

creating effective job ads



for attracting
diverse talent.



in building a diverse
workforce,

mind the words in
your job descriptions.

Building a diverse and inclusive workforce is a socially desirable goal, but there is an even more compelling reason why your company needs a strategy to support it: the business advantages.

Studies have shown that companies with a more diverse and inclusive workforce tend to outperform their peers. These leading businesses innovate more quickly, better reflect the values of customers and are more adept at thinking outside the box. It's clear that having various voices and viewpoints – related to gender, racial, age or gender diversity – can contribute a lot to organizational success.



While your business may have a robust strategy to create a diverse and inclusive workplace culture, there are many challenges to doing so. Institutional biases, ingrained discriminatory practices, poorly trained managers and other factors can prevent you from achieving the workforce you strive for. It takes a concerted effort starting from the C-suite on down to correct legacy practices and processes that impede your company's overarching goals.

One of these barriers is failure to attract a diverse slate of candidates, which can be the result of a poorly constructed job description. Researchers from the University of Waterloo in Canada and Duke University in the U.S. **found evidence** that wording in job ads can sustain gender inequality at a company. Published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, their research found that gendered wording (those with masculine and feminine themes) can often reinforce institutional biases and maintain workforce inequality. For instance, words such as 'leader,' 'competitive' and 'dominant' will more likely attract male applicants while other terms such as 'support,' 'understand' and 'interpersonal' appeal to female candidates. You don't want a candidate to turn away because the language in the job description did not persuade them to apply.

leader support
dominant
interpersonal competitive
understand



According to [CIO](#), eliminating gender-bias language in a job description can have a huge impact on time to fill. Quoting Kiernan Snyder, the CEO of [Textio](#), a machine learning platform that augments the writing of job ads, the CIO publication reported that Textio's analysis of 50 million job postings revealed that descriptions void of gendered language resulted in a two-week reduction in time to fill.

Another way in which a seemingly innocuous description may discourage applicants is mandating a degree or certificate rather than asking about the skills needed to perform the job. According to [Medium](#), just 5% of computer science degree graduates are of African heritage and 60% of Americans don't have a college degree. Those without degrees, however, shouldn't automatically be turned away since there are many who possess programming skills but have never graduated (think Microsoft's Bill Gates).

Furthermore, corporate jargon can also intimidate younger applicants from applying for a role, according to LinkedIn citing [a study conducted by Business in the Community \(BITC\)](#), a business-led nonprofit based in London. The survey of young job candidates (ages 16 to 24) found one-third were discouraged from applying because the job postings contained language they didn't understand. Terms such as 'KPIs' and 'procurement' were found to be confusing and complicated.

benefits of inclusive job ads:

- attracts more applicants which results in more qualified candidates and faster time to fill
- ensures a more diversified workforce, which results in better business performance
- creates a stronger pipeline to promote more diverse candidates for management positions
- helps your company to meet applicable government-mandated hiring practices
- documents your effort to reduce job bias



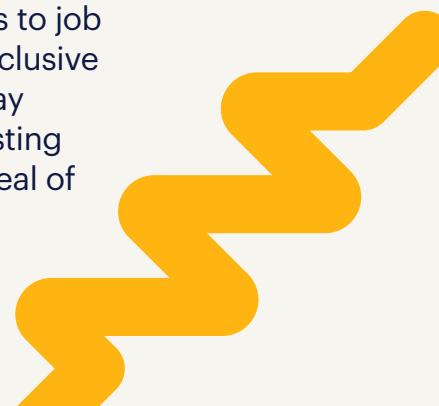
tools that can help.

Because offending language in job ads can be so subtle, often hiring managers and recruiters aren't aware of the problem. Even with extensive diversity and inclusion training, the most aware business leaders may unintentionally discourage some demographics from applying for a vacancy. This realization has led to a proliferation of new tools to help companies address unconscious bias, especially in the crafting of job postings. These augmented writing tools not only help employers draft descriptions more quickly and effectively, but they can also correct language that can be troublesome.

At the 2018 HR Technology Conference, **winners of the first annual Pitchfest** – a contest of the most promising new HR innovations – included two companies, TalVista and Textio, whose offerings are focused on creating a more diverse workforce. **TalVista**, which was awarded the contest's diversity prize, provides a tool to optimize job descriptions to ensure it attracts male and female applicants equally as well as candidates with different backgrounds. According to the company, the tool's algorithm

assesses how well the user has implemented job description best practices. Scores are calculated by adding points for content that will attract a broader pool of applicants and subtracting points for language that alienates applicants.

Similarly, **Textio Hire** makes suggestions to job description writers so they can be as inclusive as possible. By detecting words that may deter people from applying and suggesting alternatives, the tool enhances the appeal of postings.





Employers such as Amgen have adopted these tools as they look for ways to reduce unconscious bias and attract a more diverse slate of candidates. John Graham Jr., senior manager of global employer brand and recruitment marketing for the life sciences company, told the [Society for Human Resource Management](#) (SHRM) that the tool helped the company determine certain words that appeared over and over again in job ads skewed toward male applicants. One of the most often used was 'absolute,' which had a negative impact on female perceptions.

