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Employer Guide to Recruiting a Diverse Workforce

Introduction

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) is an approach taken by organisations to building diverse teams and fostering an inclusive workplace. Research has demonstrated that there are many benefits for organisations, teams and customers, to having a diverse and inclusive workforce.

McKinsey has conducted numerous studies that demonstrate a direct correlation between diversity and better business outcomes. This research extensively and consistently bears out that diversity positively correlates to better financial performance.

A 2013 report by *Harvard Business Review* found that companies that had more diverse workforces were “45% more likely to report a growth in market share over the previous year and 70% more likely to report that the firm captured a new market”.

Furthermore, numerous psychology studies have shown that diverse teams are able to solve problems faster and are more innovative and creative.

This guide is designed to provide practical tips on how to attract, retain and empower a diverse workforce.

We’ll start with the basics around what is D&I and useful terminology, and then explain some reasons why organisations struggle to attract and recruit a diverse workforce. Finally, we provide practical tactics you can implement at your organisation to increase diversity and embrace inclusive recruitment practices.

Inclusive recruitment is ensuring that there are fair and equal opportunities for all candidates during the whole recruitment and selection process. It includes ensuring that each stage of the recruitment cycle is accessible and relevant to people from a diverse range of backgrounds in order to enhance diversity and ensure that there is no discrimination against any group of people.

Definitions

Before we get started, here are some key definitions around diversity & inclusion:

- An **ally** is an individual who uses their privilege to advocate on behalf of someone who does not have that same privilege. Anyone can be an ally— a white woman to women of colour, a cisgender person to transgender people, an able-bodied person to people with disabilities, and so on. **Allyship** is the process of acting as an ally. Because it is a process, rather than a conclusion, allyship requires ongoing learning, development, and effort from the privileged individual.
- **BIPOC** is an acronym for black, indigenous or person of colour.
- A **bias** is an inclination in favour of or against a particular person or group based on factors such as race, ethnicity, age, educational prestige, appearance, and so on. As a type of observational error, bias leads to unfair and ineffective outcomes when it affects decision-making. Bias can operate systematically where an individual's decision-making is persistently affected or on a systematic basis where a process or group dynamic produces biased decisions.
 - **Explicit biases (or conscious biases)** are inclinations about particular people or groups that an individual has and is aware of.
 - **Implicit biases (or unconscious biases)** are inclinations based on subconscious associations that influence our decisions without us being aware of them.
- **Diversity** is a condition of reflecting demographic differences in a group of people. Elements of diversity include age, caregiver status, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background. The term **diverse** describes differences present in a group; therefore, individuals cannot be diverse.
- **Inclusion** is the process of creating an environment that supports and encourages all employees, giving particular attention to and elevating the voices of those from underrepresented backgrounds.
 - **Conscious inclusion** is going beyond simply being aware of unconscious bias and being intentional about ensuring a diverse

range of qualified candidates are represented in the hiring process and promoted.

- **Inclusive Recruitment** is ensuring that all aspects of the recruitment process are fair for all groups of people.
- **Intersectionality** is a prism through which to understand the interconnectedness of social categorizations, which creates overlapping and compounding systems of oppression in society.
- **Person of colour** is primarily used to describe any person who is not considered white.
- **Privilege** in the context of diversity and inclusion is a set of unearned benefits enjoyed by people who belong to particular social groups — whiteness conveys privilege, maleness conveys privilege, ability conveys privilege, and so on.
- **Tokenism** is the practice of hiring or appointing a small number of people from underrepresented groups to deflect criticism that a team lacks diversity.
- **Underrepresented minorities** are groups of people who make up a smaller percentage in an organization than they do in the overall population. The term can be used to refer either to the groups themselves or to individuals who belong to those groups.

Challenges

One of the most common barriers that prevent organisations from achieving diversity is the hiring process. Candidates from underrepresented minority backgrounds are more likely to be disadvantaged during the recruitment and selection process.

Some barriers include:

Implicit bias

Implicit bias is still prevalent in the recruitment process, from screening candidates to interviewing and selecting final candidates. People prefer to hire similar or like-minded people instead of different people.

D&I is just a tagline

Organisations speak about the importance of diversity and fail to back it up with meaningful effective action. These are the organisations who posted 'the black square' at the height of the #blacklivesmatter protests but failed to implement any structural changes to improve outcomes for BIPOC employees, candidates or customers.

