

How important do you believe the labour market to be in driving

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



The company that I will be looking at will be Asda Westbrook.

Asda are a company who promote equality within their organisation. Looking at their equality policy (Appendix 1), it quotes that " we aim to make sure that no job applicant, existing colleague, customer or supplier is less favourably treated on the grounds of their gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin or age".

(http://www.asda.co.uk/asda_corp/customerservice/ 8/11/2003)

Looking at the labour market as a whole, it is stated by Patricia Hewitt that the main characteristics of the labour market are that " there is an ageing population, diversity of cultures are increasing and there have been changes in the role of women over the last ten years". These are three of the major significant changes in Britain. Companies now have to look in these labour pools due to the fact that there is an increasing amount of people who fit into these categories.

The demographics of the labour market are, in my opinion, making companies to form some kind of equal opportunity and diversity policy. Asda are no exception.

Looking at their policy (see Appendix 1) I have picked out key areas that relate to the ageing labour market. It states that Asda " encourage over 50, s back into the work place". Such schemes as the " Grandparents Leave" and " Benidorm Leave" (up to three months unpaid leave for over 50's) have definitely drove the agenda for equality and diversity in Asda. Due to " the demographic time bomb" described by Davidson 1991, the labour market

has had a significantly decreasing proportion of young people entering the workforce. This in turn has encouraged companies such as Asda to devise the types of schemes as explained above.

Now moving onto women in the labour market. There has been a significant increase in the number of women workers in the labour market. According to Kandola and Fullerton, 44% of the labour force are women. This number was expected to rise to 45.3% in 2001. Kirton and Greene (2000) state, " jobs requiring a high level a relatively high level of education, and those where experience and on-the-job training are relatively important, are more likely to be offered to men than women".

Although this could be said to be true in some organisations, Asda state that " 40.7% of the managers employed are women" and of the main headquarters in Leeds 45.2% of managers are women. After speaking to the Personnel Manager of Westbrook, she stated that " Asda want to have a workforce that replicates the demographics of the area or region". Looking at the proportions of Asda and the labour market, the figures are extremely close. This to me, is another sign of the labour market driving the agenda for diversity as the market is encouraging the business to broaden its figures in the number of women in their company by putting policies such as " Maternity Leave of up to 52 weeks" and " Child Care Leave" into place.

Looking at another change of the labour market and another driver comes from our increasingly diverse workforce. Figures from " The Working Foundation" state that " 7per cent of the population are from Black, Asian or

other minority ethnic communities" Although this could be said to be a driver in equality and diversity and that Asda have recognised this in their policy by offering " Religious Festival Leave" and having the commitment to " match the workforce profile in each store with the local population profile", it is argued by Kirton and Greene that due to a number of labour segmentation theories " the class positioning of ethnic minority men was as low-waged workers resident in declining inner areas of British cities." As well as this it is stated, " people become trapped by stigmatisation and labour market segregation is perpetuated into the next generation therefore a vicious cycle of insecure employment and unemployment is experienced by the minority ethnic groups".

To me these statements could be said to be true, as from my own personal experience of working at Asda, I have rarely seen a large quantity of black managers. This shift in the labour market, to me, could affect the agenda for diversity and equality in a negative way. Employer's may recruit people from the ethnic communities to fill in jobs that may breach health and safety regulations, they could be lower paid, poorer working conditions and maybe unsociable hours. Although this maybe a rash opinion, it seems to me that the increase in the population of ethnic communities will cause some business to adopt an umbrella stance, and incorporate a diverse and equal position, but exploit the people within these areas.

A further change in the labour market in recent years is the increased number of students taking higher education. Although not all companies recognise this, Asda have in a place a study leave scheme, which enable

students to take the university calendar dates as unpaid leave, and then return to the company when they are not in term time. Again, a labour market change that encourages Asda to become diverse.

Other Drivers

The other drivers that encourage organisations to become more diverse according to Kandola and Fullerton (1998) are " good personnel practice, legislation, business sense, organisational commitment to equal opportunities, moral obligations, company image/PR, Director and organisational commitment". Although there is a large list here I feel one of the main reasons a company tries to become diverse is for the perceived benefits of diversity and for their company image. The gains have been broken down into three key areas, " Proven, Debatable and Indirect".