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Bridging the Diversity Gap Through Inclusion and Belonging

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Learning Objectives

- Learn why the feeling of belonging is the essence of inclusion
 - Learn how to cultivate inclusion by connecting with people in a social and professional way
 - Learn how to overcome challenges of driving change through inclusion and belonging
- Learn about the importance of inclusion in the workplace through the experience of others

Description

Overall, throughout the last couple of years, many architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry companies have started to take a serious look at diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives. While there have been many positive strides to increasing diversity, how have we been doing with improving inclusion in the industry?

This session will consist of a panel of industry professionals in construction and technology who will share their perspectives and insights on how inclusion and belonging will bridge the diversity gap. The topics will include why building a sense of community and belonging is essential in any DE&I initiative, and the steps you can take to cultivate a culture of equity and inclusion.

The panelists will take us through their journeys and share stories of leading DE&I initiatives in their organizations and communities. We will also discuss how to overcome challenges faced when creating safe spaces where minorities, especially women of color, can feel a sense of belonging.

Speaker(s)

Asia Johns

Asia Johns is a high-performing VDC professional with a passion for VDC/BIM innovations and emerging technologies in the AEC industry. She currently works as a VDC Specialist at Aptitude: Intelligent Integration, a division of JE Dunn Construction, where she supports the design phase services team as a VDC technology lead for higher education, government/municipal, commercial, multi-family, hospitality, and healthcare projects.

Asia works closely with clients, consultants, and design teams to create and manage 3D electrical low voltage system models using Autodesk Revit and leverages the use of Building Information Modeling (BIM) and other technologies to reduce project cost and improve efficiency.

Asia is a graduate of North Carolina A&T State University, where she earned a B.S. in Architectural Engineering in 2017. As a graduate of an HBCU, Asia is passionate about improving diversity in the construction industry and campus recruitment of minority students.

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Gloria Samuel

Gloria Samuel is Senior Vice President and Director of Construction Program and Project Management for Fifth Third Bank, responsible for the oversight and leadership of the teams responsible for all construction in the bank's footprint. Gloria provides strategic leadership for the team, relying on a strong partnership of project managers through CBRE to lead the day-to-day aspects of construction. She has been in the industry for more than twenty years, rising through the ranks in multiple roles.

Gloria earned her undergraduate degree in Construction Management and MBA from the University of Cincinnati. She graduated with Class XVII of the African American Leadership Development Program (AALDP), gaining the necessary tools to become a better leader in the community and her organization. She was later recognized with the Urban League Journey Award in 2015, YWCA Rising Star in 2014 for her ability to thrive in a challenging male dominated field and later graduated from the Rising Star Board Leadership Program in 2015. She was honored as Engineering News Record's (ENR) Midwest Top Professional Under 40, only to later be named one of ENR's National Top 40 under 40 in 2018.

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Monique Brown

Monique D. Brown has been in the design and construction field for over 18 years, working for firms of varying sizes and market focus – including higher education, federal/military, and healthcare. After working as project coordinator/architect for 14 years, she joined Batson-Cook

Construction in February 2018 as the Virtual Design and Construction (VDC) manager for their Jacksonville, Florida office, where she is actively working to implement a culture of diversity and inclusion.

As a VDC Manager, Monique can use her architectural experience to assist the estimating and operations teams in interpreting drawings, understanding building codes and healthcare guidelines, as well as building 3D models that are used for visualization and quantity takeoffs. She is responsible for facilitating the collaborative space for project teams using VDC tools and processes, including creating and maintaining the BIM coordination schedule, coordination of subcontractor BIM models which are used to produce shop drawings, and ensures that the 3D coordination cycle is optimized for maximum results in the field.

Monique graduated from the University of Florida in 2000 with her Bachelor Design degree in Architecture. In 2007, she enrolled at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. She worked full-timed and commuted part-time to Tallahassee to earn her professional Bachelor of Architecture degree in 2009. With the professional degree under her belt, Monique was now qualified to take the Architect Registration Exams (AREs), which she completed in April 2018 to become the 422nd registered black female architect in the US, the 24th in Florida, and the 5th in Jacksonville, Florida.

Monique's professional affiliations include the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA). She is also a LEED Accredited Professional (LEED AP).

