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EDC Focus on Equity and Inclusion: Working towards a more broadly shared economic future

Why Hiring With Diversity In Mind Works

By: Clare Briglio, EDC Communications Director

I started my career in human resources and eventually found myself working as a corporate recruiter. As a young and albeit naïve professional, focusing on diversity in the recruiting process was not in my immediate field of vision because, at the time, the topic of “inclusion and diversity” was not necessarily at the top of the national dialogue.

Fortunately, the experience of observing and participating in the recruiting process of hundreds of candidates began to shape my understanding of the importance of diversity. I observed and studied the candidates who came in that were immediately ushered away or asked for a second interview. The candidates that often made it to the second round of interviews were polished, well dressed, well spoken and among other things, most often white. I don't think I would have noticed this distinct pattern but for the fact that as a recruiter I was often asked to find candidates that matched the “culture” of the department I was hiring for. As I looked at the culture of these departments, I began to notice the problem more distinctly because these departments were primarily white. In no way am I suggesting this was done maliciously or with ill intent. It was, in part, our collective inability to recognize that we could do better by changing our focus.

It wasn't necessarily a bias toward race that I noticed in the interviewing and hiring process, it was more of an inability to cross the bridge toward the “other” and understand their unique experience and expression as valuable and something worth bringing to the table. It was expressed by a hiring manager turning down a candidate because they didn't understand how their military experience translated to a desk job or a hiring manager that only wanted a specific “type” of candidate that often translated to young, white women. Fast forward to the Black Lives Matters Movement which has put a spotlight on a problem that has been here for a long time and has given us a mirror to look into our own internal bias. We naturally have a blind spot to our internal bias which makes the conversation difficult but I suggest we lean into this moment and movement more directly and look at the ways we need to make room on the outset for candidates that may not be in our immediate field of vision when we think that “ideal” candidate.

[Some ways to expand our capacity to embrace diversity in hiring practices may be re looking at the following:](#)

1. Education requirements- Does the job you are posting really require a bachelor's degree or can equivalent experience be just as relevant? Recognize that some unnecessary education requirements can create a barrier to entry for minority populations.

2. Personal appearance and dress- Revisit your workplace dress code. Hair length, style and appearance standards, piercings and body ink standards may create additional barriers for minority populations.

3. Have a diverse set of people review your job descriptions and job postings- How you are describing your job and posting about it will attract a specific type of person. Be sure to use inclusive language if you are attempting to build a diverse team.

4. Cast the net wider- Post jobs on multiple job boards and include places that minority populations may be looking.

5. Train hiring managers- National studies ([click here for more information](#)) demonstrate that hiring for diversity brings benefits such as new perspectives, increased revenue and increased capacity to capture new markets. Training hiring managers to see beyond their "ideal" candidate and broaden the field to a candidate that might be in their current field of vision is very important. Companies that leverage the talent of their HR professionals and lean on them for guidance in this process fair better than those that do not. **Bottom line: Hiring managers should listen to HR professionals during the hiring process.**

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