



## Employment diversity report finds room for improvement

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Less than half of American workers believe their employers place enough emphasis on diversity in the workplace, according to a study presented yesterday at an event in Baltimore.

The annual [Work Trends study](#) — conducted by Minneapolis-based Gantz Wiley Research — corroborates findings from a report released last year by Global Lead Management Consulting and the National Urban League that found the majority of workers had unfavorable views of their employers' effectiveness in diversifying the workplace.

Representatives from both firms presented their findings to human resource managers from around the Baltimore area in an attempt to educate participants about improving workplace diversity.

The most important message, according to **John Peoples**, managing partner at **Global Lead**, is to "get in touch with what employees think and get leaders in the organization to drive ownership about making a difference."

Executives and employers should focus, he said, on making their companies attractive to what will soon constitute a majority of the work force. "They won't thrive long term unless they get ahead of this."

The Work Trend study found 48 percent of employees surveyed felt their senior management was committed to diversity. At companies whose diversity hiring ranked among those with "best practices," 70 percent of employees said their senior management was committed to diversity.

The researchers also emphasized that workplace diversity is more than a feel-good program. Kyle Lundby, a consultant with Gantz Wiley, said researchers found revenue and profitability were significantly connected to a firm's diversity.

Julie Mercer, managing director of the recruiting firm Columbia Consulting Group, said she has observed a number of trends related to attracting and keeping diverse talent.

“Verizon, for example, requires search firms have a solid track record of diversity, not just because it’s the right thing to do, but because it’s the profitable thing to do,” she said.

The annual Work Trends report is the result of surveys sent to 10,000 working adults across the country, Lundby said. Gantz Wiley has conducted the survey for 20 years.

“You can use employee opinion survey data to drive change within an organization,” Lundby said.

**Peoples elaborated on other ways to implement effective methods to enhance diversity.**

**“Leaders have to be viewed as diversity champions both inside and outside the organization,” he said. Education and training programs are another key aspect, but Peoples added the programs should be continuous rather than a single seminar or class.**

**Other best practices include marketing to diverse customers and consumers, focusing on retention of diverse talent and using diverse recruiting methods.**

The [Global Lead/Urban League report](#) compared sentiments from average American workers with those from eight “effective diversity practices” companies. The results consistently found that employees at the effective practices companies had more favorable views of their employers’ efforts to cultivate a diverse workplace. The report did not name the companies.

The report also did not break the numbers down by geographical region, but Peoples said he believes Maryland would fall near the national average.

**“Primarily because we have few large companies and they tend to drive the average up,” he said. “They tend to have been working and implementing practices for a longer time. But they’re still not as good as the effective diversity practices companies.”**