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Cliff Cole

As Director of VDC at the PENTA Building Group, Cliff leads all implementation and management of construction technology and Building Information Modeling. Cliff has been in the construction industry for over 15 years. Cliff is responsible for monitoring execution of all projects that incorporate VDC processes and strategic technology initiatives for the operations and preconstruction groups.

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Topics

- Corporate Culture
- Supplier Diversity
- Hiring and Recruiting
- Structured Mentorship

Primary Questions

- Why is diversity, equity, and inclusion important to you?
- Why is diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) important for your business or organization?
- Why is mentoring important to building a diverse workplace?
- How do you overcome the resistance to change related to diversity and inclusion?
- What are the benefits of a structured mentoring program?
- What advice would you give to somebody in the audience that is looking to establish a mentoring program in their organization?
- How did you get involved in DE&I? (i.e., through your employer; a non-profit organization or cause, etc)
- As a leader in your organization, what role do you play in cultivating a culture of inclusion in your workplace?
- What are some challenges you've faced as a DE&I champion?
- What are some of your goals/things you hope to see come to fruition because of your efforts related to DE&I?
- What does DE&I look like at your place of employment – what do you have in place as an organization that addresses this issue/topic?
- What resources are available to employees in your company related to DE&I?
- What are some new areas/topics that you've become aware as part of your DE&I journey?
- Tell us about your personal journey as a minority in the AEC/Tech industry?
- What a potential roadmap to DE&I excellence?
- What are some easy-to-replicate programs you've put in place to make a difference?
- What is your biggest piece of advice for getting started with DEI?

Diversity and Inclusion Quote

"We all want something to offer. This is how we belong. It's how we feel included. So if we want to include everyone, we have to help everyone develop their talents and use their gifts for the good of the community. That's what inclusion means – everyone is a contributor." - Melinda Gates

