

Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Graphic Communication Industry

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this exploratory research study was to investigate the current status/issues on diversity and inclusion in the U.S. graphic communication industry. The objectives of the study were to: 1) understand the make-up of the industry's gender, ethnic and age demographic, 2) gain insights on the level and areas of diversity and inclusion in the companies where study participants were employed, 3) examine participants' perspective on the state of diversity and inclusion in today's graphic communication industry and, 4) add to the body of knowledge on this very important issue.

The research sample consisted of members of the Print Production Professionals LinkedIn Group and Alumni from the Rochester Institute of Technology's School of Media Sciences. Data were collected through an Internet survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was focused in three areas: 1) demographics, 2) the status of diversity and inclusion in graphic communication and, 3) any recommendations or comments the participants chose to share relative to the industry's state of diversity and inclusion.

The significant findings that emerged were:

- The graphic communication workforce was described by respondents as an aging population with the majority of employees being near or at retirement age. The majority of the respondents indicated that their age range was 40 years (63.5%) or older and almost half have worked in the industry more than 20 years.
- Challenges with attracting and retaining younger employees were noted. Less than 17% of the respondents were under the age of 30.
- The ethnicity of the industry seems to be keeping pace with the U.S. population where it is predicted by the year 2020 that the U.S. will be 36% non-white (www.census.gov). Approximately 29% of research study respondents were non-white.
- The level of diversity in the workplace was reported to be higher at smaller (<50 employees) and larger (>500 employees) companies. However, comments from the respondents suggest that women and people of color often excluded from management and higher level positions. Gender, age and ethnicity were the major areas of diversity and inclusion that were indicated.

The outcome of this research suggests that as the industry continues its structural and technical transformation and the search for key personnel becomes more competitive, it is imperative that graphic communication businesses understand, embrace and celebrate diversity and inclusion. It is hoped that the findings from this study will be a call to action that will help industry leaders, educators and individuals realize that diversity and inclusion is essential for future industry stability and success.

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