Gartner for HR

5 Ways of Crafting Inclusive Hiring Processes

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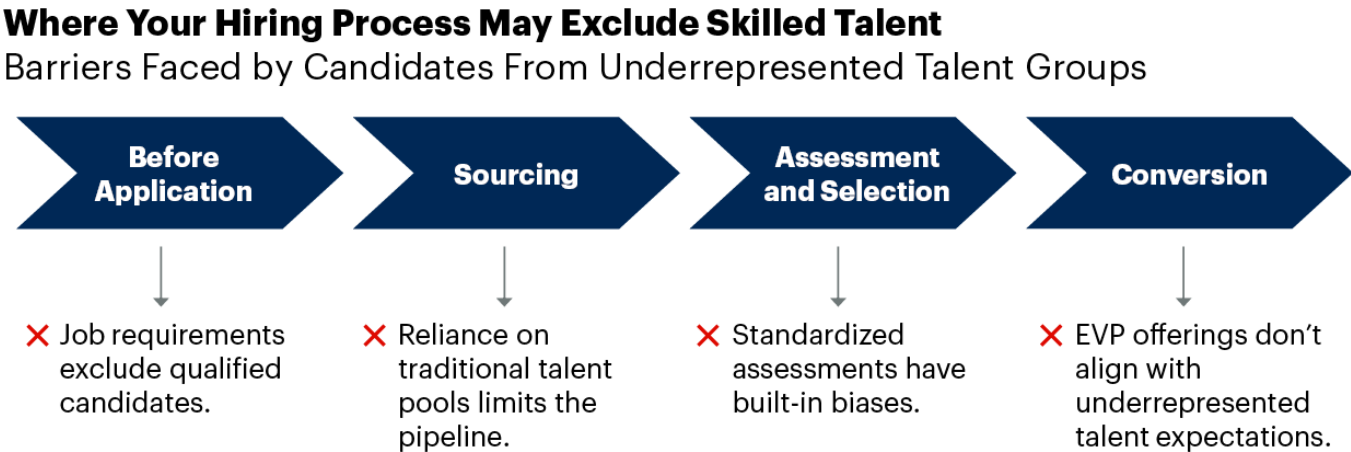# 5 Ways of Crafting Inclusive Hiring Processes

Throughout 2020, there has been a renewed sense of urgency to further diversify corporate working environments. This article shares five strategies HR leaders can use to develop more inclusive hiring processes as part of their diversity recruiting efforts.

In May 2020, a series of racially charged events reignited the global conversation about racial equity and inclusivity. This conversation has grown more urgent as protests have continued across the United States, with people demanding change in all facets of life. Organizations face increased pressure from employees and the public not just to diversify their workforces, but to create more inclusive practices for employees and candidates.

Leaders are prioritizing diversity initiatives more as well. From 2019 to 2020, 73% more HR leaders identified diversity and inclusion efforts as a top priority. [1] Acquiring diverse talent is a key part of these efforts. However, companies have struggled to make progress in attracting and hiring more diverse talent.

To increase the diversity of hires, recruiting leaders must go beyond just sourcing from more diverse pools. Candidates from underrepresented talent groups face barriers that may prevent them from successfully completing the hiring process (see Figure 1). HR leaders must reexamine the hiring process from end to end and break down these hidden barriers.

<p style="text-align:center;color:#c8501e;font-weight:bold;">Figure 1. Where Your Hiring Process May Exclude Skilled Talent</p>

Where Your Hiring Process May Exclude Skilled Talent
Barriers Faced by Candidates From Underrepresented Talent Groups

Before Application	Sourcing	Assessment and Selection	Conversion
✗ Job requirements exclude qualified candidates.	✗ Reliance on traditional talent pools limits the pipeline.	✗ Standardized assessments have built-in biases.	✗ EVP offerings don't align with underrepresented talent expectations.