RESOURCES

Why Belonging Matters in Construction

<https://constructionblog.autodesk.com/belonging-in-construction/>

Construction Inclusion Week

<https://www.constructioninclusionweek.com/>

AGC Diversity and Inclusion

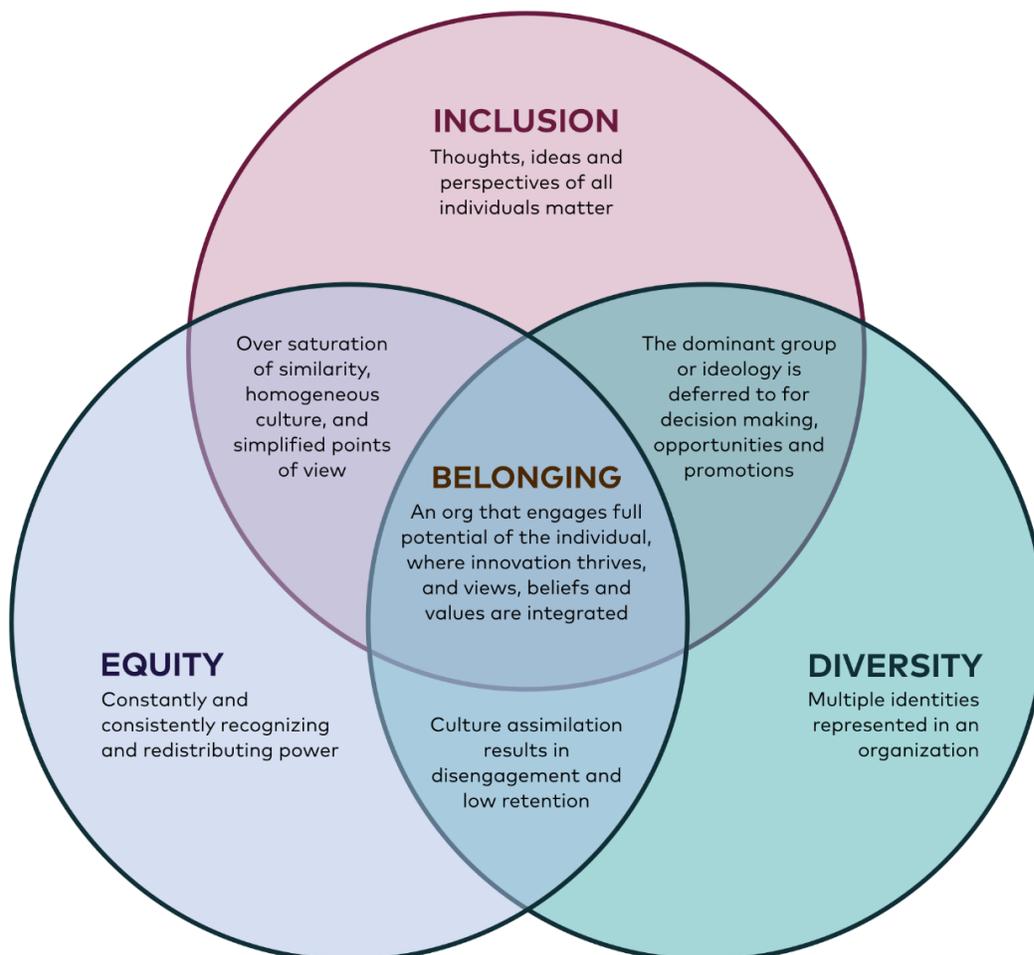
<https://www.agc.org/diversity>

Define Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective.

Equity promotes justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

Inclusion is an outcome to ensure those that are diverse feel and are welcomed. Inclusion outcomes are met when you, your institution, and your program are genuinely inviting to all. To the degree to which diverse individuals can participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization or group.



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Why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is Important to the AEC Industry

Having a diverse and inclusive organization is not "just the right thing" to do but also is a competitive business advantage. Diversity and Inclusion have a significant impact on your organization. The business benefits of diversity are well documented, even though there is still much progress to be made.

Four areas in which Diversity and Inclusion will play a significant role in your organization: [1]

Attract and Retain Talent

Sixty-five percent of employees who experienced exclusive behaviors said they would leave or seriously consider leaving if they found a different job. In an industry with an employee turnover rate of almost 25 percent and a skilled labor shortage, worker retention is vital. Companies can gain a competitive edge in hiring and mitigate employee turnover through an authentic culture of Inclusion.

Innovation and Productivity

Innovation derives specific strengths from diverse team inputs. Homogeneous teams may unknowingly develop products, technology, or services designed to benefit one type of user, limiting their customer base. In contrast, when employees think their company is committed to diversity and feel a sense of belonging, there is an 83 percent increase in their ability to innovate. Innovation leads to better results. And results drive company performance and profit.

Reputation and Culture

Documentation supports that workers who have not been integrated into workplace culture or who perceive themselves as "outsiders" are more likely to have accidents because of the increased psychological and emotional stress of being excluded. Safety is the top priority for the construction industry. Leveraging the construction industry's already strong safety culture to build an equally strong inclusion culture will help ensure the safest possible job site.

Tangible Financial Results

A McKinsey study found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams are 25 percent more likely to have financial returns above the national industry average. Companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity on executive teams are 36 percent more likely to have financial returns above the national industry average. The likelihood of outperformance continues to be higher for diversity in ethnicity than for gender.

The Business Value of Inclusion in Organizations

In a report by Salesforce Research, *The Impact of Equality and Values-Driven Business*, companies that actively work to make their cultures more inclusive are better positioned to achieve strong customer loyalty and boost employee engagement and productivity. [2]

Here are a few key stats:

- Employees who feel their voice is heard at work are nearly five-times (4.6X) more likely to feel empowered to perform their best work. [2]
- Employees who say their company provides equal opportunities are nearly four times (3.8X) more likely to say they are proud to work for their company. [2]
- Employees who say they're able to be their authentic self at work are nearly three times (2.8x) more likely to say they are proud to work for their company — and almost four-times (4.4x) more likely to say they are empowered to perform their best work. [2]

The Business Value of Belonging in Organizations

Belonging involves developing a deeper connection with others by sharing your authentic self and receiving acceptance in return. Creating space for employees to feel truly valued for their cultural differences will help to enable belonging, and that has some significant business advantages. [3]

Cost of Assimilation

A 2018 study from Catalyst found that 42% of women and 40% of men cited being on guard in anticipation of racial bias, and 40% of women were on guard in anticipation of gender bias. Other reasons included physical appearance, physical ability, age and spiritual or religious beliefs. Creating a culture of belonging where employees do not feel the need to downplay their identities, everyone can be more successful. In fact, Catalysts' report found that a feeling of belonging can be connected to higher creativity and a higher likelihood to speak up and contribute. [3]

Comfort Speaking Up

Research clearly shows that incorporating diverse viewpoints results in better decision-making. If a diverse set of employees is hired and then invited to the table to help make important decisions, but there hasn't been an investment in creating a sense of belonging, many of those employees may not feel comfortable expressing opposing ideas. Having a seat at the table is not enough—we must create the psychological safety to speak up from that seat. [3]

Hiring and retention

Fostering belonging in the workplace directly affects the retention of great employees—and hiring of new employees. A recent LinkedIn study found that 47% of professionals value working at a company where they can be themselves.

