

Focus on Your Diversity Not Your Ethnicity – Tip 13

The employment mix over the last few years has changed significantly and it is expected to continue that trend in the future. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that total employment in the US is expected to increase by 8.5% over the period from 2006 to 2016. Breaking that down by race and ethnicity reveals how the employment mix will change. Employment for Whites will only increase by 5.5% but will increase 16.2% for Blacks and almost 30% for Asians and Hispanics/Latinos.

What does this mean for the Asians and Hispanics/Latinos where the largest increase will occur? Carl Wellenstein, a career strategist and author of ***12 Steps to a New Career***, believes companies will no longer feel compelled to seek to fill positions with “minorities” or “persons of color” and, as a result, a person’s ethnicity will become less important by hiring managers.

This doesn’t mean that hiring discrimination will become a thing of the past. Discrimination will continue to some extent as hiring managers will continue to factor in age, sex, color, sexual orientation, etc. when making decisions about who to hire. The challenge for those seeking employment will be to develop a better understanding of the employment structure of potential employers and the customers that purchase their products or services.

When an employer decides to employ you, they are making decisions about two very basic questions. Can you perform the tasks of the position and how well will you be able to adapt to the culture within the organization? Culture within the organization means attitudinal not ethnicity considerations. Job performance and company culture are two areas where your diversity could be your unique advantage.

Regardless of whether your family came from Pakistan, Cambodia, or Brazil, you bring a cross-cultural understanding and sensitivity that someone from a European culture wouldn’t have. This could be important if the position requires you to sell products or services to a group that you have an innate understanding of how they make decisions, the features they would consider most important, or how to build trust with them.

Your diversity could also be uniquely important within an organization that, if it isn’t already occurring, will soon need to learn how to get the most from a much more multicultural workforce. Your uniqueness will enable you to understand nuances that would be lost on others who don’t have that knowledge and can’t grasp why others aren’t responding as they think they should.

Prepare yourself by highlighting your unique cultural diversity as a resource to an employer. Do this by investigating their markets and reviewing their website. If it’s a publicly-held company, obtain their SEC filings and review the information they prepare on employment matters. Talk to your contacts to see if they can refer you to someone who works at the employer. This will help you to find out what is important to the organization so that you can

address how your diversity could be indispensable in meeting their goals. This is your uniqueness.

Carl Wellenstein is an employment and career strategist located in Southern California and is the author of 12 Steps to a New Career. He helps those in mid-career facilitate career advancement, expedite job changes, and pursue new career destinies.