Source: Gartner
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Successfully recruiting diverse talent is a challenge to many organizations because the focus is usually on finding new talent pools rather than addressing other barriers to building a more inclusive hiring environment for underrepresented candidates. Some organizations have taken steps to redesign the hiring process to reduce barriers that candidates face. This article talks about five changes recruiting leaders can make to support inclusive hiring.
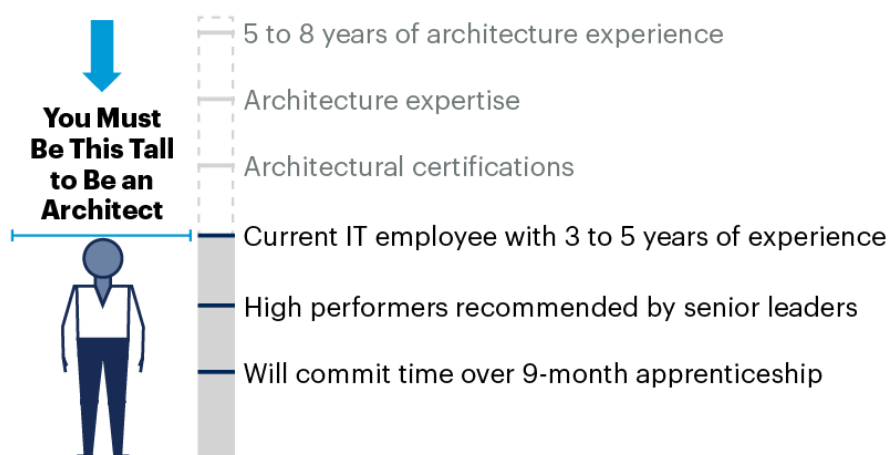
Define Job Requirements Based on Work Outcomes, Not Credentials

Organizations can create a more inclusive hiring process by rethinking the needs definition process. Most hiring managers define needs based on traditional profiles of educational backgrounds and prior work experience. However, this approach excludes many candidates who would otherwise be capable of performing the job. Many diverse candidates get screened out of the process as a result. Instead, recruiters and hiring managers should form needs definition based on the work that actually needs to be done, not assumptions about the credentials needed. Defining needs based on work outcomes removes the need for candidates to have credentials that may not be needed on the job while widening the candidate pipeline to people from diverse backgrounds.

A large pharmaceutical company does this with its architecture apprenticeship program for training new enterprise architects. The company's EA leaders realized employees with more varied backgrounds could learn to become enterprise architects. First, the company defined the foundational requirements that signaled architect potential, including technical skills and business acumen developed with IT experience (see Figure 2). Second, it ensured that apprenticeship candidates were high performers in their role and had the support of senior leadership. These relaxed requirements allowed it to expand its pipeline of architects to people with a wider variety of backgrounds. They also resulted in a number of innovative projects for the business.

By defining needs based on work outcomes, recruiters are empowered to explore candidates with different skills profiles who may be equally capable of the work. Adjusting needs definition to focus on transferrable skills and potential can be a more inclusive practice than relying on past experience alone. This widens the candidate funnel to include people with nontraditional backgrounds who are also capable of succeeding in the role.

Figure 2. Pharmaceutical Company's Approach to Expanding the Architect Pipeline

You Must Be This Tall to Be an Architect

- 5 to 8 years of architecture experience
- Architecture expertise
- Architectural certifications
- Current IT employee with 3 to 5 years of experience
- High performers recommended by senior leaders
- Will commit time over 9-month apprenticeship
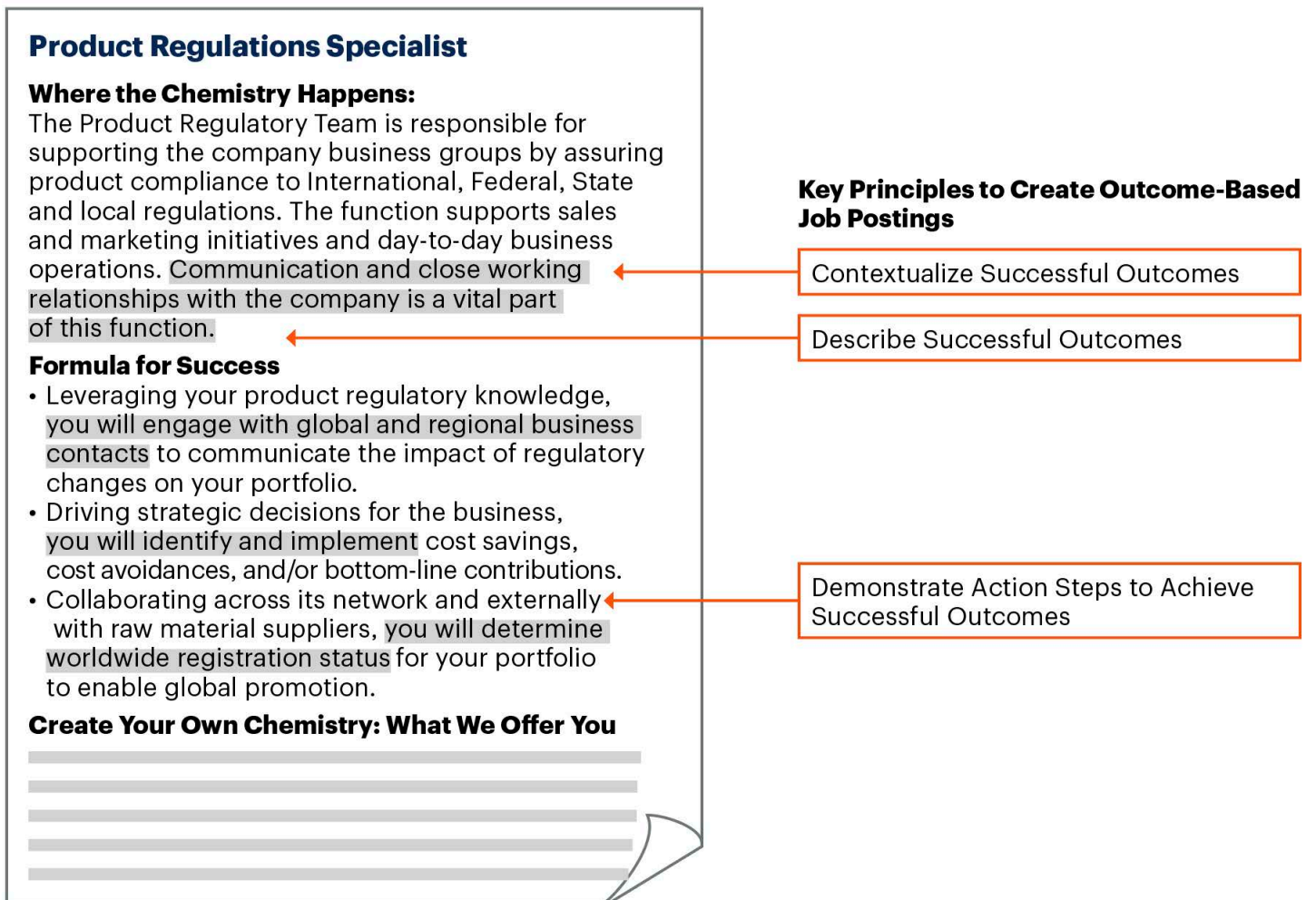
Source: Adapted from Lilly

