



The Pathway of Black CIO's: Retention and Regretted Loss Analysis of African Americans in Information Technology

AN OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

While Black CIOs share a common experience that at times may be similar to the experience of others, this is not just another story...

- Like others, they're attracted to the work and have a passion for excellence but they leave in greater number than their white counterparts.
- The data collected looks beyond the anecdotes to discover common themes and possible root causes of the quantifiable differences in perceptions and outcomes for African Americans.
- When compared to non-African Americans and employees overall, the study data provide an opportunity to identify similarities and differences in opinions, perceptions and preferences that can be used by organizations to identify appropriate strategies and approaches for targeted improvement.
- The study provides a foundation for developing and executing a benchmark process whereby organizations can compare the responses of their employees to a nationally representative group of African Americans.

Overall, African Americans perceive that non-minorities are treated differently and that there is significant room for improvement in diversity.

- While 77% believe that non-minorities are treated fairly and equitably, only 44% believe that minorities are treated the same.
- Diversity overall received low favorable ratings. Respondents indicate that there is significant room for improvement to:
 - Hold leaders accountable for building diverse teams and organizations (26% Favorable)
 - Measure the effectiveness of diversity (23% Favorable)
 - Hold people accountable for advancing diversity (18% Favorable)
 - Reward people for diversity success (14% Favorable)

Responses indicate a need for significant improvements in relationships. (Boss/Subordinate, Peerto-Peer, etc.)

- When asked directly, an overwhelming 97% of African Americans state they are comfortable working in a diverse environment, but ...
 - Less than half, 48% indicate they trust their peers.
 - And 43% indicate they have to adjust their personal style to fit in.

Corporations need to develop new a retention strategy. The next generation minority leaders must be part of the “Trusted Circle” earlier in their careers.

- When asked directly, 56% of the African Americans surveyed indicate they have considered leaving in the past 12 months. This is significantly higher than the 44% favorable response found in the 2004 diversity study published by the National Urban League.

What matters most? What should organizations do to improve results?

To improve results in recruitment, retention and advancement, African Americans indicate that ...

- Compensation/rewards and advocacy and support systems are the leading factors for improved recruitment.
- Honesty in career planning and the relationship with the boss are the leading factors for improved retention.
- Advocacy and support systems and feeling valued and appreciated are the leading factors for improved advancement.

Why have African Americans historically been overlooked as a pool of stable, reliable, passionate IT professionals?

There is a perception that talented and experienced African Americans and some other minorities are hard to find in the IT profession. This may appear to be true as many African Americans work in relative isolation from one another. While overall they may be reasonably well represented within the department, if the department is physically dispersed across several lines of business, locations, etc. it can seem as if there are only one or two. Regardless of their actual representation, African Americans in IT, like their counterparts in other functional areas or professions, often express a greater sense of isolation within their profession.

In many organizations, African Americans in IT **are** viewed as a great talent pool for executive positions in other areas of the firm! Not surprisingly, they are courted by other functional areas and by other firms. Hence, many leave the IT department before being seriously considered for a leadership role in IT.

Corporations are generally doing a better job of bringing diverse groups together across the enterprise through affinity and networking groups. Additionally, corporations need to encourage under represented employees to get together within their functional group or department. These groups then need to be linked with a senior IT executive as well as encouraged to connect with a recognized professional organization outside of the company.