

## Study of Latino Professionals Shatters Stereotypes

By Jennifer Millman

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Most Latino professionals are fully bilingual, work in various industries and are well integrated within American corporate culture, according to a recent survey of Latinos in the workplace.

The Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement's (HACE) latest findings may give many Americans pause. More than 500 professionals completed HACE's e-mail-administered [2006 Latinos Professional Pulse Survey](#). The results reveal an image of Latino workers that confounds long-held stereotypes and addresses questions raised amidst the political fervor over immigration that has rocked the nation in recent months.

"With so much focus on the issue of immigration, many people are unaware that a significant number of college-educated Latinos are successfully working in professional positions and advancing in their careers," said Abe Tomás Hughes, HACE's president and CEO. "This is an upwardly mobile segment comprised of English-dominant individuals of Hispanic heritage that are, in practically all cases, citizens or legal residents authorized to work here. They represent model citizens of this country and offer a clear picture of how Latinos are increasingly contributing to the future of the U.S."

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Twenty-seven percent of respondents work in publicly-held Fortune 1000

companies and 30 percent work in private businesses. More Latinos work in nonprofit, government or academia than whites, according to the survey.

"You see Latino involvement across all industries and economic sectors. In the military, they have the greatest ratio of Medal of Honor recipients [of] any group, which shows both courage and dedication," said Alma Morales Riojas, president and CEO of the Washington, D.C.-based MANA, A National Latina Organization. "For those of us who are not only Latino but have dealt in issues of equal opportunity and diversity, we know our common traits. We have no problem once we get in the workplace; the problem has been getting our foot in the door."

Survey results confirm Latinos' capacity for advancement. Of the 500-plus professionals who completed the survey, 65 percent reported receiving promotions at some time in their careers, with more than 90 percent occurring in the last five years.

The survey also indicates that money is not the primary objective for most Latinos, as most said they seek progress over plumped-up paychecks. They consider growth potential (96 percent) and positive environment (96 percent) important/very important in future career choices. Nearly 80 percent of respondents say working for a company on The DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity list is a factor in their career decisions. (See who's in [The DiversityInc 2006 Top 50 Companies for Diversity](#).)

More respondents report satisfaction with their jobs than not by a margin of nearly 2 to 1. This translates to higher retention rates that minimize disruption and contain costs often generated from high turnover. Three out of five Latino professionals have been at the same job for more than two years, the survey shows.

"I think it's well documented that Latinos, whether they hail from Mexico, Puerto Rico or South America, historically have a track record of pride in their work and loyalty to their employer," said Riojas, who also chairs the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility's board of directors. "Even in places where there are employment issues, Latinos are consistently more likely to see challenges as opportunities to grow and move ahead."

By a ratio of 2 to 1, most do not have affinity groups or other forums for interaction with other Latinos at work. But this has not stopped these professionals from integrating themselves into corporate culture.

The majority of Latino professionals in the United States have been in the country for more than a generation. Nearly 90 percent are fully-or-limited bilingual, both written and spoken, and not a single respondent cited a total lack of English skills.

Almost 40 percent said speaking Spanish is not important for their current jobs, but the majority believes that may change as Latino numbers continue to rise faster than any other segment of the population. (See also [Despite New Law, Spanish is Here to Stay](#).)

"The idea that there are Latinos in this country who are fully integrated, fully English proficient and working very diligently in high-powered professional jobs puts to rest the idea that these are 40 million of the same kind of

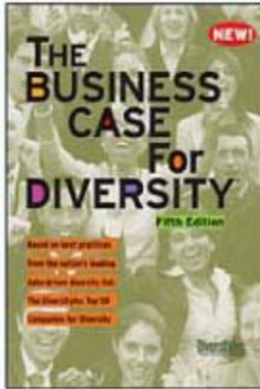


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folks," said Lisa Ramirez, director of Affiliate Member Services at the National Council of La Raza. "That's just not the case."

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