



FYI: The Diversity Institute

WHO: The Diversity Institute in Management and Technology

WHAT: The goal of the Institute is to generate new knowledge and understanding about diversity in organizations.

WHERE: The Faculty of Business, Ryerson University, Toronto

WHEN: Since 1999.

WHY: The Diversity Institute was the brainchild of 3 women, including its founder, Wendy Cukier, who, based on research that showed women were poorly represented in the technology sector, realized there were opportunities to shape practice in that field. "Many corporations and governments and educational institutes were developing programs that they said were intended to increase the participation of women," says Cukier, who is also associate dean at Ryerson's Faculty of Business. "But there wasn't a lot of evaluation being done of how those initiatives did or did not impact on the long term participation of women."

HOW: The Institute disseminates information and research findings on workplace diversity, and hosts workshops that provide customized research for organizations that allows them to analyse and act on the results of employee surveys.

HOW 2: Part of what the Institute also does is develop evidence-based policies and programs aimed at attracting, engaging and retaining diverse participants to business and boards. This, Cukier believes, is the key to survival. "I think there's real good evidence with the current focus on the talent war and changing demographics and so on, that human resources management is really the strategic issue for organizations."

INSIDE TRACK: "You see some companies that really get it, that are pushing diversity programs and re-engineering from the top to the bottom in order to better adapt to the changing realities," says Cukier. "Not because of some commitment to corporate social responsibility and ethics and equity in an abstract sense, but because they recognize that it's essential to their competitive survival."

WOW: Just this year, the Institute collaborated with Catalyst Canada and collected data for the first study of its kind in Canada, examining the career advancement of visible minority professionals and executives in FP500 companies.

BOTTOM LINE: The work of the Diversity Institute, it seems, may never be done. "To me it's the glass is half empty and it's half full," Cukier explains. "You can see very clear evidence of progress but...there's still a long way to go." **DI**