Ways to Foster Belonging in the Workplace

Belonging in the workplace is when every employee feels accepted and included for who they are and psychologically safe in their work environment.

- **Make introductions**
Especially during the first 30 days, it's important to foster relationships among your team and the organization.
- **Create an ongoing dialog**
Ask questions about how they are and listen. Listening is one of the most important leadership tools you can hone.
- **Get their input**
Include people in meetings and genuinely value their opinion and feedback. Listening is important here too.
- **Trust them**
Delegating an item from your to-do list shows that you trust them to get the job done and can foster collaboration.
- **Give them your full attention**
Show respect by fully engaging in whatever your colleague has to say. Put down your phone and make some eye contact.
- **Share your story**
Mentorship and professional relationships can make or break a career. Help someone by sharing your own journey and listening to theirs. You'll get a chance to share your successes and failures and you'll hear another person's diversity of experience.

The missing piece for many diversity and inclusion efforts has been a focus on the importance of belonging. By putting forth a little more effort to make sure your team feels a sense of belonging your entire organization may benefit as people experience greater degrees of respect, collaboration, enjoyment, and productivity at work.

Creating a culture of belonging takes intentional, long-term focus, and there isn't a simple program that can be implemented or box that can be checked. But this investment results in happier employees and more effective and successful business outcomes, and so it is well worth the effort. [4]

How to Improve Corporate Culture

To move beyond DEI as a buzzword, companies need to understand why DEI matters to their business and what actions they can take to build a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture that will last. [5]

Embed DEI in Your Business

Building a DEI culture is both a moral and business imperative. Think about your employees' collective experience and work on everyone owning the workplace culture. Everyone needs to be invested in making the culture better, which will foster a greater feeling of belonging.

Another aspect of creating a DEI-driven culture is embedding DEI in all areas of the business. Recognizing employees' contributions to DEI and incorporating them into the company's larger business strategy will help drive change. This needs to happen at all levels of the organization. [5]

Invest in Improving Your Culture

Here are some best practices you can follow to build and promote DEI at your organization.

- Listen to all voices. One of the cornerstones of an inclusive environment is trust. But trust has to be earned. Leaders need to be vulnerable and share their own stories of where they can improve, and invite others to talk about their experiences and what they expect and want in the company's culture.
- Examine the company's policies and procedures. Think about the systems in place for compensating and educating employees, for example, or accommodating their personal needs (for example, through flexible work schedules).
- Look for blind spots in your recruiting and hiring practices. In 2015, the company Buffer discovered that less than 2% of applicants for developer positions were women—likely due to the call for “hackers,” a male-coded word. Gender-coded job descriptions tend to exclude certain applicants regardless of their qualifications.
- Identify unconscious bias in talent management. Do all employees have access to the same opportunities and growth? Leaders often offer opportunities to people like them—and those that are different may not have the same access to development resources, mentoring and stretch assignments. Don't make assumptions about an employee's current skills and future potential. [5]

Execute Your DEI Strategy Through Communications

As you work on implementing strategies to build a DEI-driven culture, remember that internal communications can help you engage leaders and educate employees, fostering a greater sense of belonging. Here are a few ways comms can get DEI off the ground:

- Include DEI goals and commitments in onboarding communications. Use onboarding materials to highlight diversity groups, programs and initiatives, such as Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and mentoring opportunities.
- Provide managers with tools and resources. Employees often look to managers for advice. Equip managers with a “DEI toolkit” featuring key messages and FAQs so they feel more comfortable having open conversations with their direct reports about DEI-related issues.