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Create More Inclusive Job Posts

Recruiting leaders must also think about the way their job postings keep qualified candidates of diverse backgrounds from applying. Biased language in job posts could unintentionally discourage women, racial minorities and people with physical disabilities. For example, job descriptions may have unconscious gender bias if they include adjectives that are stereotypically masculine, such as "strong" and "drive." Similarly, job descriptions can inadvertently exclude disabled applicants through words such as "speak" or "carry." First, recruiting functions can use language processing software to analyze job descriptions for biased language. These programs can offer alternative words to convey key job requirements, such as substituting "communicate" for "speak."

Second, job descriptions can be made more inclusive by deemphasizing the need for certain prior experience, such as particular degrees or work history. At a large chemicals company, recruiting leaders realized their job descriptions were excluding qualified candidates by making assumptions about the qualifications needed to succeed in a position [see Impact-Based Hiring (Large chemicals company*)]. Recruiting leaders adjusted their job descriptions to focus on describing the outcomes a role must achieve rather than prescribing the qualifications needed to achieve them. These outcome-based job descriptions remove hiring manager presumptions and communicate clearly what success in the role looks like so candidates are less likely to remove themselves from the hiring process because they lack certain qualifications (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Chemical Company's Outcome-Based Job Postings

Product Regulations Specialist

Where the Chemistry Happens:
The Product Regulatory Team is responsible for supporting the company business groups by assuring product compliance to International, Federal, State and local regulations. The function supports sales and marketing initiatives and day-to-day business operations. Communication and close working relationships with the company is a vital part of this function.

Formula for Success
• Leveraging your product regulatory knowledge, you will engage with global and regional business contacts to communicate the impact of regulatory changes on your portfolio.
• Driving strategic decisions for the business, you will identify and implement cost savings, cost avoidances, and/or bottom-line contributions.
• Collaborating across its network and externally with raw material suppliers, you will determine worldwide registration status for your portfolio to enable global promotion.

Create Your Own Chemistry: What We Offer You

Key Principles to Create Outcome-Based Job Postings

Contextualize Successful Outcomes

Describe Successful Outcomes

Demonstrate Action Steps to Achieve Successful Outcomes

Source: Adapted from BASF

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*Case study anonymized

Candidates with diverse backgrounds may also look for information about an employer's D&I programs and policies before and during the recruitment process. To highlight these initiatives and improve the candidate experience for diverse talent, recruiters can specifically mention the organization's diversity commitment and initiatives in the introductory or concluding sections of job descriptions.

