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5 Diversity Sourcing Myths
How to Move Past Them & Turbocharge Your Growth

Introduction

Ethically, of course, diversity hiring is simply the right thing to do. But in this case, "doing the right thing" and "doing the right thing for your business" are one and the same.

Diverse companies are now more likely than ever to outperform their less diverse peers on profitability, research from McKinsey and others has found. The strong business case for diversity in corporate leadership is behind the new Nasdaq requirements for listed companies to disclose their board-level diversity statistics.

Diversity isn't just important at the board level, though. Diversity in human capital is increasingly seen as a material aspect of business operations and an indicator of an organization's overall chances of success in the global economy.

A diverse workforce brings a diverse set of perspectives that makes it easier to compete in the face of complex external challenges. And when a diverse team feels comfortable celebrating its members' differences and leveraging them as strengths, they'll be even more engaged in your mission.

However, even with these apparent benefits of building diverse workforces, many organizations struggle to adapt their hiring practices to make them a reality. In this guide, we share five common myths about sourcing diverse talent, as well as specific actions talent leaders can take to move beyond them.

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Myth #1:

There Aren't Enough Qualified, Diverse Candidates to Fill Our Jobs

The belief that there is a lack of qualified, diverse candidates is one of the most pervasive diversity and inclusion myths. But it isn't grounded in reality. More often, the issue is that organizations are limited by their own blind spots regarding where they look for talent and the criteria they use to evaluate who counts as "qualified."

For example, many employers rely heavily on formal education at specific schools and prior experience in similar roles to screen candidates. Even when these factors are reliable indicators for success, they are inherently limiting, as not everyone has equal access to those opportunities in our current society.

If you want to open up your talent pool to allow for greater diversity, start by expanding and improving how you source candidates. Using lists of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), conferences focused on specific groups, or even lists of first names (for women) can help with sourcing for talent from diverse groups. You can then use targeted messaging in your outreach to them.

You may also find more success by rethinking your assumptions about who would make a great fit. Instead of focusing on credentials, benchmark your highest performers' personality traits and transferable skills, and build your recruiting strategy around identifying people who share those factors. You'll be able to cast a much wider net, one that includes more people with diverse backgrounds.

Action Item

→ Eliminate qualifying criteria that aren't proven to connect with success in a role.

Myth #2:

Our Employer Brand and Inbound Marketing Will Attract a Diverse Talent Pipeline

"If you build it, they will come" definitely doesn't apply to diversity in sourcing. Simply building a diversity-positive employer brand isn't enough to maintain a sustainable, diverse talent pipeline.

Becoming an employer of choice in terms of diversity and inclusion takes time, and in the meantime, candidates probably aren't going to find you on their own. The more homogeneous your workforce, the harder it will be for inbound efforts alone to attract a diverse slate of candidates.

That's not to say that a robust, diversity-friendly employer brand isn't important. It's a vital component of diversity sourcing, but you'll need to combine your inbound marketing efforts with a targeted outbound sourcing strategy to get your brand in front of a broad mix of people.

Identifying suitable candidates based on skills and qualifications, then reaching out to them directly, are important components of building diverse talent pipelines. The real power of outbound recruitment marketing lies in prompting conversations. As diverse candidates become more familiar with your brand and the steps you're taking to drive diversity and inclusion, they'll be more likely to respond to and interact with your recruiters. But if you don't go to them first, they may never know that your company is out there.

Action Item

→ Develop compelling outbound messaging to drive engagement with your employer brand content.

Myth #3:

AI in Recruiting Amplifies Human Bias

The application of artificial intelligence and machine learning has been transforming every stage of the recruiting process, creating efficiencies and unlocking new insights in what were once overwhelming data sets. But as adoption of these tools has spread, there has been backlash from those concerned about fairness and ethical issues in using these technologies when making hiring decisions.

The resistance hasn't been entirely without merit. Consider the infamous Amazon recruitment engine that inadvertently taught itself to discriminate against women. The AI program was trained to pick up on patterns among candidates that make

"good" software developers. But the system was fed more resumes from men than from women, so the program taught itself that "male" was a characteristic to look for in a quality software developer's resume.

That example was so egregiously awful that it's understandable that many employers would be anxious about leaving diversity hiring in the hands of an algorithm. They'd rather take their chances with human recruiters and hiring managers. But those people are hardly free from bias. In fact, it's even harder for us to spot and interrupt our own biases.

