

HR Compliance Library, ¶42,530, Expert Guidance: Diversity recruiting programs

One essential step to ensuring a diverse workforce is to recruit from a pool of diverse individuals. HR strategists Dr. John Sullivan and Dr. Sally Baack recommend ten action steps towards dramatically increasing the effectiveness of an organization's diversity recruiting program (DRP) (.¹⁰).

Step 1: Articulate clear goals for the diversity recruiting program (DRP). Internally, recruiters, managers and all levels of employees need to be made aware of the importance and function of the DRP to the organization. This helps to secure buy-in from key internal players and lends validity and support to the DRP. This support is necessary when making resource allocation decisions and setting broader strategic objectives for the company.

Making goals explicit also has important benefits for the organization externally. If all organizational members fully understand the role and priorities of the DRP, then they can better assist the organization in their efforts to identify key diversity candidates, take advantage of referral opportunities, and ultimately help in selling and closing the deal with prospective candidates.

Step 2: Build the business case. The most powerful and effective arguments that can be made for excellence in diversity recruiting relate to the business and dollar impact that diversity recruiting can have on the bottom line of the organization. The following list contains the prime factors that can be used to demonstrate the dollar impact of having a diverse workforce.

- *Achieving excellence through access to quality* —Diverse thinking enhances evaluation and problem-solving ability, in part due to different frames of reference.
- *Product sales* —Product sales increase as a workforce reflects the interests and needs of the customer base, which for most organizations these days is globally dispersed.
- *Product features* —Having diversity on product development teams helps ensure that products have features that are desired and can be easily utilized by more people.
- *Advertising and marketing become more effective* —Having diverse people collaborate on the design of our advertising campaign results in a more effective campaign because the ads can be understood by and reach a culturally broader audience.
- *Globalization demands it* —As companies become more global it is essential that everyone think and act with a broader understanding of the different ways to solve problems and sell products.
- *Employees and stockholders may demand it* —Diversity is one of the key elements that attracts and retains top performers. In a changing world where more diverse people own stock, expectations for a diverse workforce increase.
- *Customer service* —Employees from diverse backgrounds better understand and provide service to our diverse customers.

Step 3: Better utilize referrals. Referrals can be a powerful tool for DRP's, when managed effectively by building your internal brand as a "great place to work" through frequent internal communications in order to increase or re-energize your employee referrals. If you expand the definition of "who" can refer candidates, you'll get dramatically improved results.

Step 4: Offer incentives, recognition and rewards. Some of the most effective rewards span the management, recruiting and employee ranks. For example, a significant portion of all individual hiring managers pay (5 to 10 percent) should be based on diversity recruiting and retention results. In addition, senior management should have their pay based on producing results. Finally, the director of recruiting and the VP of HR both need a large portion of their pay tied to diversity recruiting success.

Another incentive is to give employees a small reward for identifying the names of diversity candidates. Just "finding the names" of diversity prospects is worth some small reward, so don't forget to incent people just for adding names to your diversity prospect database.

Step 5: Implement innovative diversity recruiting tools and strategies. Ways to innovate recruiting strategies and tools include:

- *Differentiate yourself* —The key to success in recruiting is to differentiate, not copy. To avoid the cookie cutter approach, develop unique and distinctive programs, slogans and approaches.
- *Utilize technology* —Internet recruiting can identify candidates everyday. Screening videos, profiles of diversity employees, frequently asked questions and a listing of diversity awards are all easily utilized. Also, visit candidate's personal web pages and the chat rooms they frequent.
- *Place less emphasis on the legal* —Unfortunately, most of the arguments for diversity recruiting have focused on the threat of a lawsuit rather than logic or economics. As result, many diversity managers are accustomed to using the law as a "club." What is needed is a more balanced approach that calculates not only the risks, but also the benefits of great diversity recruiting.
- *Increase the focus on "closing the sale"* —Managers need to be educated and trained on how to close diversity candidates. Provide "side-by-side" offer comparison sheets which allow them to see how our offer stacks up against other offers a diverse candidate is likely to get. Also, whenever a diverse candidate accepts or rejects an offer, do a post-mortem to understand what they liked and what they did not.
- *Build the brand* —Building a positive external brand can positively impact both the quantity and quality of diverse and non-diverse applicants alike by increasing the company's name recognition, visibility and image.

Step 6: Hire and train world-class recruiters. The skills required to recruit excellent diverse individuals are the same skills required to recruit any excellent individual. These skills include a "find a way" " attitude, knowledge of effective recruiting techniques, experience using marketing research tools and sales ability. What results in successful diversity recruiting is the ability of these excellent recruiters to apply their experience and expertise to the specific case of diverse individuals, just as they would to any other high-potential candidate that has been identified.

Step 7: Conduct extensive market research. Market research helps HR understand the basic demographics of target candidates, which makes it possible to easily "find" diversity candidates. In addition, market research allows HR to identify what these diverse candidates expect in a job through the use of surveys and focus groups. Dr. Sullivan and Dr. Baack suggest these steps:

- Develop a behavioral profile of current diverse employees by identifying diverse individuals within your organization and finding out "how can I find you again."
- Conduct market research to identify the common demographic characteristics of the diverse population being targeted (drawn from your current diverse top performers and your targeted candidates). It's important to know precisely what they read, what they watch and where they go in order to design recruiting programs that can effectively reach them. Specifically look at conferences they attend, organizations they join, web sites they visit and chat rooms they frequent.
- Identify the specific "decision criteria" used by diverse candidates when they choose an industry and a company to select a new job.
- Identify "networks" within a function or your industry. Start by identifying any key "opinion leaders" or well-connected individuals that can serve as advisers or even referral sources for identifying diverse candidates.

Step 8: Improve program measurement and metrics. An effective DRP needs to measure at the very least:

- Which sources produce the best candidates.
- Why offers are rejected.
- Why diverse workers quit.
- The performance or quality of the hires.
- Which managers have an excellent reputation for diversity recruiting results.
- Diversity retention rates.

- Diversity recruiting results by manager and business unit.

After gathering the metrics it is equally important that they be distributed (in a forced rank format) to all managers and relevant employees. This distribution serves both to educate and to evaluate them in front of their peers. This report recognizes managers with excellent results and shows other managers what is possible within the organization.

Step 9: Recruit "passive" candidates. Most recruiting programs focus primarily on attracting "active" candidates (someone that is actively looking for a job). However, at any one time less than 20 percent of the workforce is actively looking for a job. Therefore, a DRP should focus on identifying and recruiting "passive" (employed professionals) candidates.

Step 10: Devote equal attention to orientation and retention. Finding diverse employees is important but keeping them is equally as important. Orientation is important because diverse candidates may need specialized help in understanding the corporate culture in order to get off to a fast start. Helping diverse individuals get a mentor, hooking them up with affinity groups (internal clubs or organizations made up of people with similar interests) and by continually asking them "how they're doing" can all go a long way toward improving their success rate.

It is also essential to evaluate and reward managers based on their success in retaining diverse workers. Diverse employee turnover rates need to be measured and reported independently of all other turnover. Moreover, because not all managers or employees understand the unique needs of diverse employees, it's important to continually educate managers and employees about diversity issues. It is equally important to periodically survey individual diverse employees about what frustrates them.

Footnotes

- .10 Excerpted from " *Diversity Recruiting Is a Failure—It's Time to Raise the Bar!* " an article presented in the May 2005 issue of Dr. John Sullivan's electronic VP of HR Newsletter. For more information visit www.drjohnsullivan.com.