Homogenous workforce

Candidates from underrepresented minority backgrounds tend to be attracted to organisations that already have a diverse workforce, so having a homogenous workforce hinders the ability to achieve diversity more broadly.

Solutions

Achieving diversity and inclusion should not just be a 'tick in the box' exercise – it is an opportunity to provide your organisation with a competitive edge over competitors and help you better meet the needs of customers or clients.

There is no one-solution to achieving diversity, and best practise would involve adopting several measures. Below are some practical inclusive recruitment tactics you can implement at your organization to increase diversity through your recruitment.

Attraction

Job adverts using inclusive language

The language in job advertisements impacts who applies. Writing job descriptions with a D&I lens can have a significant positive effect on the rest of your hiring process. Example - Textio is a great tool for discovering gendered and exclusionary language in job descriptions.

Inclusive employers need to consider carefully whether any of the contents could be discouraging suitable applicants from applying. Ensure that your jobs are designed so that you are not excluding, even unintentionally, certain groups of people from applying. If you don't, then the pool of candidates you are selecting from will be limited.

Share your current D&I efforts

It's important to share your current diversity and inclusion efforts on your organisation's website. Candidates from underrepresented minority backgrounds care about an organisations' diversity and inclusion efforts, to determine whether that particular environment is one where they could be set up for success, both as a candidate and as a potential employee. Be honest about them wherever you are in your diversity & inclusion journey.

Company images

Representation matters for candidates from underrepresented minority groups. Ensure a diverse range of people are represented on your organisation's website and social media pages.

Sourcing

Diversify your applicant pipeline

Referrals are a common practise which typically share the demographic characteristics of your existing team. More organisations are taking a consciously inclusive approach and engaging niche diversity recruitment service providers to support them with their diversity recruitment objectives – such as CareerTrackers to find Indigenous interns and DivTal to find candidates from underrepresented minority groups.

Practice Positive action

Positive action refers to when an organisation takes action in order to try and address any inequalities, including those caused by previous discriminatory practices. Positive action may consist of actively encouraging a certain group of underrepresented people to apply for a role, i.e. supporting candidates from migrant backgrounds or female returners to work after a career break through offering returnships (high level internships). Positive action means that if you have two equally qualified and experienced candidates for a vacancy you may decide to select the candidate who is under-represented in the workplace.

Screening

Blind Screening

Studies have shown that resumes with traditionally non-white sounding names results in fewer call backs, even though the qualifications are exactly the same. Blind screening is the process in which personally identifiable information such as name, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, accessibility requirements get redacted from a candidate's application. The idea is that, because bias is so deeply ingrained in us humans, redacting personal information in the initial screening stages ensures that candidates are shortlisted based on skills and experience, irrespective of who they are.

This is controversial as many argue that rather than erasing identity, the social barriers that a candidate has had to overcome should be acknowledged.

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews allow for objective assessment of the skills required for the job and helps minimize bias and evaluative confusion in the hiring process.

Diverse Interview Panel

Having a diverse hiring committee helps bring diverse views in the recruitment process, helps people to check their biases and uncover blind spots and minimises affinity and confirmation bias.

Unconscious bias training

Unconscious bias awareness training allows employees to recognize that everyone possesses unconscious bias and helps them identify their own.

Evaluation

Seek candidate feedback

Capturing feedback in the recruitment process in the context of D&I, can help you understand the experience of candidates from underrepresented minority backgrounds and help you find blind spots in your hiring process. It could be an accessibility issue missed by an able-bodied person.

Track and Review conversation rates

Use an evidence-based approach to track and identify any trends and gaps within the end-to-end recruitment process. For example, review conversion rates (i.e. the percentage of resumes submitted that are moved to the phone screen) and intersect them with demographic data. If you find that underrepresented candidates are passing phone screens but not making it to first round interviews at a disproportionately higher rate, this will tell you that there might be some sort of bias in this particular stage that you will need to address.

Conclusion

In order for organisations to gain a competitive edge and thrive in a rapidly changing business and economic environment, employers need to have a diverse workforce with a wide variety of experience, skills, views and ideas.

Having a diverse talent pipeline will ensure that organisations stand the best chance of succeeding in the future marketplace.

Reviewing recruitment procedures to ensure that each stage is as inclusive as possible, is an essential step towards achieving diversity and inclusion goals.

Contact us for inclusive recruitment consulting.

DivTal

www.divtal.com

contact@divtal.com

