

# Speaker highlights importance of diversity for future growth

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Jocelyn Kopac, a business consultant based in Johnson Creek, warns companies that failing to include diversity in their employee mix could spell trouble.

“Diversity is happening,” she said yesterday at Madison’s Forward Fest. She pointed out that by some estimates, the United States will no longer be a majority-white country by 2045.

“The youthful minorities right now are going to be the engine for future growth,” she said. “So if your business is not ready for that, you’re going to have a problem.”

Kopac pointed out that many would-be workers have unprecedented access to information about potential employers through services like Indeed or Glassdoor. If somebody leaves a business because they feel unsupported, unhappy or downright discriminated against, they can make their opinion known.

“We live in a digital age; where do you think they’re going to put it?” she said. “And then at that point, even though you could have fixed that situation, you didn’t, and now it’s on there for forever.”

One way companies can sidestep this consequence is by examining their key performance indicators, or KPIs, for bias. According to Kopac, KPIs used at the individual level can often be very biased, as they will seek a particular answer grounded in a certain culture.

As an example, she points out that she was raised on a farm, so if she was asked where milk comes from, she would say that it comes from a cow. But for someone raised on a city block, who's never even seen a cow in person, they might answer that milk comes from a store.

The point is that both are right answers, but KPIs can often set up one response as more correct than the other.

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