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It's helpful to remember that the goal of using AI in recruiting isn't to **eliminate** bias. That simply isn't possible, and you **should** be wary of anyone who makes that claim. Think about it this way: Widespread adoption of self-driving cars isn't going to eliminate accidents. But if they are statistically less likely to be in an accident than cars operated by people, then they can still be an improvement.

Data itself, which powers AI and machine learning, doesn't inherently lead to unfair bias. It's the humans **interpreting** the data who introduce bias.

The key is to train AI and ML programs to produce results based on objective criteria (like skills) over arbitrary factors (like gender).

If we provide the right data and oversight, and combine AI with other workflow support such as hiding photos and names during screening, we can optimize our diversity recruiting efforts and mitigate bias before it distorts our talent pools. That's what we should all be working toward: leveraging technology to mitigate bias in the recruiting process.

Action Item

→ Audit your AI-based recruiting tools regularly to catch adverse impacts early.

Myth #4:

We Don't Have the Resources to Invest in Diversity Sourcing

Many leaders at small and midsized organizations believe that only huge organizations with big teams and budgets can "afford" to invest in diversity initiatives. They're often under the mistaken impression that they need to invest heavily in targeted online advertising or sponsor high-profile events to reach diverse talent.

Those can both be valuable tactics, but they aren't your only options. And the truth is, no matter what your size or budget, you can't afford not to invest in diversity sourcing.

Building a diverse talent pipeline is fundamentally about relationships, and you don't need a big budget to do that. Here, your smaller size can even be an advantage.

Candidates are used to being bombarded with branded media, so a simple, genuine message giving them an opportunity to participate in a conversation with someone from your organization can be compelling. Directly engaging with candidates in this way produces the biggest return on a comparatively small investment.

Action Item

→ Have recruiters and hiring managers invest time in having conversations with diverse candidates.

Myth #5:

Diversity Is Mostly a Pipeline Problem

Many companies approach diversity hiring as a raw numbers game: If they can just pull enough qualified diverse talent into the beginning of the pipeline, their workforce diversity issues will work themselves out.

But there's much more to effective diversity hiring than building up your initial pipeline. If you want to move the needle, you have to consider your recruiting processes from end to end.

We are human, and we have biases. The more people involved in the hiring process, the more opportunities for bias to creep in. Even if you work with careful recruiters and your AI-driven recruiting tools to build a diverse pipeline, there may be people and processes along the way that reintroduce and amplify bias.

By tracking diverse candidates throughout the hiring process, you can pinpoint where bias is causing trouble. Then you can develop and implement solutions for mitigating against it.

If diverse candidates are dropping out immediately after the handoff between the recruiter and the hiring manager, for instance, you should investigate why that's happening. That hiring manager might need additional training.

You can consider process solutions, too. Research shows, for example, that teaming up reduces prejudice among people of different backgrounds. Build in more time for hiring managers to spend with each candidate to get to know each other as people rather than stereotypes.

Action Item

→ Develop process solutions to interrupt implicit biases.

Conclusion

Developing a workforce that's as diverse as society, and celebrates differences, may seem like an unattainable utopia. But that's a myth, too.

When you understand where diversity and inclusion fit into your broader business strategy, your path toward setting and achieving realistic goals for hiring diverse talent becomes clearer. Putting diversity hiring practices in context empowers you to determine where you stand now so you can establish a baseline — and keep moving forward.

Our differences aren't disadvantages — they're our greatest strengths. A diverse workforce brings a range of ideas and perspectives to bear on your business challenges that a homogeneous workforce simply can't. But the longer you wait to engage with diverse candidates, the further behind you will fall.

Don't wait. You **can** achieve a diverse and inclusive workforce, and it all starts with the first step. Take that step toward more effective diversity sourcing, and propel your company's talent strategy forward.

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About RecruitBot

RecruitBot's intuitive platform is the fastest way to hire top-quality talent. It saves time by using machine learning to reverse engineer new candidates from dream hires, and it maximizes response rates by sending automated, personalized drip campaigns directly from a work email to a candidate's personal inbox.

RecruitBot maximizes your team's ROI by ensuring you only evaluate and communicate with the best candidates. You decide who is the most promising; RecruitBot's automation does the rest.

RecruitBot is backed by Freestyle, OCA Ventures, Parade and a cadre of top-tier angel investors & CEOs.

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