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Diversity in Business

Diversity in Business: Bev Brown, Xcel Energy Inc.

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Jul 22, 2016, 5:00am CDT

Bev Brown oversees efforts to build and maintain a diverse workforce at Xcel Energy Inc., where she is director of inclusion and engagement.

Minneapolis-based Xcel's latest diversity initiative is the Legacy Project, an outreach program launched this summer. The project targets students at high schools such as Patrick Henry and North in Minneapolis and Harding Senior High School in St. Paul to encourage them to pursue positions at Xcel.

Company officials hope the program will attract a diverse set of job candidates as it seeks to address an upcoming wave of retirements, Brown said at the *Business Journal's* Diversity in Business Forum. Xcel is poised to lose about half its workforce to retirements over the next five years. The power utility is the 35th-largest employer in Minnesota, with 4,862 workers in the state, according to *Business Journal* research.

In addition to its recruiting program, the company also has internal diversity initiatives. It requires that employees take a four-hour course on diversity and inclusion. It also brings in speakers to talk about related topics.

On CEO leadership



NANCY KUEHN | MSPBJ

Bev Brown is the director of inclusion and engagement for Xcel Energy Inc.

“Our CEO believes in diversity and inclusion. In order for us to really have a diverse and inclusive environment, you have to start with the CEO. I think that’s pivotal in today’s environment. Every time our CEO is in front of our employees, he’s always talking about diversity and inclusion and he has goals for diversity in the workforce.”

On the Legacy Project

“One of the things we’re finding out is we’re not sexy to students. Working on electric wires, climbing poles and restoring service — they just don’t find that really interesting. We’re teaching them about how fun our company really is and how you can start out at \$20 an hour and you don’t need a college degree. We’re teaching them all about renewable energies. We hope they’ll consider going to Dakota County Technical College so that in 11 months they can start an entry-level job.”

On recruiting diverse talent

“We’re looking at our vendors and making sure we have diverse talent applying for our positions, and if we don’t, we work with different vendors to make sure that happens. We’re reaching out to certain colleges and focusing on groups like the National Society of Black Engineers and the Society of Women Engineers. And then within our talent-acquisition group, we have specific goals to bring in more talent. We have a scorecard on where we are on diversity and gender and with veterans, as well.”

Katharine Grayson

Staff Reporter

Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal

