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•Companies' Policies Praised

Awards for Being Singles Friendly

On the face of it, the notion of a singles-friendly workplace may seem unnecessary. However, since a full 40 percent of the workforce in the United States is unmarried, it makes very good sense to consider the unique needs of this huge group, says the American Association for Single People.

To honor companies for having policies and practices that respect the needs of single and unmarried adults, the nonprofit organization, which is a leading provider of information about resources for unmarried and single Americans, recently cited 20 major corporations, including Xerox, Nationwide Insurance, Delta Air Lines, and Viacom. New York City-based Cendant, which provides travel and residential real estate services, was lauded for adding "marital status" to its equal employment opportunity statement, for tracking how many employees are unmarried, and for providing workers with information about groups that deal with issues of concern to singles. Cendant also was one of only six *Fortune* 500 companies to receive a Singles-Friendly Workplace Corporate Leadership award.

The Buzz

In addition to tracking unmarried employees and including marital status on EEO statements, the AASP would like to see work/family programs morphed into work/life programs, cafeteria-style health benefits that allow for domestic partners, blood relatives, or adult children. The group also advocates a change in the way pension benefits are distributed before retirement. Currently, if the beneficiary is not a spouse, the employer's contribution to the pension fund is forfeited back to the employer.

Knowing the ratio of married people to singles helps companies to appropriately revise employment practices and benefit programs to better address the needs of single people, says Thomas Coleman, AASP executive director.

The organization bases its best-practices awards on information obtained from published news stories and from responses it receives to its *Fortune* 500 Survey on Unmarried Employees.

—Eilene Zimmerman ■

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