



PHCC NEWS

An advertorial section sponsored by the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors - National Association (www.phccweb.org)

What's ahead:

Prepare for a multi-cultural workforce

Everyone knows that finding skilled workers in the construction industry is a problem today. But the problem is going to get even bigger in the future. Projections indicate that by 2010, employers will need more than 120,000 more plumbers and 87,000 more HVAC mechanics.

At the same time, the U.S. population is not reproducing at a rate needed to fill these jobs. So where will we find additional workers? Immigrants from other countries will help fill the gap in many cases. This is occurring today, especially in the border states, and it is expected to happen more in the future.

Some other changing dynamics are going on as well. In today's workforce, 73% of workers are white non-Hispanic, and 27% represent all racial and ethnic minorities. But look at how that's expected to change: The first phase of baby boomers will reach age 65 by 2010, and that could drastically change the make-up of the workforce. By then, minorities are expected to comprise one-third of the new employees entering the workforce. Minorities will soon represent 110 million of the total U.S. population of 309 million people.

As companies prepare for the future, the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors - National Association is encouraging contractors to really think about these demographic trends because they could eventually affect their business. Here's what speaker Bob Losyk, author of "Managing a Changing Workplace," has advised several

PHCC groups: "The recruiting, hiring and retention of recently arrived immigrants will become a vital survival strategy, as the real growth segment in the future labor force will come from Latino and Asian-American workers. The predictions are that the Latino workforce will grow to 14%, and the Asian-American workforce will grow to 6% over the next five years."

This means that employers — some of whom may think now that they will never be affected by multi-cultural workforce changes — may soon need to revamp their recruiting and retention strategies to focus more on the immigrant worker. Here are some suggestions to help you be prepared:

By 2010, employers will need more than 120,000 more plumbers.

Recruiting

The following tips are provided by Quality Service Contractors Business Management Coach Mike Maynard:

- Actively recruit minorities and immigrants;
- Post job openings in the ethnic group's language;
- Work with agencies that offer help to immigrants;
- Rent a billboard in an ethnic neighborhood using

the native language;

- Offer skills training to help immigrants in their work and home life; and
- Hire a part-time minority recruiter.

Retention

The following includes some tips provided by consultant Bob Losyk:

- Learn about and be respectful of different cultural behaviors so that you do not offend employees;
- Train your employees about differences in cultural behaviors and encourage them to treat everyone with respect;
- Provide opportunities for career advancement;
- Provide English as a Second Language courses to employees;
- Consider translating some training and safety manuals into other languages;
- Encourage workers to express an opinion, even to the boss;
- Recognize the importance of family observances to some cultures and be understanding of the need for absences from work for these occasions; and
- For cultures that are family- and group-oriented, try giving feedback to the whole group instead of individuals. Also, reward the whole team instead of individuals to promote group harmony and maintain balance.

PHCC helps contractors prepare for workforce changes

To help the industry and plumbing and HVACR contractors prepare for the changing makeup of the U.S. workforce, PHCC has undertaken several initiatives.

Supporting immigration reform to provide more workers

PHCC is lobbying on Capitol Hill for comprehensive immigration reform that would allow a reliable flow of workers into the country. PHCC supports legislation that would provide increased enforcement and securing of U.S. borders, along with a flexible guest worker visa program. PHCC is lobbying against any legislation that does not include these key components. It also is opposing any bills that put the burden of enforcement and verification on the business owner, who can face large fines for violations. PHCC will be following immigration reform as Senate deliberations begin in March.

Overcoming instructional language barriers

In several states, PHCC and its education partners are taking steps to make sure students are receiving proper instruction, despite language barriers. Here are some examples:

The California PHCC has begun offering a Spanish edition of its monthly SafetyLine newsletter. The publication, which is only available online, helps employers and employees discuss on-the-job safety issues. There has been positive feedback so far, says Tracey Smith, director of association programs for PHCC of California.

Fairfax County, Va., offers Spanish-assisted classes for its first-year program that uses PHCC's plumbing apprenticeship manuals. Joey Teets, apprenticeship program specialist for the Fairfax County Public Schools, says the course typically is taught by a bilingual instructor who teaches in English but takes

Current workforce:	
White, male non-Hispanics	39%
White, female non-Hispanics	34%
Minority women	13%
Minority men	14%
Predictions:	
Minorities will make up one-third of new workforce entrants in the next 10 years.	
Minorities will soon make up 110 million of the total population of 309 million.	
Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau	

questions and answers in Spanish as needed. The Spanish-assisted courses are not available past the first year of the program; instead, the students are encouraged to learn English for the remaining instructional years.

"We believe if the students don't speak English, they are going to be viewed as second-class tradesmen," he says. "Our intent is to help them in the first year of instruction to keep their job as a plumber's helper and be productive. We provide extra language support if they need it because everybody deserves a chance to succeed. At the same time, the industry needs labor, and this is one way to provide qualified workers."

In Fairfax County's regular first-year apprenticeship program, instructor Theresa Dagenhart, an employee of PHCC member Long's Corp., has learned that being flexible may be the key to effective multi-cultural instruction. Dagenhart experienced this when a bilingual student in one of her first-year plumbing apprenticeship classes offered to read lessons in Spanish to

several Spanish-speaking students during class. Dagenhart accepted the offer and found that it was helpful to the students — and was not disruptive to the class overall. Dagenhart, who was just appointed to the Virginia Apprenticeship Council, hopes to encourage the development of state programs to address language barriers in the apprenticeship program.

Offering seminars on multi-cultural issues

To help educate business owners and others on how to deal with multi-cultural issues in the workforce, PHCC has been offering seminars on the subject at various events. The next one is scheduled during the March 17 and 18 PHCC Leadership Conference, when QSC Business Coach Mike Maynard will discuss "The Changing Face of the Workforce." Maynard also will present the seminar Sept. 29 at the ISH North America show. For a full list of PHCC seminars, visit www.phccweb.org.