



We see diversity as the right thing to do for our people and our workforce, but, fundamentally, we see it as an integral part of the way in which we should operate our business every day.

THREE CORE AREAS SERVE AS AN ANCHOR

What is Novartis' goal for its diversity programs?

GADSDEN-WILLIAMS: We have three core areas that are anchored into this particular strategy: the talent itself, the attraction and development of talent, and the promotion and retention of talent. By fostering this type of culture, people can be successful immediately upon entering the company. More importantly, though, there is the marketplace piece, which addresses how we link everything that we're doing from a diversity and inclusion perspective to the unique needs and wants of our customers. This approach can give us a competitive advantage. Essentially, my role is almost like an internal consultant to the company as it relates to diversity and inclusion.

ADDRESSING CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

How can a pharmaceutical company address diversity issues in the marketplace?

GADSDEN-WILLIAMS: The demographics within the United States point to the fact that there are a lot more women entering the workplace. There also are generational differences. We have baby boomers, traditionalists, and now generation Xers and Yers. More people of color and more minorities are entering the workplace. Given these unique challenges, it's important to understand how we all work together and the collective differences that we all bring to the table.

When we flip these dynamics around and look at the marketplaces that we serve on a day-to-day basis, these

Novartis Pharma AG's **MICHELLE GADSDEN-WILLIAMS** Makes the Case for Corporate Diversity

Michelle Gadsden-Williams is VP and Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Novartis Pharma, working to create an environment where every single individual, regardless of his or her diversity, can be successful within the organization. She sees herself as an internal and external consultant and an agent for bringing about positive change in the company and the broader marketplace.

Michelle Gadsden-Williams provides strategic direction and leadership and champions the development of an inclusive environment by integrating diversity into all aspects of the business on a global scale.

also are changing. We need to understand the unique needs of our patients, our key customers, of our physicians, our key opinion leaders, and others whose demographics are also changing. We can no longer conduct business the way that we've done in the past given all of the unique changes that are happening all around us.

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

What do you think is needed for the industry to achieve diversity?

GADSDEN-WILLIAMS: I think we need to do a better job of understanding what diversity is, what inclusion is, and how to marry the two together and position them as a business imperative. This is where pharma companies miss the boat. Diversity is not about representation. This is only a small component of the bigger picture. A lot of emphasis is placed on recruiting more individuals of difference, more women, more people of color. This needs to be balanced against doing the right thing for the business. It's important to position the company as one that truly embraces the diverse thinking and diverse styles that an individual can bring to the table.

PROMOTING PARTNERSHIPS

How do you address the perception that diversity is about quotas?

GADSDEN-WILLIAMS: First, we have to crystallize the business case. Perception can be reality. It depends on how a company is deploying its initiatives. If a company is focusing simply on representation, people are going to presume the program is only about quotas. We believe that diversity should

CAREER Highlights

Michelle Gadsden-Williams is VP and Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Novartis Pharma AG. She was one of 75 women honored for her accomplishments at the 2005 Tribute to Women in Industry (TWIN) Gala, Harvard's 2008 BMF Businesswoman of the Year, the Rainbow Push Coalition's Bridge Builder Award presented by the honorable Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, and was presented with an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Kean University May 15, 2008, for her outstanding personal and professional accomplishment in the field of diversity and inclusion. She currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the SLE Lupus Foundation of New York City where she advocates for research, patient awareness, and education of systemic lupus erythematosus, which disproportionately affects women of color. She also serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the Jackie Robinson Foundation of New York City where she actively raises scholarships for academically gifted minority college students in the United States.

be linked to the business and how to make the business better and more profitable. By doing this, the company will be perceived as an employer of choice.

At Novartis, we don't have quotas, but we do have targets related to representation. We would love to see more diversity in varying levels in our organization, but we're not going to compromise quality to get to a specific target. For us, the business case for diversity and inclusion is rather clear. We talk about it as a business imperative versus simply as being the right thing to do. Just putting bodies in places is a smoke-and-mirrors initiative, and that is not what we do. We view our diversity programs as the right thing to do for our people and our workforce, but, fundamentally, we see these as an integral part of the way in which we should operate our business every day.

BEST PRACTICES

What do you think are some best practices that can be put in place to achieve diversity in the industry?

GADSDEN-WILLIAMS: Companies have to crystallize their business case. They have to educate and promote awareness around why a diversity program is important. There has to be clear support from the top of the organization. Fundamentally, the goal is for diversity to be integrated into the fabric of the organization; it's not talked about, it just is. It should just be a way you conduct your business every day. ♦

PharmaVOICE welcomes comments about this article. E-mail us at feedback@pharmavoice.com.