

## **Why CEO Support Is Essential** **Excerpted from the *Making Diversity Happen: Controversies and Solutions***

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Ginger Lapid-Bogda led a session on gaining top-management commitment based on her article, "How to Win Senior Management's Support for Diversity" (1992). She outlined seven reasons why senior-management support is essential.

- (1) Top management sets organizational priorities. Unless diversity is an organizational priority, it won't happen. Lapid-Bogda cites Gene Andrews' example of how Jack Welch of GE made diversity an organizational priority.
- (2) The senior team has symbolic impact, so it is important that they be on board early. Employees going through diversity-related training should ask trainers if they have worked with top management and if they are committed. For an intervention to be successful, it is important to have answers. Through their own participation in the process, senior managers can affect the progress of others.
- (3) Senior managers can link diversity to business initiatives. It is the job of the senior team to decide the strategy and business reasons for diversity interventions. The consultant or trainer shouldn't be making these linkages alone.
- (4) Senior teams allocate organizational resources. Diversity efforts require money and it is essential to have top-management support for these expenditures.
- (5) It is critical to include diversity in any organizational vision. Otherwise, it is difficult to get a diversity change effort going and only the senior team can put their stamp of approval on diversity as part of the fundamental vision.
- (6) Dealing with organizational resistance is inevitable in a diversity intervention. Senior-team members need to be in a position where they don't collude with the resisters and they need to say to them, "I understand that this is upsetting or you're concerned about this; let's talk about what your concerns are and we'll figure out a way to get you on board with this."
- (7) The senior team needs to work in this area even though they may say they don't. Lapid-Bogda points out that most senior-management teams really do need to do practical work in this arena.