

Microsoft leaders to see pay tied to diversity gains

SAN FRANCISCO: Microsoft on Thursday said it is looking to link some executive pay to team diversity gains as part of a drive to increase the number of women and minority workers.



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"We have the opportunity to create enduring, long-lasting change that can impact more than just our own interests, but those of society as a whole," Microsoft chief diversity and inclusion officer Gwen Houston said in a blog post.

"The challenge is real – so is the opportunity."

The blog post came as Microsoft provided a snapshot of the ethnic and gender makeup of its workforce as of end-September that showed what Houston described as "modest progress".

The number of women employed by Microsoft slipped by one percentage point from the previous year, to 25.8 percent, due in large part to a restructuring that resulted in closing some factories associated with its unsuccessful mobile-phone business. While the number of women working in production positions decreased, those working in technical and leadership jobs rose 0.6 percent, according to Houston.

She described hiring trends as optimistic, with about 28 percent of new employees during the past year being women, and nearly 22 percent of the hires in technical positions.

Numbers of African-American and Latino employees were each up marginally from the prior year to a respective 3.7 percent and 5.5 percent, according to Microsoft.

"Although these numbers suggest only slight gains, our hiring trends again give us some reason for optimism," Houston said.

To promote diversity in its ranks, Microsoft is dedicating resources to initiatives that include "tying senior leaders' compensation to diversity gains in their respective organisations" and internal training to prevent prejudices from colouring hiring decisions.

Lack of racial and gender diversity in the US technology industry has been a topic of intense debate and criticism in recent years.

Reports published regularly show a workplaces dominated by white or Asian men, typically coming from prestigious universities.

Source: AFP

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