- Use internal channels to amplify employee voices. Forums that allow employees to share their stories can spark conversations and create connections. Employees can learn from their coworkers who model desired behaviors.
- Create DEI style guides and content guidelines. Give these resources to leaders, managers and communicators to use when developing internal content. Share best practices for using inclusive language (and avoiding insensitive language and phrases), incorporating gender neutrality and promoting conscious inclusion in content.
- Communicate progress and actions taken. Share the progress you've made on DEI commitments and next steps.

DEI initiatives often fail despite good intentions. Building a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture requires resilience, dedication, curiosity and empathy. By seeking out underrepresented stories and perspectives and celebrating unique experiences, companies can create a strong sense of belonging among its communities. [5]

How to Use Mentoring to Create an Inclusive Workplace

<https://trainingindustry.com/articles/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/5-ways-to-use-mentoring-to-create-an-inclusive-workplace/>

There is a growing consensus that inclusive work environments yield better results. When employees feel included, they are more engaged and perform better. When employees have meaningful workplace relationships with people who are different from them, organizations will become more inclusive. These relationships are where mentoring comes in. [6]

A Mentoring Culture Drives Inclusion

A mentoring culture is a culture that nurtures deeper working relationships and values the development of all employees. When employees have a place where they can focus on their own development, take risks, explore possibilities, gain exposure to senior leaders who get to know them, and understand that differences are not just seen but also valued, they can feel understood and appreciated and know that they are an integral part of the organization. [6]

An Effective Mentoring Initiative Can Build Equity

An inclusive workplace cannot exist without equity, which means that all individuals have equal access to opportunities. In his book “Empowering Yourself: The Organizational Game Revealed,” Harvey Coleman notes that there are three factors that comprise success in the workplace: performance, image, and exposure. In a perfect world, our job performance would account for all our career success, but even for people whose performance is exceptional, their on-the-job performance accounts for only 10% of their career success. The other 90% of success is attributed to image, or the impression an organization or individual has about their ability to succeed (30%), and exposure, or access to opportunities (60%).

Unlike supervisory relationships that focus on the employee’s performance, mentoring relationships focus on that other 90% of success. While a mentor can provide some developmental guidance on a mentee’s performance, the true benefits of mentoring come when mentoring pairs focus on image and exposure. Mentors can be a mirror to mentees by providing feedback on how the mentee is perceived and by exploring ways the mentee can show up authentically and favorably.

Mentors can increase exposure by presenting new possibilities, opening doors, and introducing mentees to people and opportunities. They can help mentees show up authentically and favorably, because they provide a safe space to provide feedback and a safety net. [6]

Mentoring Helps Develop Cultural Competency

Cultural competency is the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one’s own. An organization cannot be inclusive without a culturally competent leadership team and workforce.

Cultural competency requires exposure to people who are different from us in a meaningful way. When we become culturally competent, we stop judging differences as good or bad or as better or worse. Instead, we learn about those differences and how they impact others’ perspectives, motivations, and worldviews.

Mentoring helps build cultural competency by creating familiarity and understanding, which may help bridge differences. For example, a mentor might be surprised to learn that her mentee has a different view of authority, is motivated by something entirely different than she is or has a different threshold of tolerance for ambiguity. If the mentor had learned about these differences in the absence of a personal connection, she might be more likely to judge or dismiss them. Through her relationship with her mentee, she can begin to understand these differences and see how they might be significant for him and for others.

Cultural competency cannot be built in a classroom. It grows in trusting relationships where each person can show up authentically. It is developed by creating safe spaces like in a mentoring relationship, where both parties can share their insights and struggles. The skills and awareness that are built in these relationships transfer throughout the organization, helping mentors and mentees better deal with differences among their co-workers.

When done right, mentoring is an invaluable tool for creating more inclusive, equitable and culturally competent workplaces. [6]

How to Increase Supplier Diversity

Across all industries, multiple studies and statistics show that embracing a strategic Supplier Diversity Program not only benefits the owners of these diverse businesses but plainly indicates a big difference in your brand reputation and your bottom line. [7]

But what exactly is Supplier Diversity and why is it important?

A Supplier Diversity Program is defined as a “proactive business program which encourages the use of minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, LGBT-owned, service disabled veteran-owned, historically underutilized business, and Small Business Administration (SBA)-defined small business concerns as suppliers.”

Plainly, it’s a way to engage with a new, growing, and varied set of suppliers.

