



# *General Motors Corporation*

## *Recruiting, Advancing, and Retaining Women of Color through the Multicultural Women's Affinity Group*

### **Organizational Information**

General Motors Corporation, founded in 1908, is the world's largest automaker and has been the global industry sales leader for 75 years. GM operates GMAC Financial Services, which offers automotive, residential and commercial financing and insurance. GM's OnStar subsidiary is the industry leader in vehicle safety, security and information services. General Motors employs about 327,000 people and manufactures its cars and trucks in 33 countries.

### **History and Launch of Activity, Program, or Policy**

Affinity groups play a major role in General Motors's efforts to recruit, retain and develop employees and help market vehicles and services to a diverse customer base. The Affinity Group for Women (AGW) is an umbrella body for many of their efforts to advance women. The AGW has approximately 1,600 members and several working groups branching from it, including ones focused on outreach, recruitment, and career growth. The AGW participates in campus recruiting drives and advises talent acquisition members on relevant recruitment issues for women and people of color. The existence of the AGW itself has attracted potential employees to the organization because it demonstrates that GM appreciates and values diversity within the company. Beyond that, potential employees recognize the group as an invaluable support system in an industry that has not traditionally attracted women.

The Multicultural Women's Group (MCW) was started in 2004 because the company recognized the need to focus more on the development and retention of women of color. The MCW leadership consists of several executive and managerial women representing different functions within the organization. However, anyone can be a member of the MCW or the Affinity Group for Women.

### **Strategy of Activity, Program, or Policy**

General Motors believes that if it creates an open environment for women of color, then that environment will also strongly benefit all employees. From a recruitment standpoint, GM expects that the availability of its affinity groups and the MCW will make GM an employer of choice in an industry that has not traditionally attracted women. From a retention standpoint, the company also expects that the various activities and the support system available to women of color will help retain their talent.

### **Multicultural Women's Conference**

In 2006, the company held the Multicultural Women's Conference, which convened women from management and executive levels across sites from three states (Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan), to gain insight about the reasons for having the MCW and the



## *Recruiting, Advancing, and Retaining Women of Color through the Multicultural Women's Affinity Group*

status of the company with respect to multicultural women in the marketplace. The Chairman and CEO, as well as the VP of Global Human Resources and the Group VP of Powertrain, who is also the Leadership Liaison of the Affinity Group for Women, attended and spoke at the meeting.

The Conference also provided training for participants through workshops on topics such as leadership skills and building bridges between people with different backgrounds. Prominent external speakers, including Ursula Burns, President of Business Group Operations at Xerox, shared stories about their personal successes as well as the success of the company from a diversity standpoint.

The Conference was deemed a huge success, in large part because of the extremely visible support from senior leaders and executives. Before the meeting, Automotive Strategy Board members (senior leadership) from various functions, after reading the Conference's agenda, sent personal letters to their direct-reports and managers, recommending that the women in their areas attend. Following the Conference, Bo Andersson, VP of Global Purchasing and Supply Chain, invited all multicultural women to attend a global purchasing and supply chain international sourcing committee meeting that is usually only open to key executives around the globe. For many of the women who were invited, this was a unique developmental opportunity to expand their capabilities, insight, and personal experience into the global decision-making process.

### Key Objectives:

- To retain women of color. The Multicultural Women's Conference provides a strong link between efforts of the MCW and the attraction and retention of women of color.
- To ensure that the environmental dynamics within the organization do not exclude women of color and that women of color can excel within the organization. All activities and resources available through the AGW are accessible to the MCW.

### Success Factors

- The AGW and MCW provide support systems for women of color that would not otherwise be available.
- Women of color are afforded key developmental and learning opportunities, such as networking with other women of color and participating in the Multicultural Women's Conference or the "Lunch and Learn" meetings that were available for those who did not attend the Conference.
- Ties are strengthened between women of color and white women, and visibility for both groups has increased.



# *Recruiting, Advancing, and Retaining Women of Color through the Multicultural Women's Affinity Group*

- The organization's environment is enhanced by minimizing barriers that may impede employee engagement and contribution.

## **Challenges**

- GM is working to identify which developmental activities will ensure success and retention for women of color.
- GM recognizes the difficulty to attract and retain diverse groups and is pursuing initiatives to attract diverse talent to the automotive industry.
- GM is continually trying to build relationships among affinity groups by inviting chairs of other affinity groups to participate in conferences and other events. Some women are involved in the MCW as well as other affinity groups and GM wants to ensure that collaboration continues with regard to issues of women of color.

## **Catalyst Change Drivers**

### **1) Senior-Level Leadership/Involvement**

Senior leadership has been very supportive of efforts to recruit, advance, and retain women of color. Rod Gillum, Vice President of Corporate Responsibility and Diversity, and Katy Barclay, Vice President of Global Human Resources, initially were instrumental in the development of the Multicultural Women's Group and appointed the Chair of this group, Barbara Whittaker, the Executive Director of Global Purchasing and Supply Chain. At the MCW Conference, the Chairman and CEO spoke as did the VP of Global Human Resources and the Group VP of Powertrain. After the Conference, Bo Andersson, VP of Global Purchasing and Supply Chain, was so impressed by the feedback he received from the workshop on building bridges that he invited all multicultural women to participate in a global purchasing and supply chain sourcing committee meeting.

### **2) Accountability Systems**

There is a report-back mechanism in place to keep the North American Strategy Board informed of what the MCW is doing. Tom Stephens, Group VP of Powertrain and the Executive Liaison of the Affinity Group for Women, and William Tate, GM North America VP of Human Resources, gave a complete roll-out to the North American Strategy Board of what the conference was about, what was going to happen, and why. The Strategy Board is also made aware of findings from benchmarking studies so that there is a direct link to senior leaders on issues the MCW is working on.

The MCW is also now putting together a debriefing package on the Conference (attendees, evaluation results, events, and next steps). The package will be provided to Tom Stephens. Both Stephens and Tate will report back to the North American Strategy

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## *Recruiting, Advancing, and Retaining Women of Color through the Multicultural Women's Affinity Group*

Board. Interface will continue with Corporate Diversity Initiatives to continue the momentum created by the conference and to make the best use of the knowledge derived for organizational success.

### **3) Measurement Tools**

As part of their Human Resources management reporting process, GM breaks out women of color statistics to track progression, succession, representation, and attrition within the total employee population. In addition, survey data is gathered regarding activities and events such as the Multicultural Women's Conference. These analyses are used to determine subsequent events and activities.

### **The Impact of the Activity, Program, or Policy**

GM has been developing additional ways to measure the impact of their efforts to recruit, advance, and retain women of color and other diverse groups. A few anecdotal findings they have seen include:

- Participants from the Multicultural Women's Conference reported that the day's events strengthened relationships between white women and women of color.
- Women of color are pleased with the visibility of the MCW and AGW, as well as with their events and activities, and feel that GM is showing a commitment to diversity.

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