

Excerpted from *Developing Diversity in Organizations: A Digest of Selected Literature*

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In this article, Lapid-Bogda explains how diversity-change efforts that require the attention of individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds, human resources professionals, and senior management can be effected. She states that conventionally, affirmative action was relegated to human resources. But for diversity efforts to be truly successful, senior management must communicate, chart, and mandate a specific vision regarding the importance and necessity of diversity programs and policies.

The author contends that senior management is rarely inattentive to diversity by design. More often, top management is unaware of the importance of diversity efforts, due to their own (frequently privileged) backgrounds and the high demands on their time, energy, and focus. The author suggests several guidelines to follow when trying to obtain top-management commitment.

First, she suggests interviewing top management about their opinions on diversity. This assessment is helpful in recognizing differences among the senior-management team and in identifying allies. Next, directly link diversity to the bottom with specifics. Third, provide top management with data about complaints, potential lawsuits, and hiring and retention problems. This will interest them, help them perceive the relevance of the efforts, and should increase their support. Fourth, discover “what they really lose sleep over.” For example, if one of their main concerns is market share, try to find a way to expand the product or service into diverse markets. Next, provide diversity training for senior management. Finally, link diversity to other organizational initiatives such as total-quality management, self-managing work teams, or career development.

This is the only reference we were able to find that focuses on outlining the ways to win senior management’s commitment and support for diversity efforts. It has many recommendations which are practical and attainable and which can be found few other places.