



Contact

Heather Barber
+415 946 3080
heather@lpfi.org

IT Workplace Disparities: Women and People of Color Encounter More Barriers

New report reveals invisible landmines in IT employee retention

San Francisco, September 29, 2011 – The Level Playing Field Institute (LPFI) has just released a new report examining the vastly different experiences of women and underrepresented groups in IT work environments compared to their male and white counterparts. The report, entitled ***Tilted Playing Field: An Examination of Hidden Bias in Information Technology Workplaces***, reveals that hidden biases within the workplace can produce unequal opportunities and outcomes for employees depending on their race and gender. This study reports on data collected from a sample of IT engineers and managers in large companies and small startups nationwide.

The report has three significant findings:

(1) IT workplace experiences vary significantly by race and gender.

- Women and underrepresented people of color encounter negative workplace experiences (e.g, difficulty balancing work/family, exclusionary cliques, bullying) at rates significantly higher than their male and white counterparts.
- Being a woman and/or underrepresented person of color predicted the likelihood of experiencing negative workplace incidents.

(2) Negative workplace experiences lead to increased turnover in IT roles.

- Underrepresented people of color were least satisfied with their job, least satisfied with skill development opportunities, and most likely to leave the company in the upcoming year.
- As the number of negative work experiences reported by individuals across the study increased, the level of satisfaction with their current job and likelihood to remain with that company ***significantly decreased***.

(3) Diversity is not a priority for gatekeepers, despite a talent shortage and high cost of employee turnover.

- Despite vast underrepresentation of women and people of color in IT, 68% of the sample indicated satisfaction with their company's diversity efforts.
- However, men and women in startups differed drastically in their satisfaction with their company's diversity efforts. And underrepresented people of color were nearly twice as likely as whites to be in favor of a company-wide practice to increase diversity (80% compared to 46%).

“The IT sector is one of the fastest growing in our country, yet women and people of color continue to be vastly underrepresented. Previously we’ve pointed to problems in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education pipeline as the reason for low rates of women and people of color in IT positions,” said LPFI Executive Director Robert Schwartz, Ed.D. “But the findings in this report clearly show that there are also significant concerns with company culture and workplace experiences of underrepresented professionals.”

To review the findings as well as recommendations on improving IT workplace diversity, download the full report here: http://www.lpfi.org/sites/default/files/tilted_playing_field_lpfi_9_29_11.pdf and check out our blog post, An Open Letter to the Tech Community here: http://www.lpfi.org/sites/default/files/open_letter_to_tech_community_9_29_11.pdf

About Level Playing Field Institute

Level Playing Field Institute (www.lpfi.org) works to improve opportunities for underrepresented groups in education and the workplace. In addition to its research on eliminating bias and increasing diversity in the workplace, LPFI runs the Summer Math and Science Honors Academy (SMASH) (www.lpfi.org/smash) to prepare talented underrepresented students of color for careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

###