

The Economic Impact of DACA & Hispanic Engagement

By: Veronica Cool September 10, 2017



Attorney General Jeff Sessions recently announced the rescission of DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which provided a legal avenue for approximately 800,000 children to contribute to America. These Dreamers, as the DACA beneficiaries are known, were brought to the U.S. as children at the average age of 6 and have grown up in this country. Under DACA, they can apply for a renewable, two-year work permit that would protect them from deportation. Today, they are teachers, members of our military, social workers, entrepreneurs and more.

The work of my firm, Cool & Associates LLC, revolves predominantly around Hispanic engagement – the process of wooing, courting, retaining the 57 million Hispanics in the U.S., who spend about \$1.5 trillion annually, to buy your product, enroll in your schools, use your services and become your employees. We deal in training, messaging, marketing. In essence, teaching them about you and you about them. We work on building relationships based on trust and knowledge, as if the two sides are dating so they can eventually get married.

DACA dramatically impacts our work. And our community.

Who cares? Well, many do, including the CEOs and presidents of Microsoft, Starbucks, Google, Facebook, Wells Fargo, Apple and Amazon (to name a few).

"I'm a product of two uniquely American attributes: the ingenuity of American technology reaching me where I was growing up, fueling my dreams, and the enlightened immigration policy that allowed me to pursue my dreams," Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said in a statement.

Per a January 2017 Cato Institute study, the U.S. economy could lose about \$280 billion and face a cost of \$60 billion if these Dreamers were deported. Of those Dreamers, 97 percent are working or are in school; 16 percent have purchased their own home; and 65 percent have purchased their own car. More than 70 percent of Fortune 25 companies have DACA employees.

In Maryland, an estimated 9,000 individuals would be impacted. David Rosario owns a State Farm Insurance agency and has 4 DACA employees – more than half of his workforce, in which he has invested significant resources to hire and develop. These employees, in turn, serve Baltimore's fast-growing Hispanic population.

"DACA matters when you put a face to it, a name and a story," he said. "Every day, I have the privilege of working and struggling with these young adults. DACA gives them the opportunity to contribute, not live in the shadows. I have seen them shine, firsthand."

Steps to take

So what do you do as a business owner, leader, attorney, provider or executive director?

Determining the impact. This decision could have zero impact on you and your organization, at least superficially. But it's highly probably that an employee, a customer or student in your circle is now in limbo. Openly assess the impact to your employee morale, productivity, revenue – even your ability to open the doors tomorrow. Then develop a plan of action.

Recruiting talent. Acclimating to a new culture is daunting, whether a person is documented or not. Establishing trust is a lengthier process, fraught with fear and concern. We have experienced a dramatic decrease in Hispanics participating in job fairs, attending interviews or responding to job ads for fear of persecution. Again, these are folks who are legally permitted to reside and work in the U.S. You should continue posting your openings in diverse jobsites, partner with local community organizations and media publications to maintain your visibility within the market. Remember that Hispanics represent approximately 17 percent of the population.

Training. Hispanics wield a mighty fat purse, as evidenced by their increasing spending in entertainment, groceries, vehicles and retail. Train your staff and sales folks around cultural competence and communication.

Marketing and outreach. Begin, or continue, your community involvement and outreach, as well ensure your marketing efforts are inclusive, both in tone and mediums.

Acknowledging. Hispanic Heritage Month is NOW (Sept. 15 to Oct. 15). Leverage this opportunity to discuss the contributions of Hispanics in the arts, military, public service and science. Our toolkit (www.hispanictoolkit.com) is a viable resource for activities and messages.

Amigos, a gentle reminder, these 800,000 people came to our country as babies, they grew up as Americans. They attended school, work and pay taxes – they actually submitted, voluntarily, to pretty rigorous background and criminal checks to qualify for DACA. They are your clients, employees, patients, volunteers, patients and students. They are part our opportunity.

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