JazzHR

The Complete Guide to Building an Inclusive Recruitment Process

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Have you hired a team of diverse voices, opinions, and talents? For many businesses, the real answer isn't as positive as they might hope. While nearly 70 percent of executives think that diversity and inclusion are important, only 13 percent of them track leadership discussions surrounding the subject.

Building a diverse, inclusive workforce and culture starts with your recruitment process. Prioritizing candidate diversity and an equitable experience offers a variety of benefits and starts with revisiting your existing processes. Use this guide to ensure inclusivity is at the core of your hiring.

The benefits of an inclusive recruitment process

The recruitment process has, historically, been far from inclusive. Building a process that attracts a diverse workforce benefits everything from an organization's company culture to its bottom line, but only around 50 percent of employers have concrete diversity programs in place.

With so many businesses yet to adequately open their doors to all candidates, there is a massive amount of talent available to those HR teams willing to put in the work. By creating an inclusive recruitment process for your organization, you won't just be making a difference internally. You'll be improving the experience for candidates by creating a culture that affords each with the equity and sense of belonging that they deserve. Share the lessons you've learned, and you'll further make a change by setting the example for partner organizations and even competitors.

By creating a more inclusive recruitment program, you'll be:

35 percent more likely to outperform competitors

Able to **innovate more effectively**

Able to **solve problems faster**

It's not just good business sense – it's the **right thing to do**.

Inclusive job descriptions

Aside from your career page, your job descriptions represent the beginning of the candidate-facing recruitment process. An inclusive posting—one that attracts candidates from all backgrounds—can widen your talent pool. Here's how to craft descriptions that act as bridges, not hurdles.

Reconsider requirements

One of the simplest ways to attract more diverse candidates is to take a second look at what you're asking of them. Your dream candidate may have five years of industry-specific experience, but by focusing only on this ideal, you'll miss out on countless others from different backgrounds. Though they may not have exactly 5 years of the same experience, candidates who fall outside of your dream profile can be just as capable and, more importantly, bring new perspectives to the table.

Think creatively about what the actual requirements of the position are. Are the 'X years of experience' really necessary, or are they a nice-to-have? Are you expecting too much of candidates instead of building an onboarding process that will prepare them for the role? This especially applies to entry-level positions – if it can be learned on the job, consider leaving it out of the description. In doing so, you'll reduce the risk of alienating perfectly capable employees with diverse skills.

Write for a broad audience

Your job description is an opportunity for potential employees to understand your values and approach to inclusivity. Make sure you get it right by eliminating language that could be seen to cater to an individual group. At a minimum, this means removing gender-specific language. Take a look at past job descriptions and scan them for exclusive language, then use this as a guide for future efforts. If the role is advertised with gender-specific pronouns or is clearly written with one type of person in mind, it'll turn anyone outside of that group away.

Writing an inclusive description doesn't end there, though. Terms that may *seem* neutral can have gendered associations that give applicants the wrong idea. Sometimes, it's adjectives that are seen as 'masculine' that cause problems. Here's a useful list of words to avoid along with a set of more inclusive alternatives.

Keep in mind that terms your team may be familiar with could be completely alien to those outside of the business, as well. Comb through your description for internal slang and acronyms, replacing them with clearer descriptions.

Make your commitment clear

If there are images on your careers page or accompanying your job description, do they represent your commitment to diversity? Equally, do you clearly communicate your values and your dedication to diversity, equity and inclusion? Candidates increasingly want to know where companies stand on important issues before applying to work with them. Be sure to clearly state your company's unique mission in order to remove another potential barrier to diversity.

Advertising the role

Writing inclusive descriptions is only one part of the equation. If you're interested in creating a truly inclusive process and attracting applicants from different backgrounds, consider where you're advertising. Places like elite universities may produce talented candidates, but, like many institutions, they struggle with diversity. If your sourcing strategies are too narrow and you only advertise in spaces that certain candidates will access, you'll only get one type of candidate.

