



size diversity in employment

Executive Summary



We come in
all sizes...



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Foreword

I am pleased that NAAFA has prepared a Size Diversity in Employment Tool Kit that can help supplement existing education programs that overlook these categories. The Executive Summary portion of this tool kit will focus on how employing people of all sizes is beneficial to the overall success of your business. The HR Training Guide helps in the understanding of weight-related issues and how to create an inclusive workplace environment. As an attorney, diversity trainer, subject matter expert and Adjunct Professor of Law, I recommend all hiring managers in your organization make use of the Size Diversity in Employment - HR Training Guide to provide education and training for: all Human Resources workers, managers and supervisors with the ability to recruit, hire, train or promote employees; individuals responsible for implementing health and wellness programs; all managers and directors with responsibility for coordinating the development of products or services to understand the experience and needs of clients and customers of all sizes. It is wonderful when companies and organizations have the opportunity to do well while also doing good. Incorporating an understanding of size diversity into existing education programs is a true win-win: it's good for your employees and good for your business.

- Sondra Solovay, Esq.

Sondra is a member of the NAAFA Advisory Board, which is comprised of individuals who are subject matter experts. She is the author of *Tipping the Scales of Justice: Fighting Weight Based Discrimination*.



Source: UConn Rudd Center

Business Case for Size Diversity

The dimensions of diversity have expanded to include broader aspects such as thought, style, perspective and approach. Still one dimension remains to be addressed, size diversity.

In 2011 Donald Fan, Senior Director in the Office of Diversity at Walmart, stated:

“...in this new era, rife with volatility and ambiguity, innovation is critical in sustaining organic growth and securing success in a globally competitive environment. We know that there exists a strong connection between innovation and diversity and inclusion...”¹

From a 2014 Cognizant report:

“Companies must add the important goal of inclusion to the priorities, creating an environment in which a wide range of individuals feel comfortable and grounded and see clear paths to personal and professional success.”²

NAAFA contends that diversity is not limited to the inclusion of people of different races and cultures; it includes sizes, shapes and other physical appearances and abilities.

Leads to Better Ideas and Development

In a 2014 Scientific American article, the writer states:

“Decades of research by organizational scientists, psychologists, sociologists, economists and demographers show that socially diverse groups (that is, those with a diversity of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation) are more innovative than homogeneous groups.

It seems obvious that a group of people with diverse individual expertise would be better than a homogeneous group at solving complex, nonroutine problems. It is less obvious that social diversity should work in the same way—yet the science shows that it does.

This is not only because people with different backgrounds bring new information. Simply interacting with individuals who are different forces group members to prepare better, to anticipate alternative viewpoints and to expect that reaching consensus will take effort.”³

Leads to Better Ideas and Development Cont'd.

According to The Australian Financial Review these ideas are echoed in the 2016 book, *Which Two Heads Are Better Than One? How Diverse Teams Create Breakthrough Ideas and Make Smarter Decisions*, by Juliet Bourke of Deloitte. The book “demystifies what it is about diversity that boosts a group’s collective intelligence, helps them solve problems better and generates breakthrough ideas.”

A 2013 article in the Harvard Business Review discusses the concept of two types of diversity: “...inherent and acquired. Inherent diversity involves traits you are born with, such as gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Acquired diversity involves traits you gain from experience...” In their research they found that, “Employees of firms with 2-D diversity are 45% likelier to report a growth in market share over the previous year and 70% likelier to report that the firm captured a new market.”⁴

Builds a Stronger Workforce

With more than 60% of the population considered “overweight” or “obese”, organizations would severely limit their resource pool by eliminating people of size as potential employees.

“People should be judged based on their character and other attributes rather than their body weight. Body weight is not a reflection of intelligence, ability to work hard or any other factor, and it shouldn’t be perceived as such,” said Kelly Brownell, dean of the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University.⁵

Employers need to check their biases if they are going to expand their market share; which will require expanding their workforce. Looking at a potential employee’s body size and eliminating them from the selection pool based on that factor alone eliminates the potential for intellectual and material gain for the company. A person’s employability should be based on their experience, skills and abilities. An inclusive workforce is a strong workforce.



¹ *Proof That Diversity Drives Innovation*, Fan, 2011

² *Building and Benefiting from a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce*, Cognizant, 2014

³ *How Diversity Makes Us Smarter*, Phillips, 2014

⁴ *How Diversity Can Drive Innovation*, Hewlett, Marshall and Sherbin, 2013

⁵ *Weight bias is bigger problem than you may think, experts say*, 2016

Increase Brand Loyalty and Reputation

According to author, Edward Hubbard:

“Today’s companies are realizing that the world is rapidly changing and in order for them to survive and thrive they need to stay ahead of the trends. Employers can no longer ignore that diversity and inclusion adds value to the bottom line. Customer loyalty and satisfaction can be linked to satisfied employees.”⁶

Business with a Social Conscience

The ability to do good while also making money, which some call “capitalism with a conscience”, is no longer the exception but is being embraced as an effective way for organizations to sell themselves to consumers, employees and stockholders.

A 2012 Weber Shandwick survey of nearly 2,000 consumers and senior business executives in the U.S., U.K., China and Brazil reported that they are more likely to discuss the good deeds a company does than they are to discuss a company’s financial performance. In addition, 72% of consumers would recommend a brand that supports a good cause.⁷

But a social conscience does not limit itself to corporate kindness or charity, it must also include diversity and inclusion in the ranks of their employees and an awareness of the concerns of their employees and their consumers.

Putting People to Work (National Pride)

When you see the label “Made in the U.S.A.” it evokes a sense of pride. Pride of workmanship, of quality and the belief that workers are being treated fairly and humanely.



