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The Right Way To Incorporate Diversity Hiring Goals And Strategies

As the President and founder of Lila Kelly Associates, a Minnesota-based company that works with organizations across the country to develop and implement comprehensive, integrated and strategic initiatives for diversity and inclusion, Lila Kelly has researched, consulted, written books and developed online training programs on the topic of diversity hiring.

It's safe to say, she has uncovered, discussed and developed some key strategies and processes for individuals, small businesses and large employers to incorporate and meet diversity hiring goals. But it's taken a lot of time, work and research to get to this point.

"I wish a simple 10-step process to incorporate diversity into the hiring process existed," says Kelly, the author of eight diversity recruiting and hiring books. "But the hiring process has many aspects to consider to successfully integrate diversity and inclusion."

What are the strategies, methods and tips for companies looking to incorporate diversity into their hiring process? Kelly offers these tips:

First break the hiring process into three parts to analyze and develop diversity initiatives around. They are:
1. Recruiting process
2. Interview process
3. Hiring process.

Second, consideration of these parts should be seen as two-dimensional, namely at the individual and system levels.

Every employee involved in these three parts for any particular position (recruiter, interviewers and hiring manager) should understand and agree upon the minimum job requirements and essential job functions. For example, the essential job functions should appear in the job description, the interview questions, and the applicant rating system for making hiring decisions.

"This might not sound like I am talking about 'diversity,' but you cannot do 'diversity' effectively if there is not a sound system that supports it," says Kelly.

Build cultural competencies into the hiring process for the areas of diversity defined by the organization (does the organization define diversity as mainly race and gender, or does it include age, sexual orientation and identity, and disability?). This involves:

1. Identifying bias and barriers for diverse applicants in the hiring process.
2. Once identified, work to educate all employees involved in the hiring process on the appearance of those biases and barriers in the recruiting, interviewing, and hiring process.
3. Begin a process to make the changes necessary to eliminate those barriers.

By now, most organizations probably realize that the workforce is changing. Some have several older workers who are retiring in the next few years. Today's applicant pool looks quite

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different than it did years ago. So many interviewers and hiring managers are asking
questions that need to be answered, such as:

- Can I just hire my co-worker's son?
- What should I be asking in an interview?
- Are my interview questions legal

What diversity and inclusion methods work: Recruiting

Adopting a strategic approach to diversity recruiting will likely involve expanding current
recruiting efforts, says Kelly. However, by using this approach on a consistent and strategic
basis, the payoff in achieving a more diverse applicant pool and workforce will be worth it.
Studies have shown that 65% to 75% of jobs in the United States are filled through employee
referrals, or networking. Therefore, a high percentage of an organization's recruiting efforts
should focus on networking within diverse individuals and communities.

Select diversity recruiting resources that offer opportunities to post job openings and
internships, provide sponsorship (vendor table at community events), and/or network to reach
members of those communities.

Recruiting resources should include some or all of these, which are highlighted in Kelly's
Diversity Recruiting Resource and Directory**:**

- Community agencies and organizations
- Community events
- Professional associations
- Colleges and universities
- Education field – urban teach programs
- Job fairs
- Newspaper/magazines/journals
- Radio stations and programs
- Web sites, webcasts, podcasts and other online channels

"Having recruiters network in diverse communities and offering them other general diversity
resources will assist them in learning more about diverse groups and developing cultural
competencies for recruiting and interviewing," says Kelly.

All employees should be seen as potential recruiters for an organization. Perhaps offer a
referral bonus to employees who refer someone who is hired.

Below, Kelly offers additional insight, tips and strategies on how to best incorporate – and
succeed – in achieving diversity hiring goals:

What diversity and inclusion methods work: Interviewing

organization's employee selection process more inclusive and welcoming for diverse
applicants is to learn directly from the experts – diverse applicants themselves," says Kelly.
These are the people who have experienced bias and cultural misunderstandings, know how it
feels, and have ideas about positive changes that can be made within organizations.
Find answers to these questions:

- What are diverse applicants looking for in a job and employer?
- What actions might cause an organization to lose qualified diverse applicants?
- Might staff be inadvertently disrespectful or offensive to diverse applicants?
- How can interviewers make applicants open up and talk about their work experiences?