Popular job boards are one of the most effective ways to get the word out about your vacancies, but they're not the only option available. Think about adding to your advertising efforts rather than subtracting to reach a wider audience. That might mean using job boards you've overlooked in the past, reaching out to social media groups or building a presence at institutions beyond the Ivy League.

Advertising positions on social media is also a great way to target candidates that you haven't seen applying, but it's just the start. Highlight your commitment to inclusive hiring by seeking out and making use of resources like:

- America's Job Exchange
- JobTarget
- RetroTax
- Career.Place
- Bryq
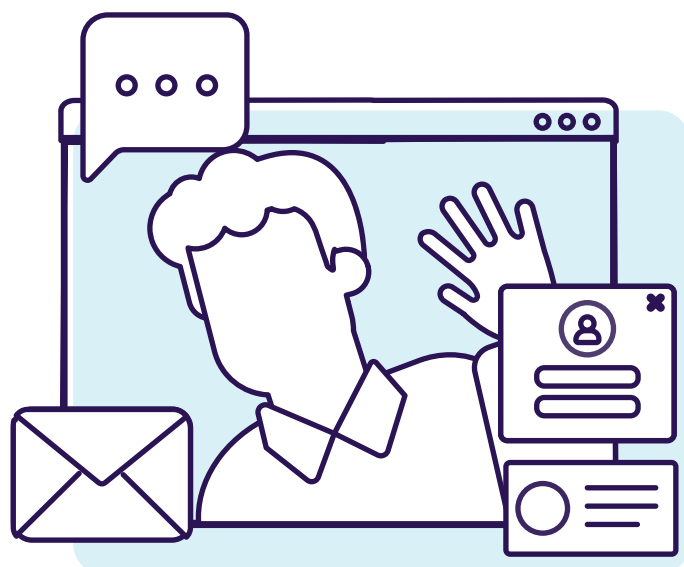
Screening and interviewing

Once you've attracted a wider range of applicants, it's even more crucial to have an effective screening process in place in order to evaluate your candidate pool objectively. This is where the potential for bias – conscious or unconscious – can slip into decision-making and undo all that good work you did to attract diverse candidates.

The job interview is also a chance for applicants to decide whether or not they'd like to work with *you*. It's vital to take the following into account ahead of time:

It's not a one-person job

Screening resumes should be a group effort among the members of your hiring team And ideally, your team should be made up of diverse team members. When people with varied perspectives filter candidates, the group can challenge things like confirmation and affinity bias. Scoring applications against objective criteria helps to eliminate bias and encourage merit-based shortlisting

If you've done the work to create an inclusive company culture, your hiring team should feel they can openly discuss biases with one another. If you've yet to do this work, this article is a good place to look for initial advice.
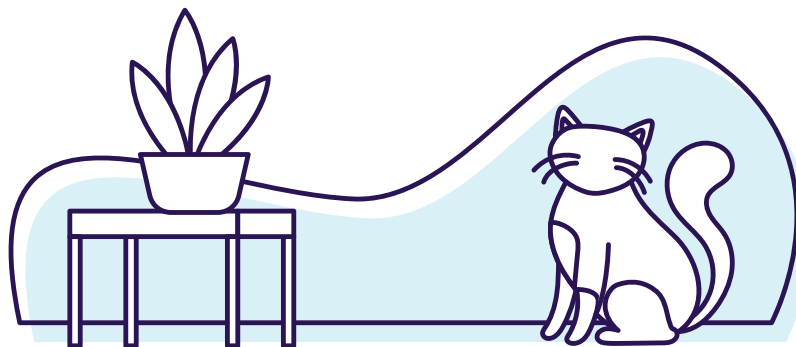
Encouraging objectivity

In addition to your typical screening process, consider making a multi-tier approach part of your organization's recruitment policy. For example, try making it a requirement that each hiring team member review a candidate's resume and preliminary Q&A before the interview itself. By making this first-tier of screening a must, your organization will be able to more easily track consistent assessment and ensure each candidate receives the same level of attention.

