

Inclusive Recruitment

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Companies that have implemented intentional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies and strategies have not only a great and inclusive corporate culture, but also increased employee retention, productivity, quality of decision making – all of which positively impact the bottom-line.

Building a strong, diverse, and inclusive culture starts with recruitment, the beginning of the employee life cycle.

What does it mean to be inclusive in recruitment? Why is inclusive recruitment important? How can we proactively implement inclusive recruitment practices? Read on to find out how inclusive recruitment can not only strengthen your DEI Policies but also be a powerful tool that helps shape the culture, bottom line and perceived value of a company.

What is inclusive recruitment?

While it seems like machines are replacing most jobs, people continue to be an organization's most valuable asset. There is no denying that the quality of a company's human resources, and their active engagement, continues to drive business performance. [Research from Gallup](#) has shown that disengaged employees cost companies \$450-to-\$550 billion in lost productivity annually. Given this, recruitment is that first step to attracting bright and diverse talent, encouraging not only diversity but also increased engagement and inclusiveness.

Inclusive recruitment recognizes that diverse talent exists and employs practical, intentional tools to not only attract, but also level the playing field for this talent and in the process removes unconscious biases and discriminations that plague traditional recruitment processes. Inclusive recruitment ensures that candidates are hired based on their skills, abilities, and expertise, and not based on their characteristics or backgrounds.

Why is inclusive recruitment important?

It's no surprise that hiring a diverse workforce that brings in potentially diverse thought leadership is critical in today's competitive business landscape. While companies are bound by law to treat every candidate equally, what is also important for businesses is the impact that their corporate culture has on the branding of their organization. A company whose culture emphasizes diversity and inclusion signals greater acceptance of diverse talent, thereby attracting a larger, more diverse talent pool, all of which positively impact not only the company's bottom-line, but also, its reputation. According to [Pew Research Center](#), millennials are the largest generation in the US workforce and in a research by the [Institute for Public Relations](#), 47% of millennials considered a diverse and inclusive company to be an important factor in their job search. Inclusive recruitment is therefore at the core of companies focused on hiring a diverse and inclusive workforce. It sets the tone and lays the foundation for all the other diversity initiatives. Diversity without inclusion is meaningless, and on the same breadth recruitment practices that are not inclusive cannot sustain a DEI focused corporate culture.

How to implement inclusive recruitment practices?

It is no news that traditional hiring processes are biased and, in some ways, unfair. Science says (and research proves) that the human decision-making process is not immune to implicit biases. Traditional hiring decisions are therefore influenced by these inherent human biases, where, hiring decisions are influenced by judgements on candidates based solely on personal preferences and first impressions of the hiring manager(s). How can we overcome these unconscious biases and make recruitment be inclusive? Here are some pointers:

1. Start with the Job Description

A well-written job description often presents the best opportunity to make a strong first impression. Carefully crafted job descriptions are inclusive, e.g.:

- explicitly highlighting a company's commitment to diversity and inclusion
- using gender-neutral language,
- emphasizing job experience, roles, and responsibilities instead of requirements, academic and professional degrees,
- keeping it simple and avoiding business and other jargon

Inclusive job descriptions can give a positive impression of a company's commitment to diversity and inclusion and attract attention from people of diverse backgrounds to apply for the open positions with confidence. Having an inclusive job description casts the net wider, encouraging people from diverse backgrounds that normally would not respond, to take that crucial first step of applying to open positions

2. Advertise with Diversity Specific Organizations

Intentionally reaching out to organizations that cater to diverse populations is one of the best ways to reach an audience that may otherwise be underserved. Professional Diversity centered organizations are in the business of actively engaging with the community they represent and therefore are in the best positions to quickly suggest candidates or present resumes of candidates best suited to the position. Actively engaging with these organizations and building and maintaining strong relationships helps build easy access to a diverse talent pool.

3. Create a Diversified Interview Panel

Having representation on the interview panel of people from different backgrounds sends the right signal to the candidates about the company's commitment towards diversity and inclusion. Having a diverse representation also is an effective means to tackle biases that can otherwise easily creep into the interview process.