With the main focus on the interview process, these four points from Kelly's book Integrate
Diversity into Recruiting, Interviewing and Hiring also involve recruiting and hiring:

Part One

Identify barriers to inclusive recruitment, interviewing and hiring. Identifying how bias and
interviewing skills affect the employee selection process and can create barriers that can exist

within an organization and interview team. From diverse applicants' perspectives, identify the motivation behind their rejecting a job offer from your organization.

Part Two

Have all on the interview/hiring team gain an understanding of diversity and cultural competencies for interviewing and hiring. Closely examine cross-cultural dynamics and the manifestation of bias and cultural misunderstandings in an employment interview and hiring process.

Part Three

Integrate diversity into employment interviewing and hiring at the more technical level — the interviewer's style and the structure of the interview process, commonly-asked interview questions in gaining the information interviewers need. Understand if and how to approach the subject of diversity during the interview process, whether it is mentioned by the applicant or interviewer.

Part Four

Focus on organizational diversity and inclusion related to recruitment, interviewing and hiring. Assess where your organization is on an organizational cultural competency spectrum in understanding and having the ability to handle situations, issues, and barriers that can exist at each stage of the spectrum. Develop and implement strategies and initiatives for inclusive practices at the organizational level involving recruitment, internet application systems, interviewing and hiring, written documentation and employee retention.

Hiring

Track the diversity of new hires (and past). For diverse hires, continue with whatever worked to get them hired. Ask them what works and for their advice on the organization's diversity hiring initiatives.

What methods do not work?

Recruiting: Trying something just once and then stop because you didn't get any hits. Placing an ad in a diverse community newspaper or on their website.
Interviewing: Overselling the position to diverse applicants, trying too hard to make them feel comfortable, making wrong assumptions about their ability to perform job duties based on interviewers' bias.
Hiring: Having no one on the interview and hiring team who will speak up when biased comments and decisions are made.

What are mistakes to avoid?

Recruiting
Do not stop diversity recruiting efforts for a reason such as, "We already have too many qualified applicants in our database, and do not plan to have any open positions. Then when a position does open up, there are predominantly white applicants in the database, many of which have been referred by current employees, and one gets hired.
Do not assume that all qualified applicants have Internet access at home or even equal access to the Internet. See Kelly's article The Hidden Face of Discrimination for Internet Applicants for more info.

Interviewing
Asking questions in a way that could put the interviewer in a culturally awkward or legally sensitive situation – and then not being prepared to handle it.
For example, an interviewer asking, "Tell me about yourself," and the applicant responding with the number and ages of her children. Another, more complex situation with a more complex solution is this: Asking an applicant who is a recent immigrant about the ability to take calculated safety risks, or a woman who is lesbian being asked why she moved to Minnesota.

Hiring
Allowing members of the interview/hiring team to get away with using words to discredit a

diverse applicant such as, "I am just not comfortable with [the applicant]," or "I don't think [the applicant] will be a good fit here," or "I don't think [the applicant] would be comfortable working here," without questioning that team member about what she or he meant by that comment. Also, hiring under or un-qualified diverse applicants, just because they are diverse.

What are ways to make sure the plan in place is effective?
1. Recruiting: Take a strategic approach aiming at results over the long-term.
2. Interviewing: Track hires on an on-going basis. If diverse applicants are represented in the applicant pool, being interviewed, and actually hired into professional level positions. Then are they retained by the organization. All of those should be tracked.
3. Screening: Only qualified applicants should be considered at every phase of the process, or the diversity hiring initiatives will fail.

Tips to consider to incorporate diversity and inclusion hiring goals
1. Understand that most people (65-70%) who get hired into jobs know someone within that organization (or knows someone who knows someone).
"Commit to breaking this model, if it exists in your organization, unless your organization is already very diverse," says Kelly.
2. Continually look for loopholes in the entire recruiting through hiring process that allows non-diverse applicants to get hired and diverse applicants not.
3. Continually strive to make changes to the system/processes to close these loop holes.
"Have upper management's support to stand firm with these changes when push back happens – and it will happen," says Kelly "If this work is being done right."

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