

Four Factors for Success with Your Hispanic Employees

These four factors will help your employees assimilate quickly

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Helping Hispanic employees assimilate into a new organization can be challenging, but it can also bring significant benefits to your organization in the form of increased motivation, productivity, and loyalty. When developing strategies to help Hispanic employees assimilate, there are four important factors to consider. Integrating these factors into your business practices will enhance your employees' ability to work effectively and contentedly.

Family is important

Ties with extended family are what move and motivate Hispanic people. As such, integrating employees' families into the life of your business will enhance motivation on the job. The following are specific suggestions for integrating family into the workplace:

- *Emphasize family in training and safety programs.* When you start a new safety program, request that employees bring pictures of their family members. Put these pictures on a sign that says, "Please work safely. You are important to these people." Some employers also ask wives and children of employees to write letters to their husbands or fathers asking them to please work safely. This technique is effective with both Anglo and Hispanic people.
- *Provide opportunities for employees to maintain contact with families.* Give out calling cards so that employees can call their families without extra expense, or when possible, allow employees to call from the phone in your office. This may

give you the opportunity to speak briefly with the employee's mother and say, "Thanks for having such a great son—he's one of our best team members."

- *Help employees wire money to their families.* Sending money to family is an important priority for many Hispanic employees, but it can also be a significant expense and a considerable inconvenience for them. Assisting in this process sends a clear message of support that employees will reciprocate through their performance.
- *Make family a part of company celebrations.* Organize open houses, field days, or other activities for employees and their families. For Hispanic people, hosting a family is a gesture of solidarity and respect.
- *Ask about employees' family members.* Talk to employees about their families. When possible, learn names of their family members and ask about their activities.
- *Allow family members of employees to apply for open positions.* When Hispanic employees work as a family unit, they generally take care of your business as if it were their own. Provide opportunities for employees' family members and friends to apply for jobs with your business.

Patriotism is important

Hispanic people are generally very proud of their native countries. There are simple ways to show respect for employees'

cultural heritage, like celebrating their countries' independence days. Some employers create "international corners" in work areas, where they display caps or mementos from a given country on a wall. This area can serve as a small "museum" with written messages such as "This business celebrates our multi-cultural heritage." Consider purchasing and displaying flags from each of the countries your employees represent. When employees see the flags, the message is, "My boss cares about me. S/he took the time to go and find my country's flag and put it on the wall."

Celebrating your employees' national heritage can be a good marketing tool as well. When customers/clients see that you respect and value your employees, they will have greater confidence in your products and services. The U.S. customer base is becoming increasingly multicultural and multiracial; building cultural bridges in the workplace can help you build bridges with prospective clients as well.

Respect employees' beliefs

Roughly 87% of the Hispanic population in the U.S. is Catholic. Supporting employees' religious and cultural beliefs can help them enhance the quality of their work. Consider changing your holiday structure for Hispanic employees. If your business has seven holidays, keep five U.S. holidays, and change two for Hispanics. (Memorial Day and Labor Day generally do not mean anything to Hispanic employees.) Let Hispanic employees take two days to celebrate important religious feasts. For Mexicans, for example, December 12th is the Feast of Our Lady Guadalupe. For Puerto Ricans, June 24th is the feast of San Juan.

Policies such as these can improve safety rates as well. Some businesses report accidents on December 13th and 14th – the day after traditional Mexican midnight masses and celebrations. Allowing employees sufficient time to celebrate and rest from religious holidays can be helpful.

Provide support

For many Hispanic employees, navigating U.S. legal and financial systems is difficult, particularly where language barriers are concerned. If you can help employees establish themselves in these systems, they will be more likely to remain with your company and work toward long-term goals, such as buying a home or establishing credit.

Some suggestions for helping employees become established are:

- Pay for someone in the business to become a notary so employees do not have to take time off work and incur added expenses to get documents notarized.
- Teach managers how to deal with paperwork and how to get documents translated.
- Bring in a company to teach employees how to develop and use credit.
- Hire a consultant to help employees with tax returns.
- Help employees get drivers' licenses.

Conclusion

Successful management of Hispanic employees requires sensitivity to cultural differences and respect for others' values. Understanding the four factors described above can help employers build an integrated, productive workforce. Relatively simple gestures and minor changes in the workplace such as those described can have a multiplying effect on the quality of your business.