

Where ending bias is part of the job

Professionals at Mack Employment Services Inc. learn that the workplace has no room for discrimination.

By David A. Kostival
Reading Eagle Correspondent

WITH A CLIENT BASE of more than 100, Mack Employment Services Inc. placement professionals have to deal with all types of personalities on a daily basis. That includes the occasional clients who may request that employees not be of a certain race, ethnic group or sexual orientation.

Steve D. Pradon, 59, owner and president of the Spring Township firm, said that because prejudice and bigotry still exist in our society, it had become a problem with dealing with a few clients from time to time.

"We deal with all types of companies," Pradon said. "It's only with a small percentage — maybe about 3 to 5 percent — where this was a problem."

"With antiquated thinking out there, we feel the need to talk to clients about the benefits of a diversified work force. Sometimes, the prejudices are not intentional, but rather an outcome of the culture. We find it our duty to correct them."

Out of this need, Pradon and his staff developed a curriculum that uses the standards recognized by the federal Department of Labor and Industry, the American Staffing Association and the Society for Human Resource Management.

The workshop is required for regular employees of Mack Employment.

"This came out of our strategic planning as a weakness and an opportunity," Pradon said. "We saw this as a threat if we did not promote a diversified work force. We did an assessment of our clients and identified some antiquated thinking."

Pradon said that prejudice about potential employees can exist in all job fields, including clerical, hospitality and medical staffing.

He said that when a client asks for a specific race, color or ethnic group, the company's position is to inform the client that he will be sent the most qualified candidate.

"We have trained our folks to say to clients that to attract diversity in an expanding work



Reading Eagle: Tom Leedy

Steve D. Pradon, president and owner of Mack Employment Services Inc., and Teresa M. Weidenhammer, training coordinator, conduct diversity training for employees in Mack's Spring Township office.

force, they have to have open minds based on one's ability to do the job," he said. "We educate clients on diversity in the work force."

"As a staffing firm, we're writing the way of the future. The world is beating down a pathway to our country and we must make jobs available to them."

Pradon said Mack Employment has not lost any clients because of the diversity philosophy, and that he has received only positive feedback.

Teresa M. Weidenhammer, 39, training coordinator for the diversity program, said the program helps employees overcome prejudice.

Weidenhammer explained that the program includes a parody which profiles the intolerance that can exist in the workplace.

"This role-play session illustrates the challenges we face in embracing a diversity philosophy," Weidenhammer said. "We start with life experience and values inventory."

"The employee reflects on and completes questions

Mack Employment Services Inc.

Address: 2834 Shillington Road, Spring Township

Other locations: Ephrata, Lancaster, Harrisburg, Pottstown, King of Prussia, Allentown

Service: Temporary and full-time placement services in areas of hospitality, medical, industrial and clerical

Phone: 610-670-6500

Fax: 610-670-9072

Web site: www.mackemployment.com

President/owner: Steve D. Pradon, Kathy A. Pradon

Training coordinator/diversity program: Teresa M. Weidenhammer

Founded: 1989

Employees: 35 (staff)

Workers placed each year: 3,000 to 9,000

which are a gut-wrenching insight based on their own life experiences and values. Our branch managers need to understand how to move forward with a client. In a world of staffing, we need to recognize talent without prejudices."

"We're not trying to change the world," Pradon said. "If anything, we just want to help

educate clients. We have made progress and have had people thank us. We feel an obligation to explain the advantages of a diversified workplace."

Linda A. Wenger, vice president of hospitality staffing, said she had looked forward to attending the diversity training.

"Diversity issues are very big in hospitality staffing so I

was looking forward to the class," Wenger said. "But in talking with the other staff, I think we all walked away with a knowledge of the proper terms to use in referring to different ethnic backgrounds."

"When a client asks for a particular group or gender, or asks us to exclude one, I simply explain to the client that I understand what he is asking for, but that Mack will send the most qualified candidate for the job."

Dianne Zerbe, branch manager for the Reading office, said that before going through the class she had felt that she had no problems in the area of diversity.

"In the back of my mind, I thought that the term diversity was becoming just another buzzword," Zerbe said. "But the class really did enlighten my mind on the subject. It just made me more aware of my responsibility when it comes to dealing with diversity in my job."

Contact correspondent David A. Kostival at 610-371-5049 or business@readingeagle.com.