

# Workforce Inclusion Sample Entry

## **Agency Name**

Gravity Media

## **Program Name**

ECHO: Driving Success and Inspiring Cultural Change

## **Executive Summary**

As part of an ongoing effort to recognize and foster the diversity of its increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural employee population, Valassis undertook a multifaceted initiative throughout 2011 and the first half of 2012 to further strengthen its culture of diversity and inclusion.

In support of this initiative, the company established in 2011 a committee of 11 senior leaders from across the company, who are responsible for setting actionable and measurable goals, including goals to increase ethnic and female diversity at all levels within the company and goals to increase leadership accountability related to diversity and inclusion. As part of this initiative, the company established its first Business Resource Group, the Valassis Women's Network, to foster women's professional development, connectivity and outreach within Valassis. Since its inception, the Valassis Women's Network has gained more than 300 members and continues to grow. The company also expanded its involvement in the Network of Executive Women (NEW) by becoming a Gold member. To provide additional opportunities for the advancement of ethnically and culturally diverse employees, Valassis also expanded its Mentoring Program and established a Talent Steering Committee in 2011. Through these efforts and others, Valassis exceeded its 2011 goal of 34% diversity recruiting for salaried associates, ending the year at 37.5%. Overall diversity hiring for external hires reached 48%, and the company exceeded its goal of more than 40% overall associate diversity. The percentage of female associates reached 53.4%, and the percentage of management and professional positions being occupied by women reached 47%.

## **Situation Analysis**

We began our formal journey to create an inclusive environment in 1998 when the first Diversity Council was formed. Our objective was to create a culture where an increasingly multicultural associate population was welcomed, supported and encouraged to reach its full potential. We linked our diversity and inclusion initiatives to business objectives and integrated the process consistently throughout the company.

Diversity and inclusion are very important to the success of our company. This important initiative ensures we are recognizing, engaging and valuing different ideas, perspectives and backgrounds in our

everyday decisions. Valassis takes tremendous pride in being a workplace where every associate feels included, valued and respected.

While we have made tremendous progress toward enhancing diversity and inclusion at Valassis, we also recognize the need for continuous improvement. To remain relevant and aligned with our consumers and our clients, it is imperative that we integrate diverse perspectives and insights in all aspects of our business.

After the rebranding of our Diversity Council in 2010 to our new program ECHO, our company conducted a series of cultural assessments including regional focus groups across all functions and levels of associates, one-on-one interviews with all senior leadership team members as well as a cross-section of leaders with varying backgrounds, and associate surveys. As a result of these assessments, we identified key focus areas for improvement:

- A need for greater senior leadership involvement and commitment;
- Desire for diversity at higher levels;
- Greater inclusion and upward mobility of women; and
- A need for consistent understanding of diversity & inclusion across Valassis

The identification of key areas for improvement provided us the opportunity to craft specific goals and measures to directly impact the improvement within the key areas.

During 2011, we continued progress toward our initiatives by introducing the ECHO Strategy Committee which is made up of 11 senior leaders from across Valassis. The ECHO Strategy Committee is responsible for developing and guiding our multi-year Diversity & Inclusion Strategy.

In addition, we also launched our first Business Resource Group (BRG), the Valassis Women's Network (VWN) which is dedicated to fostering women's professional development, connectivity and outreach to drive a competitive advantage for Valassis. The VWN demonstrates our dedication and continued progress toward diversity and inclusion while providing a valuable resource for information, shared experiences, networking and leadership advice. The VWN offers associates a foundation to achieve both professional and corporate business goals. Since its creation, the VWN has gained over 300 members and continues to increase in size. Although the focus is on women, like all BRG's, the VWN is open to all Valassis associates, regardless of gender.

We will continue to put maximum effort into taking our diversity and inclusion efforts to the next level and achieving our goals. Through greater understanding and appreciation of our differences, we will continue to build a stronger company and community.

## **Program Objectives**

Our objective continues to be to attract, retain, develop and advance the best talent representing the broadest range of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. Our actions are guided by an awareness that appreciates all of the unique and authentic values that associates bring from their varied backgrounds.

## **Strategy and Execution**

Valassis' commitment to diversity and inclusion is designed to achieve the following results:

**Building our Talent Pipeline** – Our commitment to developing our talent speaks volumes, not only to our current associates, but to those who wish to join us in the future. We offer our associates the development opportunities they need to build successful careers. We help to build our talent pipeline through our annual performance management process, development planning, mentoring programs, talent reviews, succession planning and training programs.

**Improving Talent Acquisition** – Our clients expect Valassis teams to be diverse, to mirror their own companies and the customers they are serving. Our broad range of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives gives us an advantage when responding to client requests and helping them achieve their marketing objectives. The best talent includes people of all origins and points of view. For several years, we have had a goal to recruit and hire a diverse workforce that reflects the communities in which we work and live. In 2011, this equated to a goal of 34% diversity recruiting for salaried associates. We are pleased to report that through our combined efforts, we ended the year at 37.5% – exceeding the goal for salaried new hires. In addition, our overall diversity hiring for external hires was 48%. In 2011, for the first time, diversity recruiting goals were a part of every Vice President and above's personal bonus objectives.

