Virtual Working Group:

Strategies for Recruiting Diverse Talent

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February 24, 2022

As organizations respond to growing calls for racial justice and gender equality, many have committed to increasing the diversity of their workforce. However, successfully recruiting diverse talent is often challenging, particularly in a competitive labor market. In this working group, participants shared their strategies for recruiting diverse talent, and the discussion extended to other topics more directly related to diversity and inclusion (D&I) in general. Based on the discussion, we summarized some takeaways on: 1) the mistakes to avoid when creating a diverse and inclusive workplace and 2) what human resource practices facilitate recruitment of diverse talent.

DISCUSSION
TAKEAWAYS

Mistakes to Avoid When Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace

One overarching issue that was discussed was that when recruiting for diversity, a company must take a holistic approach and focus not only on recruiting diverse talent but also on creating an inclusive culture so that employees from different backgrounds flourish and are retained. Fostering an inclusive workplace is not just about hiring people from underrepresented groups; it is about creating a work environment where all employees are given development opportunities to climb the corporate ladder. Without development opportunities, minority employees are unlikely to feel genuinely included irrespective of what D&I efforts companies make.

Furthermore, companies often deploy strategies that support only select groups of minorities. While these companies may have done so to ensure the underrepresented groups have equal opportunity, other "reasonably represented" minority groups that are not supported by the companies' strategies may feel neglected and even discriminated against in the workplace, resulting in turnover. Hence, when devising a strategy for recruiting and retaining diverse workforce, companies should ensure that the new strategy supports all employees, even those already adequately represented.

What Human Resource Practices Facilitate Recruitment of Diverse Talent?

The participants shared what human resource practices they implemented to recruit diverse talent.

1. Job Descriptions

Participants stressed that, in order to effectively attract diverse applicants, companies have to ensure that they use inclusive job descriptions and advertisements. Masculine wording in job descriptions and advertisements can make women feel they do not fit well with the job and discourage them from applying. In addition, including mention of certain benefits like parental leave and benefits for domestic partners can increase interest from "super star" or "best and brightest" but discourages

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18
participants
from
13
C A H R S Companies:

Accenture
American Express
Boeing
CNH Industrial
General Electric
Johnson Controls
Johnson & Johnson
McDonald's
Medtronic
Otis
Polaris
Samsung Electronics America
Terex

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women and people of color from applying, whereas development-oriented language such as "highly motivated" and "passionate learner" encourages them. This is due to women and people of color looking for signs that the organization will provide development opportunities. Having a limited number of job requirements (whether they be required or preferred) was also suggested to increase the application rate of women. One of the participants indicated that men were often found to apply for a job irrespective of the number of job requirements they satisfied. On the contrary, women were often reluctant to apply for a job unless they satisfied about 80-90% of the job requirements.

2. Inclusive Interviewing

Participants shared that one way to make sure that participants from underrepresented backgrounds do not self-select out of the recruitment process at the interview stage was to make sure that the interview panel was diverse. They suggested that doing so helps minority applicants experience inclusion during the interview process and thereby increases their likeliness of accepting job offers.

3. Training Recruiters and Interviewers

Participants discussed training programs focused on reducing unconscious biases of recruitment and selection teams. Recruitment and selection teams often have unconscious biases toward minority applicants. Several participants stated that, because of these biases, recruitment teams sometimes discourage underrepresented individuals from applying, and selection teams sometimes unduly hire non-minority applicants when all else is equal.

4. External Branding/Messaging

To recruit diverse talent, companies discussed the importance of communicating and emphasizing their D&I efforts and achievements through various channels, including job advertisements, company web pages, and social media. Four types of communication practices were identified. First, there were internal bottom-up communication practices. Companies used these practices to receive feedback from employees on how they should brand their D&I efforts and how D&I performance can be improved. Second, there were internal top-down communication practices. Top managers communicated through these practices to let potential employees be aware that D&I is strongly emphasized and supported in the workplace, what achievements they have made regarding D&I, and what D&I goals they are attempting to accomplish. Third, there were internal lateral communications. At the employee level, minority members shared real experiences of how their company's D&I effort has supported them and made them feel accepted in the workplace. At the manager level, members had transparent conversations about the problems they faced in improving D&I performance and how those problems could be resolved. Fourth, there were external communications with minority groups. Participants explicitly communicated their D&I efforts and achievements to these groups. One participant also used a more implicit method of underrepresented groups. Specifically, the company made charitable giving to minority groups in the community to signify that it is making significant devotions to its underrepresented employees.

Participants emphasized the importance of being genuine in messaging around a company's diversity efforts and representation of different groups within the company. One participant mentioned that when their

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company struggled to meet D&I goals, they were transparent about this but emphasized that they continued to make D&I a priority.

5. **Incentives**

Participants provided various forms of incentives and bonuses to employees to encourage recruitment of diverse talent. For example, one of the participants offered incentives to executive-level managers that were rewarded when a certain number of racial and gender minorities were hired. In another company, each department gave bonuses to employees who referred someone dissimilar from the majority of the department's members (e.g., referring an Asian female to a department highly populated with White males). The participants indicated that the incentives and bonuses significantly diversified their talent pools.

6. **Accountability and Feedback from Employee Resource Groups**

To hold themselves accountable, participants regularly evaluated whether they were successful in recruiting diverse talent and meeting their goals. Participants also mentioned that they often both relied on Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to help with recruiting diverse talent and also sought feedback from ERGs about their diversity recruiting strategies. One participant mentioned that if the ERGs were not excited about bringing in more minority employees to the company, this was a sign that the organization needed to change its strategies and deal with unresolved issues related to inclusion.