

Diversity Marketing & Cultural Awareness

Diversity today means something very different than it did years ago. Learn ways to increase your customer base and grow your business by hiring diverse staff and marketing to diverse customers.

Cultural awareness is more important today for a title company to be successful. Today's builders, lenders, real estate agents, brokers, and consumers represent the American melting pot, and specific strategies to work with different cultures can help you succeed. You need to ask yourself: Does my customer base look different today versus five or ten years ago? Does my business resemble the community I serve? Does it resemble my customers? If the answer to any of these questions is "no," then you need to evaluate the way you market and operate your business. If your customers are different than you and they feel unrecognized, you will begin to lose them. Your custom-

ers will go where they are valued, understood, and well served. They will not stay where they are made to feel different or uncomfortable. You may have noticed in recent years that stores like Home Depot have welcome signs in foreign languages. This isn't because they believe their clientele cannot understand English. Instead, it's to make them feel welcome in their own language. Diverse or heterogeneous organizations do a better job at marketing and selling to diverse or heterogeneous target markets.

You know you have an excellent portfolio of products and services, but for whom? It is not your product or service that will make you successful for the long term. Diversity in the

workplace used to be based upon the color of skin and ethnicity. These days, diversity in the workplace has become much more than that. Most CEOs and executives alike have come to discover that diversity is what often makes for better business. Every one of us comes from a different background with different experiences that led to different results. Each one of us brings something different to the table whether it is age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, national origin, or race. It's in this diversity that we flourish as a company. A diverse workforce is not only good for the company but good for the company's market. The company that is capable of managing a diverse population of employees most often attracts a diverse range of customers. It doesn't take a strategic planner to know that the more diverse a company's customer base is, the better it prospers in popularity and sales.

Diversity is No Longer Just Black and White

Diversity today means something very different than it did years ago. Today's diverse homebuyers include not only African Americans but also Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and Caribbean, African, and South American natives. They include multiple age groups such as Generation Xers, Baby Boomers and retirees. Today's buyers are just as likely to be single females, single parents, and from the gay and lesbian community as the married couple with children.

The minority homeownership rate is roughly 47%. Over the past 12 years, minorities accounted for 35% of the first-time home purchasers. Immigrants accounted for 33% of household growth. Latinos are the largest growing household market segment – 15% of the U.S. population. Over 47% of African Americans, some 5.7 million people, own homes. Sixty percent of Asian households are owner-occupied. By 2010, 28% of American households (31 million) will be headed by

member of that community in order to obtain business from that community, although it does help. It does mean that you need to spend time understanding their culture, language, wants, needs, and fears. How you do this depends primarily on whom you are marketing to and how much you wish to invest in tailoring your business to meet their needs. Meet with members of the community you wish to serve, ask them how you can best serve their community, and what, if anything, is missing from the services

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females. Baby Boomers are a unique homebuying segment. Just when you thought they were retiring to over-55 retirement communities, they fuel sales of second homes and vacation homes. Sales to this group are expected to stay strong for years because the youngest baby boomers are only 42 to 43 years young!

Immigrants and people of different ethnicities, religions, backgrounds, and nationalities often flock to those businesses that are owned and operated by individuals of like-kind. They feel comfortable dealing with people that understand their culture. It is no easy task to obtain business from such groups if you are not a member of their community, but it is not impossible. You must first understand the background and lifestyle of the group you are marketing to. Simply understanding and liking an ethnic group's food is not enough to convince them that you understand their needs. Yet this doesn't mean you have to hire a

they are currently receiving. Listen, learn, and act.

Adapt your product or service to meet the needs of your new customers. Be proactive and anticipate your customers' needs. Make sure this market is "high growth," "emerging" or "up and coming." Promote your products and services and monitor results. Try marketing to these audiences by starting a pilot program before devoting substantial resources. Devoting substantial resources to a small market with little growth potential is never a good idea.

Be the first to reach out to these markets and you will realize a significant competitive advantage (the first to market rules—leaders dominate, followers pick up the scraps). You may ask yourself—what comes first—the market or the service? The answer is always the market. Never try to adapt the market to your services. Your services must always adapt to the market.