**Strengthening Inclusive Behavior at Valassis** – An inclusive environment empowers associates to be themselves and share their perspectives. It spurs creativity and collaboration, allowing us to provide our clients with innovative marketing solutions. It improves associate engagement and drives business results. We measure our diversity statistics by senior leader, office location and career level on a quarterly basis. These reports are shared regularly with all Vice Presidents and above and our Board of Directors. Our objective is for our overall diversity to be at or above 40%. In 2011, we surpassed our goal ending the year with an associate population that is 40.23% diverse.

**Enhancing our Reputation** – The value of our Valassis and RedPlum® brands depends on our reputation. To succeed in our mission to deliver value to consumers how, when and where they want,

we must accurately reflect the diversity we value. It speaks to who we are, what we stand for, and the fact that we value people for who they are and the contributions they make. It also makes it clear that we understand our clients, their customers and the world in which we live and work. Our pursuit of sponsorships, speaking opportunities and our award and recognition programs are a deliberate effort to make the public face of Valassis match the internal reality.

In addition to increasing efforts focused on improving our four key areas for improvement, in 2011, our Board of Directors established the ECHO Strategy Committee to develop action-oriented goals based on our greatest opportunities for improvement which were identified by the committee. Our resulting Diversity and Inclusion Goals are as follows:

1. Strengthen our diverse and inclusive culture to drive innovation and market leadership.
2. Achieve and sustain an improved level of leadership accountability and engagement relative to diversity and inclusion.
3. Achieve and sustain at least two diverse executives (ethnic and/or female) among CEO direct reports by 2016.
4. Achieve and sustain 38% female diversity among positions from Director to Senior Vice President (SVP) by 2016.
5. Achieve and sustain 20% ethnic diversity among positions from Director to SVP by 2016.

**Supporting Collateral**

N/A in this sample entry

**Accomplishments & Conclusions**

Our dedication to diversity and inclusion is reflected in our results. Since the inception of our diversity and inclusion efforts, we have increased the number of female and diverse associates.

	Catalyst Study	Valassis
Percentage of women in the U.S. labor force	46.70%	53.40%
Percentage of women in management, professional and related occupations	51.50%	47.00%
Percentage of female Fortune 500 corporate officers	14.40%	14.30%

Percentage of female Fortune 500 board seats	15.70%	10.00%
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One of the ways we measure progress against our diversity and inclusion objectives is through our annual associate survey results. The survey includes the following questions:

	Valassis 2011 Rating	100 Best Benchmark
“People here are treated fairly regardless of their age.”	88	91
“People here are treated fairly regardless of their race.”	90	94
“People here are treated fairly regardless of their gender.”	90	93
“People here are treated fairly regardless of their sexual orientation.”	92	95

In summary, our accomplishments included the following through the implementation of our ECHO program:

- Determined goals, metrics and action plans for our long-term diversity and inclusion strategy.
- Became Gold members of the Network of Executive Women (NEW).
- Expanded the Mentor Program to all associates, regardless of gender or ethnicity and added 12 new mentees and mentors.
- 46% of the mentees in the mentor program were ethnically diverse.
- 38% of the associates in the Valassis Associate Council were ethnically diverse.
- 24% of the interns in our summer intern program were ethnically diverse and 51% were female.
- Won 23 cultural awards including Working Mother “100 Best Companies” and Working Mother “Best Companies for Hourly Workers.”
- Added “Leadership Scorecard” to all Vice President and above bonus plans. The leadership scorecard includes metrics around increased diversity in the leader’s departments as well as diversity recruiting, talent management and cultural goals.
- Exceeded our goal of overall associate diversity of 40% or higher.
- Exceeded external salaried diversity hiring goal of 34% ending the year at 37.5%.
- Achieved 48% external hourly and salaried combined diversity hiring.
- All Manufacturing associates participated in the Business Case for Diversity Training.
- Launched Valassis Women’s Network (VWN) which is dedicated to fostering women’s growth and development. The VWN platform was transitioned to our first Business Resource Group (BRG) in March 2012.
- Conducted Leadership Toolkits on the Business Case for Diversity and Inclusion and Leading a Multi-generational Workforce
- Conducted Empower Hour session on “Connecting Generations in the Workplace.”
- Refreshed succession plans at the Senior Vice President level and above which included development

tools for identified successors. Our CEO and Board of Directors reviewed the planning to assess readiness, bench strength and talent demographics.

- Conducted first ever company-wide functional talent reviews which included a report to the CEO and the Board of Directors.
- Added new leadership training courses designed to help the newly hired, promoted or transitioned leader obtain key skills and build a high-performing team.
- Enhanced our New Hire Orientation Program to provide an overview of
- diversity and inclusion at Valassis.