



## FYI

[www.taxdiversity.com](http://www.taxdiversity.com)

**WHO:** TaxDiversity.com

**WHAT:** A website that focuses on increasing the number of individuals from underrepresented groups who choose to pursue a career in taxation, and on creating more diversity among corporate tax professionals.

**WHO'S WHO:** TaxDiversity.com first saw light of day as a feature on the career portal, TaxTalent.com.

**WHERE:** South Carolina

**WHEN:** 2008

**WHY:** Founder Tony Santiago realized that with the increasing number of retirees in the tax profession coupled with the long retraining period required for new hires, something had to be done and fast. Or there could be "dire consequences." So he set his sights on minority and women professionals.

**HOW:** At TaxDiversity.com visitors can access a job board, participate in forums, read case studies and watch videos from successful minority tax professionals. Last fall Santiago undertook a campus outreach program targeting minority universities in an effort "to get the students and to get the business administration departments to recognize that this is a huge opportunity, a highly lucrative field." Lucrative, as in six-figure salaries.

**CAPITAL GAINS:** Although the numbers of women in the tax profession at the staff and managerial levels have improved, Santiago explains there is still a problem getting women into senior tax roles because the years women are ready for those positions coincide with the years they are considering starting a family. "We need to figure out how to get the females up into the C level by making the requirements for travel or the hours more reasonable," he says. "Or we'll never get them into it."

**MINORITY REPORT:** Santiago admits that the tax sector has been "terrible" at attracting minorities. "If you go to any TEI (Tax Executive Institute) conference, any tax institute, any big association and look in the audience, you only need your two hands."

**STATS:** According to a survey of Big Four accounting firms conducted by one of Santiago's companies, more than 68% of respondents said that diversity at the senior executive level was below average or poor. Almost 50% came to the same conclusion about the availability of support systems within their organizations to promote diversity.

**USEFUL LIFE:** "This is about changing the damn problem," Santiago says. "Hopefully, in whatever number of years, this entity dissolves and goes away. There's no need for it anymore. We've done a good job. We've gotten the females into the C level positions they deserve to be in. We've gotten minority, gender, racial balances in place."

**BOTTOM LINE:** "These candidates who are diverse candidates who are already in the field are saying, 'Everybody tells me that we're in high demand but nobody calls me.' Okay, well now it's put up or shut up. Post your jobs on this site," Santiago says, adding that the tax industry as a whole is color blind. "Trust me. Everybody's out there wanting people. They couldn't care less." **DI**

