

Google steps up efforts for more racial diversity

May 29 2014, by Martha Mendoza



In this May 30, 2007 file photo, Google employees work on their laptops at Google headquarters in Mountain View, Calif. In a groundbreaking disclosure, Google on Wednesday, May 28, 2014 revealed how very white and male its workforce is—just 2 percent of its Googlers are black, 3 percent are Hispanic, and 30 percent are women. (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma, File)

Google has had more trouble diversifying its workforce than its computer scientists have had writing programs that respond to search

requests in the blink of an eye.

That seemed to be the conclusion when the Silicon Valley giant this week [issued a gender and ethnic breakdown](#) of its workforce. It showed that of its 26,600 U.S. employees, 61 percent are white, 30 percent Asian, 3 percent Hispanic and 2 percent black. Thirty percent of its employees are women.

"Google is miles from where we want to be," said Laszlo Bock, head of personnel at Google.

Bock says the biggest factor is a shortage of such students majoring in computer science or other technical fields in college.

One year, there were just two black people in the U.S. with new doctorates in computer science on the job market, Google says. The company hired one of them, and Microsoft hired the other, according to Bock.

But that doesn't entirely account for the lack of diversity.

For instance, Google sells \$50 billion in advertising annually, a task that required more than 2,900 salespeople in the U.S. as of last August. Just 79 of them, or 3 percent, were black. A total of 127, or 4 percent, were Hispanic. More than 2,000, or about 70 percent, were white.

Google attributes this phenomenon to "unconscious biases" that have historically favored white people. To address this issue, Google has put more than 20,000 employees through sessions during the past year to help them become more aware of their biases.

Google is also trying to do more recruiting at colleges with large minority enrollments. During the past year, Google has dispatched a

specialist to work with historically black Howard University to draw up a curriculum that will give its graduates a better chance of competing for technology jobs against the likes of MIT. The program will be extended to five other colleges this fall.

Google is just one of many high-tech companies that are pledging to diversify their workforces under pressure from the Rev. Jesse Jackson. He and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition have been leading delegations to shareholder meetings this year at such companies as Google, Facebook, eBay and Hewlett-Packard, decrying "old patterns that exclude people of color and women from opportunity and advancement."

In 1999, when Jackson launched his first Silicon Valley initiative, 89 percent of Silicon Valley chairmen and CEOs were white, while the white-collar workforce was about 60 percent white and 31 percent Asian. Those figures have barely changed.

"I'm disappointed. For the most part, they have not improved," Jackson said Thursday.

Intel, Hewlett-Packard, Cisco and Advanced Micro Devices also have published labor data breakdowns.

Four percent of the 57,000 U.S. employees at computer chip maker Intel Corp. are black, according to the company's breakdown. About 8 percent of Intel's U.S. workers are Hispanic and 26 percent are women.

"We are not satisfied with our diversity data, and we continuously strive to improve," said Patricia McDonald, the company's vice president of human resources.

Hewlett-Packard Co. has won praise for hiring two women, Carly Fiorina and Meg Whitman, as CEO since 1999. Overall, one-third of

HP's U.S. staff are women, according to the company's most recent statistics; 7 percent of U.S. workers are black and 6 percent are Hispanic.

Sharon Vosmek, CEO of nonprofit Astia, which connects women-led startups with financial backers, said: "This is not a Google issue; this is a societal issue."

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