retires, and China and India vie for political and economic dominance on the world stage. Finally, diversity practitioners will come to see that the future is not some place where we are going, but one we are creating. The paths to it are not found but made; and the activity of making them will change both us as the makers and our destination on the journey to inclusion. Are we ready?