

WHITEPAPER: Strategies for Diversifying Your Workplace

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**A Guide for  
HR Professionals  
and Employers**

A publication from

 **localjobnetwork**

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Diversifying your workplace does not have to be complicated and we've provided some strategies to help get you started. Every employer approaches diversity and inclusion differently, so feel free to expand on our suggestions with successful practices you might already have in place.

## 1. Make Job Advertisements Inclusive

One major area that will impact the diversification of your workforce is in the language you're using for your job ads and postings. It all starts with determining what requirements are listed for the position you post. Are all of these *actually* requirements? Many times, a job requires a decent amount of "must-haves" and a lot of "nice-to-haves." A long list often scares off quality job seekers because they believe they can't fulfill every item.

Studies show that white males apply to a position if they only meet about 60% of the qualifications. Women and individuals from non-white races tend to only apply when they feel closer to 100% qualification. If there are tasks that are only done a handful of times throughout the year, is it really necessary for a potential employee to be an expert in that?

Similarly, keep in mind applicants and candidates who may have a disability. There may always be the possibility of an employee being asked to lift a heavy item or use their legs, arms or bodies in different ways. However, does a marketing position, for example, truly *require* a person to perform physical tasks without assistance from anyone in order to be successful in the position?

Veterans might also be interested in your positions. Not every job has an exact equivalent to draw from military experience, but if you want to help them feel included, look for ways to match a transferrable skill from military work to civilian work. Maybe there's a computer program your company and the military both use, or you have a security position that mirrors military tasks. Can you create an equivalent in experience when nothing specifically applies? A veteran might not have management experience, but they may have led a team in the field and have skills necessary to succeed.

You'll want to do your best to avoid words that are more specific to a gender or cultural group. Numerous studies and research show that women are less likely to apply when aggressive language or perceived masculinity is conveyed. For example, words like "assertive," "outspoken," and "analytical" tend to dissuade females. Culturally, terms that appear to exclude minority cultures or religious/political views could cause hesitation. It's best to think about your job descriptions from a generic point of view.

Lastly, if you're listing benefits for the potential employee (which you should), try to cover all the applicable bases. College graduates might have different needs and desires than a middle-aged family person. You never know what discourages someone great from applying.

## 2. Eliminate Unconscious Bias in Candidate Screening

The next major concern with a lack of diversity in hiring comes from unconscious bias, particularly in reviewing resumes or screening in other ways. Resumes can tell you plenty about the person applying aside from their skills and experience – or at least give you a chance to subconsciously discriminate based on stereotypes or other perceptions. You'd be best served to remove or cover names and addresses on initial resumes. Those can give you clues of the

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person's gender, ethnicity, or cultural background, which may cause you to perceive the details of their resume differently. The focus should only be on what the applicant brings in terms of skills, qualifications, and experience.

Part of the problem is that our perceptions may not fit reality anyway. Last names can be misleading due to marriage, adoption, or other factors where a person who identifies as white has a traditional Hispanic name like Gomez. Additionally, two people of the same race or ethnicity or any other similarity can have completely different upbringings that impact them. You can't judge someone's experiences based on these types of things. Even socioeconomically – if two people have the same degree, and one is from a poverty-stricken area and one is from an affluent area, which is “better?” There are arguments on both sides so it's best to avoid such potential biases.

Social media is another area of concern in screening. You aren't going to avoid using it, but you must be extremely cautious because it can easily create unconscious bias. Anything you find cannot be “unseen” and may affect your judgement. Everyone involved in recruiting should fully understand they are not to evaluate anyone based on their appearances or photos/information unrelated to their career or the company/position you're hiring for.

Facebook offers mostly personal information. While it is true that individuals are putting these photos and comments online willingly, there is a gray area when using this knowledge to make employment decisions. Some types of photos and information may actually be protected legally, and using said information in a hiring decision could create major problems for your company.

Fortunately, LinkedIn is specifically designed for professional information and networking. What people put here should be well thought out. However, you may still have perceptions based on how one looks, where they are from, or even what school they attended. It's important to stick to items that are relevant to the skills and experience necessary for the position you are looking to fill.

### **3. Get Everyone On Board – Sourcers, Recruiters, Managers**

To truly embrace and succeed with your diversity and inclusion strategy, everyone needs to be on the same page. Every level involved with hiring needs to be considered.

Encourage your sourcers to highlight your diversity in outreach efforts and on any resources they may use. Promote your company diversity in all of your branding, online content, and social media. Share pictures of your staff at work and volunteering events. Don't shy away from promoting areas of your company benefiting from diversity initiatives, such as female leadership or a diverse technology team.

Recruiters can also develop a pipeline of diverse candidates by being active in areas outside of their normal recruitment groups. They should get involved in a variety of professional organizations throughout their town or city – there are groups for just about every ethnicity and cultural group. Don't forget about veterans, LGBTQ, or individuals with disabilities either.

Teach your recruiters how to spot stereotypes and avoid them while recruiting. Going back to some of the points made in #2, avoid using a person's name or location, and instead focus on their professional experience. Train them to hone in on the skills and experience specific to the job you are hiring for.

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Finally, educate your hiring managers on their role in the process. They can review the hiring processes and identify problem areas. If they notice certain undesirable trends in hiring, they can take steps to correct them. For example, if more men than women are being hired, they can review the hiring process to see what might be happening. Hiring managers can identify the gaps between a large, diverse applicant pool that seems to yield only certain kinds of hires. A successful diversity and inclusion strategy means hiring qualified applicants from all walks of life!

### **Diversity Solutions**

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- ✓ Targeted Outreach: Send your jobs to specific organizations
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### **References**

<https://hbr.org/2014/08/why-women-dont-apply-for-jobs-unless-theyre-100-qualified>