Of course job descriptions aren't the only culprit that may deter diverse candidates from applying. Everything from the talent attraction strategy to screening applicants to the interview and review process can also be a barrier to hiring more diverse workers. The most important consideration is making sure there is an ongoing effort to identify and remedy bottlenecks that will keep your organization from finding the best and most diverse talent in the marketplace.

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five steps for crafting an inclusive job posting.

1. Keep your postings short, concise and free of jargon.

Shorter descriptions perform better and attract more applicants, **according to Textio**. One **study** states that consumers' attention spans aren't getting shorter, but they are becoming more selective. In other words, unless your long job description reads like a selection from a Shakespeare play, there will be a significant drop-off in interest if you insist on having a long posting.

Rather than creating a novel, strive to keep your job description as relevant as possible to the candidate. Do they need to know the lengthy background of your company or that of every member of your executive team? Do you need to describe in detail every benefit offered by your business or can you simply

summarize briefly with the goal of providing more information at the time of interview or offer?

Conversely, don't economize on words if you have a compelling story to tell about your brand and culture. If your business has been recognized as a top employer by analysts and media, that's a feat worth mentioning.

The most important consideration is putting yourself in the shoes of the job applicant. What would they want to know about the role and your company? What makes you stand out as an organization? What do you offer in terms of training and development and career advancement? A well-worded description can convey the important aspects of the role without reading like 'War and Peace.'





2. Be mindful of gender-biased terms.

Words that are more aggressive, demonstrate a lack of empathy and have very masculine conveyance probably will deter female job seekers. Similarly, text with a clearly female tone may result in more women applying for a role. One way of ensuring equal opportunity for all applicants is by avoiding emotion-stirring terminology that can be favored one gender.

It's not always clear why some words are more gender-biased while others aren't. This can be a difficult barrier to overcome as you develop job descriptions, but there are steps you can take to minimize unconscious bias in your process.

For instance, consider having a diverse group of people assess and provide feedback on your postings. They may help detect terms that are offensive or gender biased. It's always a good idea to have multiple reviewers who can catch not only engendered phrases but also give feedback on the overall construction of your ads.

You might also turn to AI-augmented technology such as [Textio](#), which can provide metrics around your verbiage and call out terms that aren't gender neutral. The company claims that its tool not only leads to more diverse hiring practices but also do so in a shorter amount of time, leading employers to fill roles more quickly.



3. Specify skills you need for the role and not degrees.

Remember, a college degree doesn't necessarily mean an applicant has the requisite skills or the right attitude. An [article in Harvard Business Review](#) contends that women may overestimate the importance of a degree to a role more than necessary and, therefore, are reluctant to apply for a position without the right degree.

In fact, female applicants may possess the right skills without the certification. The article argues that advocacy and networking may be more important than a degree when it comes to choosing the best candidate, but many women never make it past the screening process because of this bias.

So how do you determine whether a degree is absolutely necessary for the roles you seek to fill? Of course when it comes to technical skills, certification is important. You certainly couldn't staff a hospital without certified nurses and doctors, but will degrees be necessary for code developers, for example? Remember, Microsoft founder Bill Gates dropped out of Harvard to start his company, and it wasn't until [many years later](#) that the school granted him an honorary degree.

Skills and experience requirements will always be more important than certifications when it comes to finding the best candidates.





4. Highlight benefits as well as salary since some workers may value flexible schedules just as much as a competitive salary.

This is especially important for job seekers who have family obligations and need flex time to tend to personal needs. If you are targeting these types of workers, your job description should highlight the kind of benefits that will have the greatest appeal.

Why would your organization want to attract working moms, who often are unfairly viewed as not being dedicated to their careers? According to the SHRM, being a parent can provide valuable training for developing useful workplace skills such as diplomacy, communicating, multitasking and remaining calm under fire.

You can, however, attract more working mothers by emphasizing your company's flexible schedules, family leave policy and career growth. By including these benefits in your job descriptions, you demonstrate a commitment to those with family obligations and a desire to employ women with strong career ambitions.

Additionally, perks such as on-site day care, generous medical benefits and even adoption support will help your business attract a wider variety of women and minority applicants, as will providing data about pay parity in your business. Companies such as Citigroup recently disclosed their gender pay gap as part of an effort to be transparent and active in closing the gap.





5. Be clear about your company's diversity and inclusion efforts.

This should always be a part of your company's background description in job summaries. Making such a statement strengthens your employer brand among diverse candidates and demonstrates a commitment against discriminatory hiring practices.

According to a [survey](#) among workers, conducted by the Boston Consulting Group, making such a commitment to antidiscrimination policies is among the top three measures respondents seek from their companies. By making clear they will not tolerate bias in the workplace, employers assure their workforce that they have support and mechanisms in place to protect diverse employees.

By including diversity and inclusion language as part of your job description template, you make it clear to diverse candidates that not only are they welcomed in your organization but that they also have a path forward, which according to [Randstad Employer Brand Research](#) is one of the traits most desired by job seekers. Knowing there are clear opportunities to move ahead will help you attract more talent.

Your job ads should be clear about your commitment to be an equal opportunity employer, succinctly state why you value diversity and provide links to additional information for job seekers. Without being overly wordy, you can effectively convey your company's inclusive culture.





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