Tailor the EVP for Underrepresented Talent Segments

As organizations compete for the best talent and work toward becoming more diverse and inclusive, understanding candidates' preferred benefits and employee value proposition (EVP) attributes can help them stand out. Significant room for improvement exists, as in 2019, only 60% of new hires said a company's branding matched their experience in their new roles. [2] Recruiting leaders should always strive to ensure inclusive branding is supported by an inclusive company culture.

A large mining organization worked to change brand perceptions so it could improve its gender representation after adjusting its talent management approach [see Mining New Talent Pools Mining Company*]. By creating new marketing materials for its mining teams, the company was able to craft an EVP that appeals to women in a male-dominated industry. Its HR team created YouTube videos that showed the new roles, locations and facilities and discussed the culture and diversity of its new mining teams. The recruitment team also attended numerous events at women's professional organizations to identify potential employees and promote the opportunities in the IROCs. Organizations can emphasize certain benefits that women employees value, such as flexible work, parental leave and leadership development programs.

Candidates from underrepresented groups are looking for organizations with an authentic and inclusive company culture. The best organizations are making an intentional effort to understand the specific needs of diverse candidates and address those needs with a customized EVP.

Create New Partnerships for Future Sourcing Needs

Recruiting functions can also cultivate new relationships with organizations to further diversify their pipelines. Many organizations currently leverage partnerships to help diversify the pipeline of women and racially and ethnically diverse candidates. However, organizations should consider partnering with groups that can help hiring managers recruit neurodiverse candidates and other underrepresented talent segments.

A large computer company's Autism Hiring Program, and an aerospace and defense company's career restart program both stemmed from dedicated partnerships with organizations that connected them with talent. The computer company worked with an organizations that empowers people with disabilities to find autistic candidates who were looking for work, while the aerospace and defense company teamed up with return-to-work organizations. Nontraditional candidates may not be aware of opportunities at certain organizations, so cultivating new sourcing relationships eliminates the first barrier toward sourcing diverse talent.

Organizations can partner with nonprofit groups that seek to help underrepresented talent find jobs that they can excel in. In addition to community-based partnerships, recruiting functions should consider reevaluating their university partnerships to focus on schools with more diverse populations, particularly for majors where diversity is a challenge. A language-learning website, for example, achieved a 50-50 balance of men and women in its university hiring for software engineers by only partnering with schools that had an above-average percentage of female computer science majors.

Leverage Technology to Reduce Bias in Assessments

Candidate assessments should be reviewed for biases to give all candidates equal opportunities to perform well. To mitigate biased decision making, organizations are leveraging new technologies that help remove biases from the sourcing and interviewing processes. These technologies have the capability to remove barriers from the process and ensure all diverse talent is fairly considered.

For example, CapitalAssets* leverages its applicant tracking system (ATS) to remind recruiters of bias and biased language while they screen candidates (see Figure 4). The company does this by embedding reminders about biased language into the ATS itself. CapitalAssets relies on technology to assist in the recruiting process while also actively using it to reduce bias.

Figure 4. CapitalAssets' Use of ATS to Reduce Bias

ATS Biased Language Reminder
Illustrative

Weiwei L.
Position: Senior Accountant

Competency Interview Notes

Weiwei's resume indicated that she had some relevant experience in financial reporting but struggled to articulate examples of how she …

… Concerned that her **presence** in front of senior stakeholders would be an issue.

Your Role in Reducing Bias

At CapitalAssets*, we are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace. Part of that mission includes reducing the influence of bias in hiring.

Below is a list of words and phrases that are **not** an indicator of future success in a role, and should not determine whether we go forward with a candidate:

• Presence
• Quiet
• …

Learn more about unconscious bias here.

Source: Adapted From CapitalAssets

*Pseudonym
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Recruiting leaders also have the ability to leverage assessments early in the hiring process to prioritize candidates based on their skills rather than their resume. This helps ensure candidates who are a good fit for the job are not prematurely screened out of the hiring process due to bias. A multinational pharmaceutical company includes a business challenge as part of its application process that allows candidates to show how they solve problems [see Active Consideration Applications (Pharmaceutical Company*)]. The manufacturer of an energy drink also uses an upfront assessment to prioritize candidates based on objective measures of their strengths. Organizations can use these assessment solutions to prioritize applicants based on indicators of potential performance in role rather than relying on a more subjective early screening process.

More inclusive hiring processes improve candidate experience for diverse groups and increase the likelihood of them joining the organization. Identifying barriers throughout the hiring process is key in successfully hiring diverse talent. When making a commitment to source new talent segments, recruiting functions must identify the needs of each talent segment and adjust their hiring processes and EVP accordingly.

Endnotes

[1] 2020 Gartner HR Agenda Poll; 2021 Gartner HR Agenda Poll

[2] 2019 Gartner Candidate Panel Survey

* Pseudonym

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