In a survey conducted at the Atlanta Linkage Conference in March 2001, diversity professionals from across the country cited piecemeal diversity initiatives as “the most frustrating impediment to aligning diversity process with their organization’s business strategies.”

Here’s what others are saying— and doing—about the piecemeal trap.


As businesses put processes and systems in place that allow employees to be fully engaged in providing business solutions, daily issues arise. They are not occurring in a vacuum or one at a time, they are clashing, converging and entangled and competing for time, attention and resources.

All are critical to the viability of the operation, each requiring correspondingly complex decisions in a short amount of time. Often, however, the attempt is made to find solutions in a piecemeal approach with a less than strategic focus.

Piecemeal diversity activities were overwhelming the most frustrating and yet, most frequently received comment on the survey from diversity professionals who attended the Linkage Conference in Atlanta in March 2001 and completed a survey to assess the status, health and alignment of their diversity process with their organization’s business strategies. The results, in themselves, say a lot.

• **Question 1** asked respondents their greatest challenge relative to diversity. The answer most frequently given was **Strategic Focus and Process**.

• **Question 2** focused on the progress of the respondent’s diversity initiative. 99 percent of those responding indicated their organization’s diversity initiatives other than the diversity process or simply acknowledged it as necessary. Both reactions fall short of aligning and leveraging diversity to move the business forward.

In Poland, power is a relatively new idea for local employees who have lacked the right to speak out. Managers attempt to ensure employees’ opinions are heard and accepted.

Another cultural difference involves benefits, such as time off. Internationally, employees’ vacation and holiday time is much longer than U.S. employees receive. For example, in Asia, time off for the Chinese New Year can last two weeks. Nationwide respects the vacation time of employees in such circumstances and provides vacation benefits to NGH employees that reflect their country’s norms.

We’ve worked to establish the relationship between our Columbus headquarters and our international divisions. Obviously, it is difficult to coordinate policies and programs halfway across the world. NGH human resources now employ a centralized approach from home office, where governance, compensation, incentives and benefits reside. The human resources teams abroad carry out day-to-day operations and spend a lot of time with office managers linking activities and business objectives. Bilingual Human Resources Planning Meetings are held to bring all human resources teams together in one location. This year one of the sessions was held in Brazil, the first time it has taken place abroad.

To handle the obstacles related to global expansion, Nationwide had to decide which competencies were vital to transfer to other countries and how to implement those competencies into the culture through PMP. The competencies included:

• **Leadership.** A crucial competency for any organization.

• **Coaching.** Managers take time to let employees know how they’re performing.

• **Feedback.** Necessary for employees and leaders as evaluation for performance.

• **Accountability.** Employees must be responsible for themselves.

• **Timely results.** Employees honor deadlines and scheduled appointments; avoid breaking commitments.

Nationwide continues to make strides. Language and cultural differences will always pose some challenges to operations, but a solid team of NGH human resources representatives serves as facilitators and translators of company business objectives. Developing a Total Reward Strategy is one of our next challenges for implementation globally. We need to identify what the minimum requirements are domestically, and then consider what is required abroad. This calls for assistance from outside consultants in designated countries to help determine how reward programs work and succeed, and if market opportunity exists.

We continue to focus on improving financial results in our existing operations while exploiting opportunities in other countries. We’re adapting to new ways of doing business, domestically and abroad. One indicator that an organization has truly become global is when it shares ideas between its domestic and international operations, which is a main objective of Nationwide. We must remind ourselves that with every challenge, there’s a solution. Nationwide’s business is finding solutions for its customers and employees, in any culture and language.
THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING A global workforce

NATIONWIDE LEAPS HURDLES TO GO FROM INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EXPLORATION TO ESTABLISHMENT

When Marco Polo dictated accounts from his explorations of Asia in 1296, he explained the phenomenon of a marketable opportunity, a land rich with coal and the existence of paper currency. Yet he was new to the game of exploration, and obstacles stopped him from advancing on the great opportunities. Nationwide, a company that is relatively new to the global game, has already explored and established businesses abroad. And while we have both feet in the international door, we are quickly learning our way around those obstacles that arise when operating overseas.

Nationwide Global Holdings, Inc. (NGH), the holding company for Nationwide’s international operations, was established in 1997 to export Nationwide’s expertise in offering and servicing long-term savings products and retirement solutions products. Today, almost five years later, Nationwide has learned some valuable lessons in how to implement business practices internationally and how to manage foreign employees. We continue to learn today.

NGH is engaged in multiple businesses in selected markets in Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Key holdings include: • Nationwide Maritima Vida e Previdência (Brazil) • PaulLatier Life (Luxembourg) • Nationwide Towarzystwo Ubezpieczenia na Życie Spółka Akcyjna (Poland) • Nationwide Life Assurance (formerly Thai Prast Nationwide) (Thailand).

Nationwide has moved into international business mainly through acquisitions and joint ventures, as well as greenfield start-ups. For example, the company that is now Nationwide Life Assurance, Thailand, operated for 50 years prior to NGH taking an ownership stake. We have generally not started companies in foreign countries with the exception of Poland.

NGH is now focused on aligning these companies with Nationwide’s central objectives and business goals.

In the process of building the Nationwide international family, we’ve found two major challenges to be language and cultural differences. These are strong yet manageable obstacles for our managers, human resources teams and employees. Toward that end, we have found that to be effective, human resources must sometimes play the role of facilitator/translator for communication between the United States and other countries. As a result, approximately 20 percent of the NGH human resources budget is dedicated to travel and translation.