Why is this move to engage with diverse suppliers important? According to an article by Dun & Bradstreet, minority-owned businesses contribute jobs for 2.2 million people, women-owned businesses contribute 7.9 million jobs, and LGBT-owned businesses contribute 2.4 million jobs. This represents a massive chunk of the economy yet achieving success as a diversity supplier remains a challenge. [7]

KNOW YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

Identify diverse suppliers that exist in your supply chain and you spend with those suppliers. Figure out the diversity category information and break down each supplier dollar-for-dollar. This process will lead you to have a better understanding of the overall diversity in your supplier program. [7]

INCORPORATE DIVERSITY INTO YOUR SUPPLIER ONBOARDING PROCESS

Along with filling out a standard W9 and ACH form, make sure your suppliers fill out a properly modified business classification form. This form determines what types of certifications your program will accept as part of your baseline and ongoing reporting, including either self-classification or other classification standards. Also, have them provide any other 3rd party diversity certifications that can assist in the classification as well. Monitoring the data can be complicated if you do not capture it on the forefront and retroactively classifying your suppliers can be time-consuming. [7]

HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS AND SYSTEMS IN PLACE

Be sure you have the proper reporting system in place to be able to find that business in the supplier database. This system should not be based solely on spreadsheets. The more comprehensive metrics you can track, the better. As tracking these metrics become more complicated, and the expectations are higher on developing a robust supplier database, investing in a Vendor Management Software (VMS) or even an outsourced Supplier Management Team can make it more manageable and your supplier diversity goals more attainable. [7]

MAKE DIVERSITY A CORE VALUE FROM THE START

According to Elizabeth A. Vazquez, CEO and Co-Founder of WEConnect International, “*Some of the most successful supplier diversity and inclusion programs come from companies that have diversity and inclusion in their DNA.*” Having buy-in from the top down for your Supplier

Diversity Program is imperative. That way, it will not just become a best practice, but a standard. The fact of the matter is the demographic landscape of the United States is changing. The Census Bureau indicates that the U.S. population is continuously changing and will become “majority minority” in 2044. [7]

How to Improve Diversity Recruiting

Most recruiters and managers would agree that a diverse team helps companies be more innovative, creative and achieve better results. It makes sense that having different perspectives and backgrounds on your team will contribute to newer and more diverse ideas to help solve problems and drive innovation. It's no wonder, then, that companies around the world are focusing on developing their diversity recruiting strategy. [9]

What is diversity recruiting?

Diversity can fall into two categories: inherent diversity, such as demographic factors or acquired diversity, which are developed or earned over time. Think of inherent diversity as being tied to race, gender, age, health and any other characteristic that is natural to who someone is as a person. Acquired diversity refers to things like education, experience, values, skills, and knowledge, which are more fluid and can develop and evolve over time.

Diversity recruiting is the practice of hiring candidates using a process that is free from biases for or against any individual or group of candidates. It is still merit-based recruitment and still aims to find the best possible candidate, but it's structured to give all applicants, regardless of background, an equal opportunity. [9]

Why is a diversity recruiting strategy important?

In addition to being a good moral choice, diversity recruiting also provides many tangible benefits for performance, innovation, and productivity. Some of the known perks include:

- A broader range of skills and experience on your team.
- Increased language and cultural awareness.
- Larger and more varied candidate pools.

The results speak for themselves:

- Companies with diverse management teams have 19% higher revenues.
- Diverse companies are 1.7 times more likely to be innovation leaders in their market segments.
- 67% of job seekers say diversity is an important factor when considering a company.
- 85% of CEOs say that having a diverse workforce improved their bottom lines.

As you can see, having a strong recruiting strategy for diversity is a sure-fire way to improve your team's performance and drive innovation in your industry. Now that we've looked at the benefits, let's dive into how to do diversity recruiting. [9]

12 ways to recruit for a diverse workforce

Increasing diversity in sourcing - A great way to ensure that you're hiring a diverse range of people is to make sure there's diversity in who is applying to your positions to begin with. Here are some techniques for increasing diversity in your candidate sourcing: [9]

Audit your job ads

Audit of your past recruitment ads, and make changes to speak to a broader range of candidates. You may notice that some of the languages you use are more geared toward a specific demographic of experience level. If this is the case, find ways to be more inclusive in your language to appeal to candidates from different backgrounds. [9]

