



## Holding senior management accountable

By May Snowden

As I explained in the first article, U S WEST's new diversity philosophy requires embracing diversity in all aspects of the business. This philosophy puts us in a better position to 1) meet competitive challenges, 2) maximize shareholder value, and 3) fully engage the company's employees. Now I want to talk about how top leadership are held accountable for diversity.

Our diversity goal is to capitalize on diversity in order to achieve exceptional performance. We started with accountability at the senior leadership level because that's where all business initiatives must begin. To measure our progress on implementing diversity as a business philosophy, we developed a quantitative and qualitative accountability tool to be used specifically with the CEO's senior team—officers and executive directors.

### Quantitative measures

Diversity starts from the top, so the first quantitative component is the workforce profile of directors and above. We are particularly interested in the representation of women and people of color.

Our benchmark for comparison "out in the world" is the Equivalent Civilian Labor Force (ECLF) profile derived from U. S. Census data. Our concern is whether the diversity profile of top leadership mirrors that of the available workforce.

The second component consists of opportunities within our company. Internal opportunities include promotions, lateral job changes, direct hires, and job upgrades. We compare opportunities for all groups—white men,

women, and people of color—to the previous year and to the current director-and-above profile. Our goal is to continue to improve opportunities, year after year.

We measure outward movement as the third component. Compared to the profile, what percentage of each demographic group has been downgraded or left the business?

Component number four is the succession candidate profile. Do we have a good, diverse mix of people who are potentially promotable? We also look at the profile of employees who are "expandable," who need to gain additional experience to become promotable. And we want to know how various groups fared compared to the previous year. Do white men, women, and people of color all have opportunities in our company?

Succession movement is the final component. It's not enough to put women and people of color on the succession list. We expect to see qualified candidates from all groups moving into higher level positions.

### Qualitative measures

Senior management's personal commitment is necessary to maintain a diverse workforce, serve diverse communities and reach diverse markets. Here is how we measure our leaders' commitment to and personal involvement in diversity.

1. We expect management to lead by example—to make inclusion part of the business plan. If leadership sees diversity as an HR issue, but not as a strategic part of the business, nothing happens.

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2. Our leaders must become as proficient in understanding people issues as in other aspects of strategic planning. When they clearly communicate why and how diversity is a critical element in the business strategy, then employees are free to use their talents to help the company succeed.

3. Leaders must be involved personally in diversity recruiting efforts. For example, they can speak at the National Black or Hispanic MBA Association, Women in Technology, or engineering conferences that offer recruiting opportunities. One U S WEST officer brought 30 diverse college interns into the company. By holding individual conferences with the interns and their parents, the officer enhanced the students' performance, as well as our chances of retaining them after graduation.

4. Diversity education must be funded. This year, we developed two mandatory courses. "The Value of Human Diversity," a one-day course for all new employees, focuses on the diversity business strategy, behavioral expectations and needed skills. "Managing within the Law" is required for all new managers. Additional diversity training is available in facilitator-led classes as well as through self-directed learning via tapes, books, and CD-ROMs.

5. Developmental opportunities involve front line profit-and-loss positions. All groups must have assignments that allow them to acquire skills and knowledge needed for high-potential opportunities.

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6. Mentoring involves formal and informal coaching of diverse expandable/promotable candidates by senior leadership. Without mentoring as well as developmental opportunities, diverse candidates will not move up.

7. Affirmative Action plans must be implemented to attain goals. What action has leadership taken?

8. Goals and objectives must be set to identify and support qualified women and minority-owned business suppliers. Our Minority and Women Business Enterprise (M/WBE) program continues to increase dollars spent with these vendors.

9. Leadership must participate in employee resource groups and diversity-related functions in our communities. We have eight resource groups committed to promoting the U S WEST diversity philosophy. These self-funded groups help their members develop professional skills and promote an inclusive working environment that welcomes each employee's contributions.

10. Finally, senior management must be accountable for recognizing and rewarding the exceptional performance and accomplishments of diverse individuals.

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### Qualitative Measures for Senior Managers

1. Integrate diversity into your business plan
2. Communicate the strategy throughout your organization
3. Take time personally to recruit
4. Develop a strategy and funding for training
5. Provide developmental opportunities for women and people of color
6. Initiate a mentoring program, formal or informal
7. Implement affirmative action plans in your organization
8. Set and attain goals for supporting minority- and women-owned suppliers
9. Become involved in employee resource groups and diverse communities
10. Recognize exceptional performance demonstrated by diverse individuals or groups