Inclusive interviewing

93 percent of Americans say that job interviews have, at some point, given them anxiety. It's an intimidating-enough situation as it is, but if you're not presenting your organization as inclusive, it can be even worse for minority groups. Ensuring that every candidate feels they are welcomed and on a level playing-field is essential. A two-stage interview process is one way to address this with 'blind' phone interviews taking place before an in-person meeting.

Screen questions for exclusive language, ensure that candidates are assessed on their answers in the same way, and diversify your interview team if possible. Like shortlisting, it'll help to counter bias if there's more than one person involved. Making your diversity and inclusivity policies clear at the interview stage is another means of communicating the organization's commitment to equity.

If a candidate is disabled, it goes without saying that any necessary accommodations should be made. If, for example, an applicant is hard-of-hearing, ensure that you offer an interpreter and enough time to properly conduct a full interview. Building accessibility should be communicated ahead of time, as well.

Welcoming new hires

With 20 percent of employee turnover taking place within the first 45 days, a thoughtful onboarding process that makes each new hire feeling included is essential. Ensure that new hires are met with a clear runway into their role by revisiting your process, keeping company culture at the front of your mind. Check out our guide to employee onboarding here.

Reiterate your organization's diversity and inclusion policies early on to reinforce your approach to each new hire. If your company culture is inclusive, it should be a relatively smooth transition for staff from different backgrounds to become engaged. Opportunities to do so should also be presented early on. A 'buddy system' in which new hires are paired with existing employees is a good way to ensure they have a point-of-contact, and that they are encouraged to engage with colleagues.

Next steps: Company culture

Inclusive recruitment is an important first step for employers committed to diversity, but it's not the full story. Your company culture must support the same inclusive values presented in your recruitment process in order to retain the diverse workforce you've built. Hiring a diverse workforce is one thing; retaining one is another.

There are further opportunities to address a historic lack of diversity in your organization or industry-at-large, as well. Internships and work experience programs targeted at diverse groups provide a pipeline of internal candidates, and can help in efforts to offset past exclusions.

In following the steps in this guide, you'll make a significant and worthwhile investment in the future of your business and in society at large. Share your journey with your social media audience, your clients, and your competitors to present a transparent view of your organization. Encouraging others to evaluate their recruitment process can be valuable, too.

The Inclusive Recruitment Process Checklist

Use our printable checklist to make sure you're taking the necessary steps towards inclusivity in hiring:

Job description	Completed
Revisit the criteria you're requesting of applicants. Are you including unnecessary or prohibitive requirements?	
Remove gender-specific pronouns and traditionally gendered adjectives from your job description.	
Write your description in a clear, easy-to-understand way, free from company slang or jargon.	
Highlight your commitment to diversity and inclusion in your job description and in any advertising material that accompanies it.	
Advertising	
Diversify your candidate sourcing strategy to reach a broader set of candidates. Consider diversity-specific distribution channels like America's Job Exchange and JobTarget.	
If you are attending university job fairs, consider broadening your search beyond elite institutions.	
Post your open roles on social media, in groups that reach those candidates you're not currently catering to.	
Screening and interviewing	
Diversify your shortlisting and interviewing teams to ensure that decision-making doesn't fall on one person.	
Explore opportunities for bias awareness training, and identify staff that are willing to volunteer themselves for it.	
Implement a multi-tiered method of assessment, requiring each member of the hiring team to review resumes and basic information before interviews take place.	
Screen your interview questions for language that could exclude certain groups.	
Make your diversity and inclusivity policies clear at the interview stage.	
Onboarding	
Ensure that your onboarding process is thorough, with a clear set of steps for all new hires to take.	
Consider pairing new hires with a 'buddy' to help them engage with colleagues and your company culture.	