

What's All This About Diversity Recruitment?

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It seems that you can't read a staffing industry, human resources, or business publication without seeing an article about diversity recruitment. Well, here's another one with a different spin on what you've probably read before. We'll look at diversity recruitment without trying to be politically correct or overly sensitive. There's a great lesson in this article that will positively impact your recruitment effectiveness. Read on to learn it.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (www.eeoc.gov) lists the following types of discrimination: age, disability, equal pay, national origin, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, and sexual harassment. A large part of what is written about diversity recruitment and a large proportion of the time, money, and effort that is expended by corporations on diversity recruitment is done to avoid legal problems under the federal EEO laws. Thankfully we're not going to spend any more time on this area.

There are other more compelling reasons to want a diverse workforce in our organizations. First, our population is diverse. Doesn't it make sense that our organizations be just as diverse as our population? Theoretically it makes sense but reality isn't that way. Most people know that white men hold most high-level executive positions. In fact the higher you go in most organizations the fewer women there are. How about people of color? Look around where you work. Are there the same proportions of people of color in your workplace as in the population as a whole? Not where I work and probably not where you work. Why is that? Well we all could probably come up with hundreds of reasons. We're not going to talk about that either.

Let's consider that one of the key factors in business is attracting, hiring, and retaining top talent. Does top talent only come in the form **white male aged 20 to 40**? Of course not! As our economy continues to recover from the challenges of the past few years, the demand for top talent will continue to increase. Perhaps top talent doesn't look the way you think it looks? Perhaps top talent comes in all different shapes and sizes, colors, ethnicities, and religions? Perhaps top talent has the education, the experience, and the desire to make a difference?

OK. So we're ready to diversify our workforce. We'll let our white recruiters and our white hiring managers get to work on it. They can recruit their friends and colleagues who are also likely to be white. Now is that going to work? Not likely! We'll then, let's advertise our open positions. Let's get our advertising agency to create some great new campaign. Now we'll have some white people dreaming up how to attract black people by advertising where white people hang out. That's just nuts!

So by now you may be thinking that diversity recruitment is tough. Sure is. To have any chance of success the diversity recruitment program (DSP) and the people who run it must also be diverse.

Be very aware of your biases. We all have biases and that isn't a bad thing, it's a human thing. One of the most common biases I hear from hiring managers is rejecting a candidate because they live too far from the job. Who knows what will work for the candidate? They may choose to relocate. They may be happy to travel further than the hiring manager would consider reasonable. They may live next door and use the address on their resume for mailing because their mother lives there and mail to their own address keeps getting stolen. You never really know what will work for people and what won't. Here's the great lesson in this article. Notice when you have a bias, be it positive or negative, and let it go. Just let it go. Ask yourself, is this candidate qualified to do the job? Give up your biases about people of color, people who are "too old", people in wheel chairs, people who come from that country where they eat things you wouldn't eat. Just let them go and focus, instead, on the candidate's ability to do the job.

In summary, diversity recruitment is tough. It's doubly tough when the people doing the recruitment are not diverse and the methods used don't reach a diverse audience. And no matter how well intentioned you are, without giving up your personal biases, it will be nearly impossible to significantly impact the diversity of the workforce where you work.