Tip Sheet: Embracing Diversity in the Workplace

We live in a multicultural world, where people of different cultures and different beliefs must work together more than ever. The face of the American workforce is changing rapidly. Diversity has replaced the concept of the “melting pot” as the American ideal. Cultures, races, and religions are no longer expected to meld into one, and successful organizations across the nation are recognizing the value that the differences among employees can bring.

Common Questions
When discussing diversity in the workplace, a number of questions often arise from employees and managers alike. Discussing diversity, clarifying misconceptions and addressing common questions is one of the first steps in creating a workplace culture that embraces diversity.

Diversity is just about race and gender, right?
Race and gender are just two facets of diversity. Ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, and disability also enter into the equation. Other facets include personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background and more.

Isn’t the human resources (HR) department responsible for diversity in the workplace?
The responsibility for dealing with diversity issues belongs to every employee in the company. However, your HR department has official duties regarding diversity and can provide advice or guidance if you have questions.

What’s the difference between following the law and actively seeking diversity in the workplace?
Equal-opportunity and affirmative action initiatives are government-based regulations that are intended to prevent discrimination and correct past discrimination. Diversity-driven initiatives are voluntary measures taken by employers to increase productivity, develop intellectual resources, and improve the bottom line.

Why should I bother with it?
There are at least three good reasons why you might want to do everything you can to support or promote diversity in your organization:
1. To recruit and retain a broader range of talent;
2. To adapt to and anticipate the changing applicant pool;
3. To develop teams with greater capacity for creativity and innovation;
4. To appeal to customers who value diversity and reach multicultural consumers.