

Keeping The Peace

Could your company be the target of a racial or gender discrimination lawsuit? Smaller companies are not immune—and the risk is rising. The 1991 Civil Rights Act allows lawyers who prevail in employment bias cases to charge double their usual hourly rates and sometimes more. Not surprisingly, discrimination cases are on the increase.

One way to protect your company is to be proactive: Analyze your employees' attitudes, and if necessary, implement diversity training. Thomas Rundquist, President of Nova Counseling Associates Inc. in Big Rapids, Michigan, has developed a test that can evaluate a variety of biases (racial, ethnic, gender, religious and more). If a problem is identified, Nova can determine an appropriate corrective strategy.

Rundquist's test costs about a \$1 person, plus an administrative fee, which ranges from nominal to as much as \$3,000 if he handles the setup and evaluation. Rundquist, who adds, "This test is set up so a small company can test its people at a reasonable rate."

Beyond preventing discrimination and lawsuits, Rundquist says testing can also be a defense if you are sued. Test results on file will show whether you had problems and, if so, what you did to correct them. As an additional proactive measure, Rundquist recommends maintaining relationships with organizations that deal with diversity and discrimination issues.

To see a sample version of the survey log on to Nova's website at www.novamediainc.com.

Note: that the prices of taking the test have increased in the past 10 years.

ENTREPRENEUR MAY 1997 in Management Smart's section.