In addition, training and educating hiring managers on diversity and inclusion tools and techniques, is an effective way to ensure that there is a conscious effort being made at removing unconscious biases from the interview process. Unconscious bias creeps in when you judge a candidate based on criteria that are not relevant to the job. Encouraging and perhaps enforcing unconscious bias training for all people who oversee the hiring decision, will help bring focus to an issue that often plagues traditional recruitment.

4. Focus on the Interview

The actual interview is an important part of the recruitment process, where the candidate gets a good first taste of the company's inclusive recruitment practices as they get to talk to the 'people in charge', so, make it count. Develop carefully planned and thought-out questions that reinforces commitment to diversity and inclusion. Avoid questions that are traditionally associated with specific demographic groups and screen the language to correct for any unintended references. For example, asking the candidate's family situation, questions related to upbringing, age, religious beliefs or political affiliations, whether a female candidate has children or expects to have children. In other words, it is best to avoid questions related to personal choices and characteristics or questions that do not reflect or are unrelated to the candidate's ability to perform and succeed in the role.

5. Leverage the use of Technology

Several Human Resource Management Systems (HRMS) powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) are widely available and help screen candidates objectively using tools and technologies that help overcome the shortcomings of human bias in resume screening. In addition, these systems also help collect and track demographic data that provide insights into the company's hiring processes and create scores and benchmarks that helps a company measure and stay on track with their diversity goals. Take a look at [g2.com](https://www.g2.com) which reports, reviews and compares recruitment softwares that are designed to improve diversity in the hiring process and eliminate unconscious bias in recruitment.

However, one must remember that AI technology is not always error free. As AI powered the system maybe, human error can still introduce biases into the AI algorithms. As such, it is imperative that companies don't blindly adopt technology, but continue to actively monitor and measure the performance of their AI powered tools. The ability to 'fix' and adapt the available tools and techniques is vital to the successful use of technology to reduce human bias.

6. Track and Measure

As the adage goes – “what gets measured gets managed.” DEI efforts are often a marathon and not a sprint, so it is important to recognize that it can take time to see the positive results of having a robust inclusive recruitment program. However, setting up and creating some measurable metrics and KPIs are key. Below are some examples of measurable metrics.

- Company demographics
- Candidate feedback and experience
- Employee performance and evaluation among diverse groups
- Employee retention rates among diverse groups

Upheaving old, established, traditional recruitment processes is no easy task. It is an uphill battle. However, one must start somewhere if change must happen. Our society reflects diversity in people from different religions, races, ethnicities, gender identities and abilities, among others. The employee composition of companies should reflect this diversity as well, and the starting point is having an inclusive recruitment strategy! Inclusive recruitment strategies have several benefits from not only hiring diverse talent, but also encouraging innovation and creativity that the diverse talent brings to problem solving and decision making. Companies that have embraced this have reaped rich financial rewards – [PWCs 18th Annual Global CEO Survey](#) showed that 85% of the CEOs whose companies have a diversity and inclusiveness strategy reported better bottom lines. Many small steps can help get to the finish line, but it is important not to stop and to keep moving forward.

Christabel James is a Director with RiskSpan Inc. and has taken a leading role within RiskSpan as an innovator who is automating a segment of housing finance that has traditionally been mired in redundant, manual processes. She has over 15 years of experience in the Structured Finance Industry in varied capacities from Model Validation, Financial Modeling, Data, Cashflow, Pricing and System Analysis, Project Management and Valuation. She has extensive knowledge on the workings of different structured assets including CDOs, Agency REMICs, RMBS and CLOS among others. She is considered a SME in the reverse engineering of structured assets and has worked with several Issuers, Trustees and their Legal in understanding, validating and interpreting the legal deal disclosure documents as it relates to different types of structured assets. In the recent past, she has been heavily engaged in the building of Automated Systems, Tools and Processes to transform the mortgage industry and contribute to client success in an evolving tech world. Her contribution to a patent on 'Automatic Document Generation Systems and Methods' (awarded in January 2021) is the most tangible recent example of this. Christabel is also the recipient of HousingWire's Rising Star award, presented in June 2021 (<https://bit.ly/3idx8nx>). In early 2021, Christabel was additionally tasked with formally launching and leading DEI initiatives at RiskSpan and works closely with RiskSpan's leadership and executive team in initiating and building DEI strategies and initiatives from the ground up!