

## Mixing employees at a high level



**What does diversity management mean for a company with a worldwide footprint? Babette Mallon, program director of the Inspiration for Integration contest by de Baak, is curious about how the different cultures are brought together in such a company and speaks with Mirjam ten Cate, Diversity Manager at ING Group.**

Mirjam ten Cate, who used to work in marketing at ING, was fascinated by diversity management. During her four years as diversity manager at ING, she has introduced all kinds of projects that convey the appeal of diversity. "It's interesting to look at diversity from a marketing angle, and not just from a traditional HR angle. In my opinion, diversity is mainly about customers. The staff not only has to be customer oriented, they also have to reflect the diversity of our customers. Only then is diversity meaningful in organizations."

### **Raise people's awareness about diversity in a challenging way**

And when your organization wins the Diversity Award 2006, you know you're on the right track. ING was praised for its broad approach, the consistency of its policy and the good results. Mirjam: "In many other companies, the intention of giving diversity a lasting role often loses momentum. I've noticed in my daily activities that you have to be tenacious. The first step consists of raising awareness; only then can you start carrying out concrete actions. And you have to keep raising awareness, because people come and go and change positions, and everyone's too busy to take diversity into account. This means making a continuous effort to come up with new, challenging, high-profile projects that will impress employees."

### **Looking at what a different country's CEO is doing**

According to Mirjam, the Diversity Mentoring program was a successful project. Michel Tilmant, chairman of ING Group's board of directors, was one of the participants. "Forty of ING's international executives were assigned mentorship of one male and one female ING employee. To save costs, senior managers traveling to a country on business or for leisure were matched with employees in that country. All of the participants thought it was great. The senior managers came into contact with talented people from other regions, and the mentorees were able to watch what a senior manager does. It's a good way of getting inspiration: 'I can do that too' or 'our different specialties make us a good discussion partners'."