

## John Deere CEO Says U.S. Needs Lots More H-1Bs

Posted By [Rob Sanchez](#) On 24 June 2010 @ 9:40

John Deere [CEO Samuel Allen](#) held a [media event](#) at the National Press Club on June 23, 2010 in order to debut the results of a Global CEO survey that was sponsored by the [Council on Competitiveness](#).

Later in the day Allen was interviewed on Bloomberg TV by Margaret Brennan. [[see video](#)]. The Bloomberg site doesn't have a transcript of the video so I made one starting about 2:30 into the clip.

Allen said that John Deere needs talent and the way to get that commodity is to hire many more H-1Bs. He never said if Deere is considering hiring the multitudes of talented Americans who are seeking employment but he did imply that's a possibility — if enough money is invested in education so that eventually Americans will have what it takes to work at John Deere. Roughly translated from Bloomberg *businessweek* to regular English, Allen said that John Deere cannot be competitive if the company has to rely on homegrown talent in the United States. It's worth noting that Allen never said who's money should be invested to educate their new workforce so it's safe to assume he means government money instead of donations from John Deere.

As I will show after the transcript, Allen's arguments that John Deere can't find homegrown talent is totally undercut by the fact that all of their founders and most of their current executives were born in the USA and most of them are Caucasian.

Allen presented his case for the lack of talent in the U.S. by implying that Americans don't have enough education to work at John Deere. Ignoring the fact that people gain skills from education not talent, he failed to consider that the majority of the H-1Bs that he idolizes receive the same education as Americans because they all attend the same schools. The quality of the education is irrelevant unless he believes that people from Asia are intellectually superior to Americans [most H-1Bs are from India and China]. As is usually the case in the mainstream media the interviewer Margaret Brennan accepted what Allen said at face value.

MARGARET BRENNAN: You have been talking about keeping this country more competitive. When you say you need more access to talented workers in the U.S. does that mean you are asking for more H-1B visas? What are you asking for specifically?

SAMUEL ALLEN: Clearly! And this morning what we were talking about is my role as Chairman on the Council on Competitiveness. We've introduced a new manufacturing initiative where we will report to the government, at the end of 2011, what policies we believe are needed to insure that America remains competitive well into this century.

In the near term I can speak for our company [John Deere]. We believe we need access to the talented workers all over the world so we must have more access to these visas. At the same time we need to continue to make more and more investments in educating our own, which will help for the long term and make us more sustainable.

Biographies at the [John Deere](#) and [JD Heritage website](#) helped to research the demographics and backgrounds of the founders and leaders of Deere. Here is a partial tabulation:

- John Deere: *Caucasian* born in Rutland, Vermont, on February 7, 1804
- Charles Deere: *Caucasian*, born in Hancock, Addison County, Vermont, 1837
- William Butterworth: *Caucasian*, born in born in Maineville, Ohio, 1866

- Charles Deere Wiman: *Caucasian*, born in Addison County, Vt, 1837
- William Hewitt: *Caucasian*, born in San Francisco, CA, 1914
- Robert Hanson, *Caucasian*, East Moline, Illinois
- Hans Becherer, *Caucasian*, Michigan, 1935
- Board of Directors 1942: 17 members, all *Caucasian*
- Samuel Allen and the rest of the board: All *Caucasian* except for one African-American female.

Do any of you see a trend yet? **Hint:** If you missed it look at all italicized words.

There aren't many Asians in leadership positions at John Deere, which is evidence that their desire to hire H-1B visa holders is driven more by the need for cheap labor than talent. Deere doesn't have much in terms of [executive engineering positions](#) but there are a few:

- Randal Sergesketter: *Caucasian*, Engineering and Manufacturing Worldwide Construction & Forestry Division
- Barry Schaffter: *Caucasian*, Senior Vice President, Intelligent Solutions Group and Chief Information Officer Agriculture and Turf Division
- Klaus G. Hoehn: *Caucasian*, from Germany. Vice President, Advanced Technology and Engineering
- Bharat Vedak: Indian from India, agricultural engineer who graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology. Vedak is worthy of mention because he is one of the few non-Caucasian executives at Deere and he was educated in India. However, he started to work at Deere in 1974 which is almost two decades before the inception of the H-1B program. Vedak is not an example of the need for H-1B because he almost certainly came to the U.S. with an EB green card.
- Raj Kalathur: Vice President, native born Indian, educated in U.S., Sales & Marketing, China/India/South and East Asia/Sub-Saharan and South Africa Agriculture and Turf Division. As a student Kalathur probably came to the U.S. on an F-1 student visa. More than likely he got a green card but considering his 1996 start date at Deere he could have been an H-1B for awhile. I have no evidence to support this theory, but my best guess is that he has dual citizenship between the U.S. and India. Like Vedak, his example would provide a weak argument for the H-1B program.

**CONCLUSION:** John Deere's talented leaders (assuming executives have talent or skill) are mostly American born whites with a few foreign born immigrants that came to the U.S. by means of student visas and green cards. Most of the executives at Deere could use L-1 intra-company transfers to flit around the world to play golf so H-1B visas are unnecessary. When Deere hires H-1Bs it's primarily for lower level technical positions that tend to be for the bottom end of the talent and wage scales. In plain simple English, Deere just wants to import cheap labor. Another possibility is that Deere wants to use H-1B to comply with affirmative action. Neither reason is justification for abandoning American workers.

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