

# Diversity: Buzz Word or Business Policy?

by Celia Renteria Szelwach

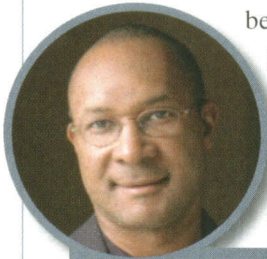
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A FEW DAYS AGO THIS NATION CELEBRATED the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday. Since delivering his “I have a dream” speech in 1963, much has happened – not the least of which has been the changing shape of the word “diversity.”

From social program and catalyst to sound business policy, “diversity” has come a long way. Yet for many, it’s been exiled in that vast wasteland called “buzz word,” where much is said and little is done. For Teddy Pierre, president of the Tampa-based Pascall Company LLC, diversity “personally and organizationally means different things.” He believes diversity involves personally “recognizing, understanding and respecting the differences we see in other people.” As an organizational initiative, it means creating an inclusive environment regardless of gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation or other lifestyle factors.

Approaching diversity as a business imperative, organizations make conscious decisions in order to survive and thrive in a competitive marketplace. Pierre’s team works

with Tampa Bay companies to determine the benefits diversity offers, put in place processes and infrastructure and establish goals and measurement systems of diversity initiatives. By treating diversity as a business function rather than a social program, organizations develop accountability for encouraging inclusion.



**TEDDY PIERRE**

Pierre suggests focusing on three areas: people, internal environment and external market presence. The Pascall Company ([www.thepascallcompany.com](http://www.thepascallcompany.com)) helps organizations analyze these areas with respect to the company’s reputation as an “employer of choice” and contributor to the community. Through inclusion, companies attract and retain top talent and key diverse consumer groups.

Pierre likes to quote the National Conference for Community and Justice ([www.nccj.org](http://www.nccj.org)): “Ultimately we are more alike than unlike ... at the end of the day we all have dreams, love for our family, (desire to) do a good job and be part of a winning team, and to be recognized and valued for what we do.” ☺

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