Differences in language require time and patience to resolve. One example involves Thailand, where human resources is currently working on implementing Nationwide’s Performance Management Process (PMP) to support a performance-based culture that rewards teamwork, performance and creativity—all linked to our business goals. PMP will allow us to evaluate performance against a balanced set of financial and non-financial measures. It is necessary to be onsite to explain to the ThaiLand company president and managers why PMP is important, provide evidence of its success in the United States, and translate the process into their language.

But this explanation itself is challenging because in our Thailand division, only one-third of the people speak fluent English. Operating a regional office in this environment requires patience, perseverance and a willingness to

- Training is a critical component of a comprehensive diversity process that provides employees with the knowledge and tools for understanding and fully tapping into the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of co-workers to solve real business challenges. The respondents indicated the following to Question 3 (Our diversity training is part of our diversity initiative to …)
  - Stay Competitive - 35%
  - Increase Productivity - 32%
  - Comply with Personnel Policy - 21%
  - It’s Not - 9%
  - Other - 3%

Specifically, the “Other” category included: influence cultural change; better serve customers; create an inclusive environment; and to promote career development, recruitment, retention, accountability and communication.

- Question 4 focused on the organization’s ability to integrate diversity into the “real business of the business.” An analysis of the responses indicates that diversity is often seen in most organizations as a “silos” function and that the real business goes on as usual. In some cases the functions seem to be loosely linked. Some respondents indicated that their organizations had successfully integrated diversity into the business plan and strategy. Here are the results:
  - Not Successful - 85%
  - Less than Successful - 49%
  - Successful - 40%
  - More than Successful - 25%
  - Very Successful - less than 1%

- Question 5 received more responses than the other survey questions and responses indicated that creating a measurement process and utilizing a systematic approach for tracking progress remains a challenge for organizations and diversity practitioners. Specifically …
  - 17 percent of respondents indicated they are not tracking and measuring their progress.
  - 11 percent indicated they were just beginning to think about tracking progress.
  - 24 percent responded that they are tracking EEO/AA numbers for reporting purposes.
  - 25 percent are using exit interviews, assessments, focus groups and surveys.
  - and 1 percent reported the use of company “scorecards.”

Often, organizations do not move from the “counting-heads” focus of measurement and they fail to measure other meaningful diversity indicators that are tied to the focus, mission and strategy of the organization.

- Responses to Question 6 indicated that current diversity efforts were only generally tolerated—not supported, managed or leveraged. The desired changes most frequently listed were: structure, focus and support; buy-in from senior management and measurement.

These results reflect the same frustrations that many organizations and diversity professionals are facing in the Fortune 1000 organizations that we talk to and work with. At the same time practitioners are linking-in diversity, they are stretched and challenged to understand, apply solutions and synthesize learning around the complexities of fast-moving and diverse business issues.

You and your organization can avoid the diversity piecemeal-activity trap by:

- Integrating diversity into your business plan.
- Avoiding the Piecemeal Trap The Changing Landscape

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[Image]
During the last 10 years, the companies of Philip Morris have contributed more than $1 billion incash and food donations—$125 million in 2000 alone. Our grant making priorities focus on theissues of hunger, domestic violence, culture andEmpowering our Communities

During the last 10 years, the companies of Philip Morris understand thecommitment to diversity is an evolving,unending effort that produces long-lasting results and makes a difference in our communities, ourcompany and for our employees.

A diversity specialist at the company, said, “Diversity is a critical business consideration that allowsany organization to compete in the global arena.”

The results of this quest are as varied as theglobalization, however, the war for talent takeson new and interesting proportions. Who is this talent by? When they do embrace diverse talent, are organizationsequipped? Do they have sustainable environments to nurture it?

As my work has expanded globally, I have watchedorganizations struggle with these questions,essentially saying, “OK, so this equity stuff works in North America with its structural support of equity and equality. But what happens when I have to hire from; trade with; consult; sell to; and heed the expectations of people around the globe who yesterday did not even register on our consciousness?” Or, “How do I nurture the talents of women in my organization for playing on the global stage when in my country women are regarded as chattel?”

The Global Search for Fairness and Equity

Such questions are being posed as much by $20 billion corporations as they are by small start-ups,by public sector organizations and by wholejurisdictions. And they are buying into theunrealized potential and limited capacity toexploit the plethora of opportunities the currentenvironment offers.

Viewed through the lenses of diversity andglobalization, however, the war for talent takes onnew and interesting proportions. Who is this talent by? When they do embrace diverse talent, are organizationsequipped? Do they have sustainable environments to nurture it?

Since then I have been contacted by countless task forces, committees, researchers and plan-ners on just about every continent, seeking anapproach to diversity that would be embraced byorganizations seeking a holistic path to management. I knew—and argued in my book— that companies are vying for what does it look like? When it shows up in all its gloriousdiversity, will it be embraced? Or will employers try again—in vain—for the more familiar andcomfortable packaging of days gone by? When they do embrace diverse talent, are organizationsequipped? Do they have sustainableenvironments to nurture it?

The Changing Landscape

Globalization is re-defining the meaning of diversity in ways that are powerful,far-reaching and destined to forever change the way we look at workforce composition, talent pool,client/customer base and shareholder orshareholders. In a global environment, organizations can no longer look only in their own back yard for the key to winning the war for talent, customers and resources. Advances in technology mean that the talented minds needed to provide strategic advantage are just as likely to hail from Singapore, Johannesburg or Lagos, as they are from a local job fair.

Having recognized the business case, albeit at acursory level, organizations are seeking the means to maximize value from their pursuit of diversity. Regardless of where they sit on the equity continuum, today’s organizations have one thing in common: they are striving to win the war for talent, a war whose theatre is increasingly theglobal marketplace. If customers, market share and corporate goodwill are the spoils of this war, talent is its chief weapon. Without talented people, organizations are left with narrow vision, unrealized potential and limited capacity to exploit the plethora of opportunities the currentenvironment offers.

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