Many American consumers make it their priority to buy “Made in the U.S.A.” whenever possible. They buy American because they have a sense of pride in the product and a knowledge that the money they pay for that product goes to support American workers. Keeping Americans at work should be everyone’s priority.

Increased Employment Leads to More Consumers and Investors

In a 2015 article in *Inc.*, the author states: “Potential investors are more attracted to businesses that have empowered their employees and engaged them to go above and beyond to satisfy customers and ensure the company’s success. Ultimately, highly engaged employees boost company values.”⁸

When people are employed, they have more disposable income and the ability to invest for their future. So, yes, they are potential investors. Additionally, as employees, they invest their time, energy, skills, abilities and talents in the company with the goal of getting a return on their investment. Employment of people of all types/traits increase the potential by all concerned in creating growth and success of the employer.

⁶ *The Diversity Scoreboard, Evaluating the Impact of Diversity on Organizational Performance, The Business Case for Diversity*, E Hubbard, p.16

⁷ *Millenials spur capitalism with a conscience*, USA Today, 3/27/13

⁸ *5 Ways to Build a Stronger Workforce*, Inc., 4/20/15



Increase the Bottom Line

George Roberts of Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. stated that “a job is better than a handout” in his opinion piece in *The Wall Street Journal* [March 2, 2015] and talks about a “social enterprise” way to put people to work. He believes that it isn’t just good for workers but it also delivers tangible economic results for businesses and for the economy as a whole:

“REDF [Roberts Enterprise Development Fund] recently commissioned the research firm Mathematica Policy Research to conduct a study of seven social enterprises in the state of California.

Among other findings, the just-released study reports that, ‘Social enterprise delivers a positive return on investment for society. For every \$100,000 invested, the return is \$223,000, including savings to taxpayers with reduced public benefits and avoided incarceration, and social-enterprise business revenues and workers’ incomes.’

As Mathematica reports in its study, ‘For the average dollar spent by the social enterprises, there was a \$1.34-\$2.23 return on investment for society. This includes benefits for taxpayers from reductions in government transfer payments and increases in revenues for social enterprise businesses.’”⁹

Retention of Valued Employees Saves Money

Another avenue to save money is in the retention of valued employees.

Prejudice in hiring and promotion robs the organization of its most important investment - the ability to hire and strategically promote the best and brightest employees to crucial positions. Employees’ performance suffers due to low morale and high turnover, resulting in ongoing training and retraining expenses.

The health of fat employees is often posed as a liability to a bottom line. An individual’s health cannot be determined by their size.¹⁰

NAAFA is fighting to remove weight from the liability equation and add it to the equality equation. We are productive members of society, our communities and businesses and as such are entitled to the same opportunities. Size diversity is good for business.

⁹ *Putting People to Work Is a Good Thing - And a Good Investment*, Huffington Post, 3/10/15

¹⁰ *Big Fat lies: The Truth About Your Weight and Your Health*, G Gaesser

Protection Against Litigation

Individuals come in all sizes, similar to other dimensions (ie, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) and discrimination against individuals based on size is prevalent in our society.

Successful organizations today recognize the importance of harnessing the power of diversity both to further business goals and to minimize the risk of litigation. At the same time, some take an overly simplistic approach to diversity thereby missing many of the benefits of a well-rounded program. Simply put, if your diversity or unlawful discrimination training omits height and weight issues, your program is incomplete.

Assumptions and stereotypes regarding people's ability, skills and intelligence are often linked to the size of one's body. Weight bias has created a haven for a hostile workplace and fat people are subjected to discrimination on a regular basis.

Size diversity is extremely important both by itself and also in connection with more traditional diversity categories like race and sex/gender. The failure to understand and include size diversity allows it to be used as a loophole for other discrimination. Did you know that some of the laws prohibiting weight/height originated because of race discrimination? For example, minimum height requirements have discriminated against people of certain races because of the disproportionate impact on those groups. Weight functions similarly.

A number of size discrimination claims are now being brought by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Suits are being filed based on the employer's "perception" of a disability. An employer's perception of a disability does not mean that the employee is actually disabled for the employer to have violated the ADA.

Here are two ways an organization may suffer when their employees are not trained in size diversity:

- Litigation costs result when size discrimination results in lawsuits under the American with Disabilities Act or other disability statutes
- Settlement costs result when size discrimination occurs in those places in the U.S. where such conduct is unlawful



Note: Anti-discrimination laws based on body size exist in the State of Michigan and six cities: Binghamton, NY; Madison, WI; San Francisco, CA; Santa Cruz, CA; Urbana, IL; Washington, DC



Postscript

Thank you for taking the time to review the Size Diversity in Employment - Executive Summary. We believe that this tool will assist you in understanding how size diversity plays a positive role in the health and success of your organization and will change your perception of diversity in making your company and workforce stronger.

We come in all sizes...

We invite your organization to utilize the NAAFA Size Diversity in Employment - HR Training Guide. The HR Training Guide was created to ensure that your organization is achieving the goal of size diversity and inclusion by giving your staff the training to operate optimally.

If you or any members of your organization have questions, please feel free to contact NAAFA at assistant@naafa.org. You can find the NAAFA Size Diversity in Employment - HR Training Guide online at <https://naafa.org>.

Acknowledgements

NAAFA's Board of Directors wishes to acknowledge and thank the individuals listed below for their contribution to the NAAFA Size Diversity in Employment Tool Kit. Without their efforts this Tool Kit would not exist.

Our intent is that the Tool Kit be used to help build a weight-neutral environment through education and awareness. We are committed to adding size diversity to the equation, ensuring that all people across the size spectrum are valued and respected. To read NAAFA's complete statement on diversity, please visit our website at naafa.org.

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