Target sources where diverse candidates congregate

A great way to ensure that your talent pool is full of diverse candidates is to source your candidates from a variety of different places. [9]

Encourage your diverse employees to refer their connections

Creating a diverse candidate referral program is a great way to both boost your diversity recruitment strategy, and showcase that your company values different backgrounds and ideas. [9]

Offer internships to targeted groups

Many companies have started internal diversity programs that offer internship and co-op positions to candidates from specific backgrounds. [9]

Develop an employer brand that showcases your diversity

Perhaps the best way to boost diversity in your candidate sourcing is to organically create an employer brand that values people and opinions from all walks of life. [9]

Create company policies that appeal to diverse candidates

Having policies in place, and actively promoting them in your sourcing, is a great way to ensure your diversity recruiting strategy is running as it should be. [9]

Increasing diversity in candidate screening

If you find that your diversity recruiting strategy is bringing in a nice variety of candidates, but you're struggling to eliminate bias in how you screen them, then you should consider some of these tactics. [9]

Use blind resumes

An increasingly popular technique recruiters are using to remove bias from how they screen candidates is to "black out" all personal information on resumes. [9]

Use blind interviews

Blind interviews use the same principle as blacking out resumes to reduce bias but apply this tactic to early conversations with the candidate. [9]

Harness AI to review resumes

One way to ensure that you remove bias from your resume screening process entirely is to leverage artificial intelligence technology in your ATS. Pre-program your platform to flag and filter for specific skills and experience and let the AI technology analyze your candidate resumes for those parameters. [9]

Rethink the factors that you screen for

This tactic relates back to your job ads audit where you rethought what you look for in a candidate, and how you talk to them. A critical part of diversity recruiting is to always be questioning what traits you value most in candidates, why, and whether that's based on your own bias. [9]

Automate your shortlisting using an ATS

As mentioned above, your ATS can be used to impartially whittle down your list to the most high-potential candidates. Use the screening tools included in your ATS to find candidates with the most potential and the best resume of skills. [9]

Seed talent pipelines with diverse candidates

It's been proven that diverse candidates are far less likely to be chosen when they are the only ones from their demographic represented in a shortlist of candidates. To combat this decision bias, you can use a diversity recruitment strategy called "the two in the pool effect."

The premise here is that having multiple people from the same minority demographic drastically increases the likelihood that one of them will be hired. Intentionally seeding your shortlist with a proportionate number of diverse candidates, therefore, will result in a more even playing field when it comes to choosing one to hire. [9]

Call to Action for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

THE AEC INDUSTRY MUST STAND TOGETHER TO TAKE MEANINGFUL AND EVIDENT STEPS TOWARDS CREATING A DIVERSE, WELCOMING, AND INCLUSIVE INDUSTRY.

Action Item 1: Executives and Senior Leaders Need to Champion Change

Emphasize the business case for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Make these initiatives part of your business strategy. Communicate your vision on diversity to the company.

Action Item 2: Establish a Corporate Culture for DE&I

The most crucial step to take towards improving Diversity, equity, and Inclusion is to keep the conversation going. The conversation around Diversity and Inclusion can be difficult; discussing racism can be uncomfortable. These conversations are needed to embrace a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment. Listening to your employees will bring awareness to the issues, build trust, and improve the company culture.

Action Item 3: Supplier Diversity

Training can help build awareness of unconscious bias, cultural competence, or additional barriers to Diversity, Inclusion, and belonging. It can also motivate positive behaviors and attitudes and foster an environment where folks feel comfortable bringing their full, authentic selves to work.

Action Item 4: Hiring and Recruitment

Create a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion group of passionate, committed, and influential employees in the company. At least two Executives are required to lead and actively be involved in the group. Ideally, the Diversity and Inclusion group should be involved in goal setting around hiring, retaining, and advancing a diverse workforce and addressing employee engagement problems among underrepresented employee groups. D&I groups should meet regularly to review organizational feedback, troubleshoot challenges, and, most importantly, carry messages about their work to their senior peers and company executives.

Action Item 5: Mentoring

Sponsorship programs are an effective way to overcome network gaps. Sponsors are senior-level leaders who advocate for employees, earn promotions, and raises and get credit for their successes. Sponsors put skin in the game, using their network and connections to help advance employees via guidance and endorsement.

Handout References

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