

Adjusting for the Cultural Demographic Shift

In a changing landscape, organizations must go beyond traditional diversity strategy.

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—Glenn Llopis

President

Glenn Llopis Group
Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.

By the year 2050, minorities will represent 54 percent of Americans, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Are healthcare organizations prepared to serve an increasingly diverse population?

Today, industries across the nation, including healthcare, are rethinking traditional ways of serving diverse populations. One new approach involves recognizing and adjusting for what the Glenn Llopis Group has coined the Cultural Demographic Shift™.

Glenn Llopis, president of the Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.-based thought leadership, human capital and business strategy consulting firm, says the Cultural Demographic Shift, or CDS, occurs when “large cultural segments of the population reach critical mass or numbers necessary or sufficient to have a significant effect on what we do and how we act.” According to Llopis, these “shift populations” not only are changing the nation’s cultural demographics, but also are influencing innovation across all industries.

“The influence of shift populations is compelling those industries to serve the needs of larger, broader populations of employees in the workplace and customers—or patients—in the marketplace,” he says. “They are forcing organizations to engage more authentically, embrace diversity of thought and consider strategies that break free of existing templates to evolve in new ways.”

The CDS Imperative

Several factors related to today’s highly dynamic healthcare landscape are contributing to the urgency for healthcare organizations to address the CDS. A greater emphasis on patient-centered care is one of them.

“Patients want to see people who look like them, can communicate with them, and understand their unique needs—needs that are influenced by their cultural heritage—when they go to the doctor’s office,” Llopis says.

High employee engagement also is an important component of successfully addressing shift populations. As a large organization with about 270,000 employees on a global scale, Aramark is working to approach the CDS not only with its clients and the communities they serve, but also within its workforce.

“We continually strive to develop and retain a workforce that reflects the communities and marketplaces we serve,” says the COO for Aramark’s healthcare businesses, Victor Crawford. “We understand that the demographic shift is one key to increasing employee engagement—and subsequently community engagement—because most of our employees come from the communities in which they work. We also recognize that a highly engaged workforce leads to higher customer satisfaction.”

Addressing the cultural demographic shift goes hand-in-hand with addressing population health management. Having highly engaged employees helps create stronger connections among staff, patients and their families and contributes to improved care and service.

“When we are able to provide support to patients and families in ways that are culturally relevant to a patient—whether it is by understanding home diets or offering food preparation



instruction—then we can enable individuals' ability to self-manage their own health, help decrease additional diet-related illnesses and, ultimately, contribute to reduced readmissions," Crawford says.

One way in which Aramark is addressing the CDS and contributing to population health management is through a new community health engagement initiative. In April, Aramark, in partnership with the American Heart Association, launched a program designed to help people make better food and lifestyle choices through culturally relevant and family centric cooking and curriculum-based nutrition education. The program is part of Aramark's Healthy for Life® 20 By 20 initiative, which aims to reduce saturated fats, calories and sodium levels by 20 percent and increase fruits, vegetables and whole grains by 20 percent on its clients' menus. The new program is piloting in Philadelphia, Chicago and Houston.

Addressing the Shift

To tackle the cultural demographic shift in today's competitive climate, organizations need to look at diversity and inclusion as a profit center, not a cost center—it must evolve as a strategy for growth, according to Llopis. "Diversity and inclusion

need to be seen as competencies that can help increase revenue, strengthen our workforce and enhance our relationship with patient populations."

How can healthcare leaders begin to address the CDS? To start, Llopis suggests assessing the organization's preparedness for serving shift populations. "There is intellectual capital about how to best serve the cultural demographic shift within an institution already," he says. "Organizations must tap into each of their departments to find where there are common threads to approaching diverse populations. Leaders should ask themselves, 'Are we really exploring the possibilities of what these shift populations mean and how we can create competitive advantage?'"

Participating in or forming a consortium to address population shifts is another way leaders can get involved. Crawford and Llopis believe now is the time for healthcare executives to come together to discuss, learn from one another and strategize.

"It's really important that healthcare leaders remain very informed about how they can address this shift," Crawford says.



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To help generate more awareness among healthcare leaders about addressing the cultural demographic shift, Aramark will sponsor a special session, led by Llopis, to be held Monday, Nov. 7, during the November 2016 ACHE Cluster program in Atlanta. Llopis hopes the session will spark dialogue among leaders and ultimately help executives become better prepared to serve shift populations.

"It is only through courageous approaches that real solutions will prosper, improving outcomes for all populations," he says.

For more information, please contact Tim Alba, vice president, strategic partnerships, Aramark, at alba-timothy@aramark.com.