

[« Back to Article View](#)[Databases selected:](#) ProQuest Newspapers**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.****Wal-Mart's Peterson to Retire From Human-Resources Post***Ann Zimmerman. Wall Street Journal.* (Eastern edition). New York, N.Y.: Feb 23, 2004. pg. B.6

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Section: *Media & Marketing*

Publication title: Wall Street Journal. (Eastern edition). New York, N.Y.: Feb 23, 2004. pg. B.6

Source Type: Newspaper

ISSN/ISBN: 00999660

ProQuest document ID: 548719341

Text Word Count 326

Article URL: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:pqd&rft\\_val\\_fmt=ori:fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&rft\\_id=xri:pqd:did=000000548719341&svc\\_dat=xri:pqil:fmt=txt&req\\_dat=xri:pqil:pq\\_clntid=9269](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:pqd&rft_val_fmt=ori:fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&rft_id=xri:pqd:did=000000548719341&svc_dat=xri:pqil:fmt=txt&req_dat=xri:pqil:pq_clntid=9269)**Abstract** (Article Summary)

In recent years, Wal-Mart has been the target of several high- profile employment-related lawsuits. Numerous lawsuits allege Wal-Mart didn't pay thousands of workers for overtime. "There isn't a senior human-resources person in the country who isn't dealing with the challenges of wage and hour and diversity issues," Mr. [Coleman Peterson] said, adding, "but with 1.4 million associates, 1% of anything is going to go bump in the night."

**Full Text** (326 words)

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Wal-Mart Stores Inc. said Coleman Peterson is retiring as executive vice president of its human-resources division. No successor has been named.

The highest-ranking African-American at the world's largest retailer, Mr. Peterson will remain at Wal-Mart until April 30, but will continue to offer consulting services to the company. Mr. Peterson, 55 years old, said he always had planned to retire in his mid- to late 50s, and hopes to serve on corporate boards.

During Mr. Peterson's 10-year tenure at Wal-Mart, the Bentonville, Ark., retailer became the world's largest private employer, with about 1.4 million employees. Mr. Peterson created a retention program that helped cut yearly employee turnover to 50% from 70% and spearheaded a leadership development program for senior managers, among other things. He also recruited five of the seven top executives at the company.

But in recent years, Wal-Mart has been the target of several high- profile employment-related lawsuits. Numerous lawsuits allege Wal-Mart didn't pay thousands of workers for overtime. "There isn't a senior human-resources person in the country who isn't dealing with the challenges of wage and hour and diversity issues," Mr. Peterson said, adding, "but with 1.4 million associates, 1% of anything is going to go bump in the night."

A suit pending in San Francisco that seeks class-action status alleges the company discriminated against women in pay and promotions. According to internal Wal-Mart documents, Mr. Peterson repeatedly informed the company's board prior to the suit that Wal-Mart "significantly" lagged behind major retailers in the percentage of women holding managerial positions. Mr. Peterson attributed some of the company's personnel problems to its aggressive growth, which he said outstripped the impact of the company's diversity initiatives.

"But we know we have to invest even more and devote a greater level of attention to get to the levels we need to be," Mr. Peterson said. This week, for example, Wal-Mart hammered out a plan to tie managers' compensation to achieving specific

diversity goals, he said.

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