

10 MYTHS ABOUT LATINA WORKERS

1. "Latina workers lack initiative." Female Hispanics often don't do more than they are asked to do because they respect authority and usually do exactly as they're told - no more and no less. This is why it's crucial to be very specific about what they are supposed to do. They also don't like making suggestions that might imply that they are questioning their boss.
2. "Latina workers are always late." Punctuality is not one of the highest values in the Hispanic culture. In America we say, "Time is money" and punctuality is expected as a result. In Latin America, "Time is for building relationships." Also, many Latinas do not drive so much take public transportation or rely on others for a ride and do not always have complete control over their arrival time at work. Once at work they are happy to work a full eight hours so if you can be a bit flexible about the start time of these workers your productivity will not be affected.
3. "Latina workers are difficult to teach." Remember that the common American teaching method is verbal where we lecture to teach. However, less than one-third of all people prefer to learn by listening. Studies show that Hispanics tend to be highly kinesthetic preferring hands-on learning. There is a saying in the Hispanic community, "Don't tell me how to do something if you want me to learn - show me." Demonstrations and practical exercises are much more comfortable for Hispanics than lectures. Also don't forget that most Latin countries use the metric system so this could be the cause of some confusion. When Americans talk about "feet" Hispanics are thinking you're talking about shoe size.
4. "Latina workers are somewhat lazy." Nothing is further from the truth because these women work extremely hard working. However, the fact that they are very social and enjoy talking to one another in Spanish while they work or on break makes it sometimes difficult for untrained managers to know whether they are working or socializing. Actually, they are doing both because they "work to live" unlike Americans who "live to work".
5. "Latina workers are not very exacting in their work." Unless highly educated, precision is not a trait that is widely practiced in the Hispanic culture. If you want exactly 14 ounces of bleach mixed with a bucket of water you should explain why it is important and demonstrate how you want it measured. Otherwise they are likely to measure "by eye" if they do not understand the significance of precise measurement.
6. "Latina workers only like to socialize among themselves." In the Hispanic culture there is a clear division between managers and workers and it is never crossed. Having lunch with the boss is usually only done if the boss wants to have a frank discussion with the employee and the worker would never eat during this talk.
7. "Latina workers only like to socialize among themselves." To some degree this is true but not because they don't want to be sociable. Hispanics know that others may not feel

comfortable around them, especially when speaking Spanish, so they often do not include others in their gatherings so they won't feel uncomfortable. If you take interest in their language and culture they will be happy to share and soon will make you part of their group.

8. "It's hard to motivate Latina workers." Hispanics are generally very group oriented and don't like to be competitive. Awards like "Employee of the Month" are not highly motivating because it means that while they have won their fellow workers have lost. Incentives that encourage performance but don't disadvantage others are much more motivating to Latinas such as a day off for perfect attendance. Time off to spend with family is much more valued than money.

9. "Latina workers are not very serious about work." This can be a common impression since many female Hispanics love to laugh as a way to relieve tension and build rapport. However, once you get to know them you quickly discover a very serious and intellectual side to them. However, if you expect them to want to become managers this is a huge challenge mainly because of the "machismo" spirit they do not want to disrespect their husbands by earning more than they do.

10. "All Latinas should get along well." The Hispanic culture is incredibly diverse and you should not lump them together. Mexicans are different from Cubans who are not the same as Puerto Ricans who are unlike South or Central Americans and so on. There are even regional differences in the Spanish language and don't forget that Brazilians speak Portuguese, not Spanish. Get to know all of your workers as individuals who have unique needs and wants. Once you know these you can develop special motivational programs for each.

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