Diversity Marketing Strategy Relys on the Four P's

- Product - you must have a product or service that the diverse group wants or needs.
- Price - your products and services must be made available at a price your market is willing to pay.
- Place - You must be convenient to your customer base.
- Promotion - Potential customers must know that you and your service exist.

Communication is the most essential element of your marketing efforts. Status quo is ineffective—remember if your marketing and advertising strategies have not changed in years, you are already losing customers to your competition who are capitalizing on demographic changes.

Different racial, ethnic, and social communities have their own unique sources of information. Identify them and then build a marketing plan that utilizes these resources to get your message out. Look for resources such as ethnic and social community newspapers, yellow pages, newsletters and the like, which are tailored to these individual communities.

It's always an advantage to speak the language of a nationality that you wish to serve. You can't always find employees who speak a second language. If you do not already have bilingual staff, offer bonuses and other incentives for them to take classes or programs to learn a second language. By doing this you retain a valued and experienced staff and have the ability to broaden your marketing. There is no question that customers for whom English is a second language appreciate being spoken to in the language they are most comfortable with.

Marketing by Age Group

The three prominent age groups in America today are the Baby Boomers—those born from 1946 to 1964; Generation Xers—those born from 1965 to 1981; and the Millennials—those born from 1981 to the present. There is as much diversity between these age groups as there is between different cultures. This means that you need to diversify your marketing approach to each age group as you would to the other groups discussed here.

To market to this group, you must use multimedia and abandon the hard sell. They want to be treated with more intelligence and respect than they usually see in ads, and they want an honest approach. With them it is best to get to the point and stick to the point. Don't drown your message in warm and fuzzy or unrealistic promises. They like attitude, so get some. To them, attitude, not brand, makes the sale. Be bold in your statements – “We will make the transaction happen.” Stay away

multimedia, social events, and peer-to-peer gatherings.

Getting Started

Get out into the community. Expand partnerships with nonprofit and community-based organizations that strive to increase homeownership for all. Support housing initiatives that benefit lower-income, first-time buyer, immigrant and minority groups, and unique cultures. Participate in home-buying fairs, seminars, workshops, and various outreach initiatives to advocate that homeownership is achievable. Offer information, tools, and educational resources that assist your customers and their clients in achieving financial literacy about the home-purchasing process. By doing this you become a part of the ethnic, racial, or social community you wish to serve. Business is slow, and in such markets we tend to mine the same spaces. It's time to go beyond our comfort level and delve into whole new arenas of prospective customers.

The largest group of buyers today are Generation Xers, and they are the most diverse generation to date.

The largest group of homebuyers amongst these three are the Generation Xers. They lead very fast paced lives. Demographically, they are the most diverse generation to date: 69% are Caucasian, 13% African American, 13% Hispanic, 3% Asian American and 1% Native American. They like to hear “We'll do it your way;” “We're pretty flexible;” “We don't have a corporate mindset – we take more of a hands-on approach.”

Diversity is the key fact of life for Gen Xers, the core of the perspective that they bring to the marketplace. They have a sophistication about advertising from a lifetime spent watching and reading more of it than any generation. They are skeptical and irreverent, ready to buy but smart about marketing. They refuse to let their lives be stripped down to the stereotype of a marketing target group. Therefore, your marketing approach cannot have that appearance.

from traditional taglines like “We are the best.” Most importantly, have some fun. Generation Xers are young people, full of energy and ready for fun. Your marketing approach and ideas should reflect this. ESPN caters to this group and puts out some of the funniest and best commercials in the industry. The title industry can be pretty stuffy, but your marketing approach doesn't need to be. Get advice on marketing to this group from other Generation Xers.

The most effective way to reach Generation Xers is with visual images. They have been inundated with visual marketing, and they are comfortable with it. Their attitudes and values are shaped by visual images rather than the written word, so form your marketing materials around pictures with fewer words. They are the least likely generation to read a newspaper. They prefer communication by e-mail, Internet, through



Michael P. Krone is vice president and special counsel, director of sales, Massachusetts for First American Title Insurance Company in Boston.

This article is an excerpt from a presentation he made during ALTA's 2006 Annual Convention. Mike can be reached at mpkrone@firstam.com.

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