

4 WAYS TO ATTRACT A DIVERSE WORKFORCE



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Is your team diverse? Do you invest to ensure your team reflects the needs and attitudes of your customers and clients? Does your workforce mirror the communities your employees live, work in and provide services to?

When a lot of people think about diversity, they focus on gender, ethnicity and age. These are important to keep focused on, but there is another kind of diversity that is often overlooked. This is diversity of thoughts, backgrounds and experiences. If elements of the latter

are missing in your organization, it's likely that everyone thinks the same way. As such, new ideas, new ways to problem solve and innovation may be stunted. When you have employees who *only* follow the boss, then the only ideas you have are from that one boss alone.

MIXING IT UP

While there is no “one size fits all” playbook for attracting diversity, you will want to make your organization attractive for diverse talent. In order to effectively attract

diverse candidates, here are four success practices that have been effective:

1 REFERRAL PROGRAMS.

If you have great talent on your team who are highly engaged and doing a great job, they likely have similar friends. Consider offering incentives with shorter payout times and grant immediate impact to ensure your team is helping to attract people who are a good fit. You can also have them act as ambassadors in alumni groups, associations or clubs they are a part of.

2 EARLY CAREERS/ UNIVERSITY STRATEGY.

Attracting talent right out of school is often a strategy for helping shape the career of generally younger people, but is also a great place to find diversity. A strong university recruiting strategy is a terrific way to help create a diverse team because you can more easily target diversity on a university campus through student clubs and organizations. Setting up early career development programs and considering those in majors that are not what you'd traditionally look for are also good for your employer brand, and ensures your talent can develop with your business.

3 CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING FOR HIRING MANAGERS.

We know that this group often needs help to build relationships. While it's unwise to *force* training on managers (and that often backfires), integrating training that helps them identify unconscious bias is an area of learning and development that has taken off in recent years and has been effective in many organizations.

4 WORKPLACE PREPAREDNESS.

It is one thing to say you want diversity, but actually setting up your physical space and your benefits program to accommodate it is another. Does your office have things like nursing stations? Do you offer extended Maternity/Paternity Leave and are your Human Resources

policies inclusive for Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, etc. individuals? Do you have prayer rooms facing the correct direction and do your gyms have areas that are exclusive for women? How is your pay equity based on gender? These are things that can help attract top talent and show you will welcome them as equal employees without singling them out or making them feel that they won't find a sense of belonging at your company.

THE RIGHT FIRST IMPRESSION

In addition to finding the right candidates, diversity brings several important things to your organization. Imagine if the people who applied for your job postings came in for an interview and didn't see anyone who looked like them, or if all the people who interviewed them asked the same questions in the same way. They would likely not be very interested in continuing the discussion.

Your employer brand is only as good as what employees and candidates will say about you when you're not in the room. Taking the opportunity to show you are a progressive company that is investing visibly in many areas of diversity will be obvious from their first encounter with you.

APPEALING TO A YOUNGER GENERATION

While it is generally true that almost everyone values diversity, you may have noticed that many in younger generations are very vocal about their values. Moreover, many of them expect diversity and can be very outspoken about how much it matters to them in a workplace.

By bringing in a diverse group of people to your organization, you will have access to broader networks which will spur further diversity opportunities and all the benefits it brings. Think of how much more likely it is that diverse people who enjoy working at your company will introduce you and advocate for you in their circles.

THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY

While the business reasons for diversity are compelling on their own, many jurisdictions also have regulatory requirements that you have to consider as well. It's not just laws for the jurisdiction you operate in; it could be laws necessary to sell to your customers. For example, if you sell to the United States government, you are required to submit an affirmative action plan to improve diversity at the organization and provide updates during the term of the contract. There is also an audit process that ensures that organizations are keeping to their plans.

Most importantly, your organization should invest in diversity because it's not only the right thing to do, but you will get much better business results! Don't let regulations drive your diversity efforts. The best way to improve diversity is to be truthful.

No matter how many smiling, ethnically diverse models you may hire to represent your brand, or false testimonials you may really want to post—it is so easy to spot a workplace that does not value diversity. The truth always comes out. Give your organization the best competitive advantage you can by welcoming diversity into your team, and celebrating it in real ways. All types of diversity bring something new to the table, and who doesn't need fresh ideas? ☘



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