

10 Tips for Working Effectively with Your Latino Workforce

by: Hector Escarcega, CSP, ARM, MSIH

Hector Escarcega is President of Bilingual Solutions Int'l / Full-Esteem Ahead Training and Seminars, a Los Angeles based Corporate Training & Consulting company, specializing in Cultural Diversity, Human Resources and OSHA. Hector is also Chairperson for the newly formed **SPALW** group sponsored by ASSE. You can contact Hector at (323) 256-6968 or by e-mail at HectorEscarcega@aol.com.

1. Treat your Spanish-speaking employees like you would want to be treated if you were a new immigrant in a foreign country.
2. Put forth some effort to understand the Latino culture and traditions.
3. Teach your American workers about Latino culture and your Latino workers about American culture.
4. Even though you may not know their language, make simple efforts to greet your Latino employees, use their first names, smile and a gentle pat on the back as a "good job". Doing these little things may go a very long way in closing the communication and cultural gap.
5. Train your Spanish-speaking workforce in their native language. English can come later.
6. Hire an effective Spanish-speaking trainer. Avoid using bilingual employees as interpreters. You will lose key words and communication.
7. Provide Spanish-language training materials that are written at an appropriate comprehension level for your workforce.
8. Use plenty of pictures, diagrams, and charts, and avoid technical words in your training presentations and printed materials.
9. When implementing an incentive plan, try to incorporate group rewards rather than recognizing individuals. Latinos enjoy the cohesiveness of the family as other ethnic groups as well.
10. Be politically correct. Remember that many different cultures make up the Latino population. Referring to your workforce as "Mexicans" may be offensive to your Guatemalans, Salvadorians. Use "Spanish-speaking" or "Latino" instead.

Remember, any effort you make to welcome your Latino workforce will be appreciated. By incorporating these tips, you will be rewarded with a loyal, hard-working, culturally diverse workforce.