

Member's Quarterly

Summer 2016 Edition

Feature

Serving up Diversity and Inclusion in the Recruitment Process

What are 'The Answers'?

A lot of quality literature has been written on 'the business case for diversity and inclusion.' As HR practitioners, managers, employees and consultants, we must regularly review it to ensure our workplaces are devoid of systemic discrimination. In Ontario, we are legislatively governed by the *Employment Standards Act*, the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (best to check out your local legislation).

Clearly, the evidence demonstrates that hiring diverse employees at all levels is 'the right thing to do.' It also benefits organizations greatly by generating more creative and innovative ideas and solutions through hiring strong performers, mirroring our clients in our workforce and impacting our bottom lines. It simply works better to have everyone represented and supported in our workforce.

Recruitment professionals are frequently challenged by hiring managers who insist on hiring to 'fit their culture' — by which they may mean a specific ethnicity or background, or candidates with Canadian experience, English-sounding names and of a certain 'young' age, for example.

These are difficult discussions to have with our recruitment partners. Often, they do not intend to discriminate and they do not realize that they are asking us to do so. Yet, the result is the same. This is what we are being asked to do and it simply can't happen on our watch. We have the responsibility and opportunity to educate.

How do we have these difficult discussions? How do we 'live' diversity and inclusion without putting the wall up or closing conversations? What are the right answers in these 'sticky situations'?

Having tried this in a number of ways with varied results, I recommend 'gentle, constructive education' that demonstrates the benefits of diversity and inclusion without 'nailing' our recruitment partners. Here are some examples to generate healthy conversations. They don't address every situation but they will provide some ideas to get us moving forward. The goal is to have the most impactful result by hiring 'the best' qualified candidate.

"We have a young culture, so we'd like to see young candidates."

Weaving the organization's 'cultural fit' into the process is fine if this is done to ensure that the candidate's values and work ethic are in alignment with the organization. If the organization is rooted in entrepreneurship, it's fine to target candidates that are entrepreneurial. However, age is not relevant information and has nothing to do with qualifications, 'fit,' or the candidate's ability to perform. We can help employers understand that organizations benefit from having all generations and ages represented, including new grads and those with experience who can mentor them.

"I need someone with Canadian experience."

Often, Canadian experience is unnecessary. Canadian regulations for specific processes and procedures can be reviewed and learned quickly if candidates have the required technical and behavioural competencies. We can promote understanding by measuring behavioural and technical competencies in interviews, then determining if additional learning is required. It helps to dig into years of experience performing



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specific duties and candidates can demonstrate their knowledge level by providing detailed examples. It is simply advantageous to recruit the most qualified candidate. Organizations that recognize international 'transferable' credentials and training reap the corresponding competitive advantage.

"I want somebody with an English-sounding name."

Why? Selecting candidates based on criteria other than their qualifications is discrimination. To avoid generalizations based on ethnicity, we can help hiring managers understand that our purpose is to source qualified candidates and the last name or ethnicity are irrelevant. I recommend communicating that we are here to keep the hiring manager and candidate safe within the recruiting process by not engaging in any type of selection that is discriminatory or irrelevant to getting the best qualified person. That's our value add — keeping everyone safe with a legislatively compliant recruitment process while finding the best possible candidate.

"I need a guy with his CMA."

Really? Last we checked, there were many qualified candidates other than those of male gender. Many times, non-inclusive language hasn't been taught in organizations and the hiring manager doesn't mean this literally. Again, we can suggest 'remaining open' to all candidates to broaden the funnel of qualified candidates. Encouraging inclusive language can also help to change this mindset.

In the end, we do our clients (both internal and external) an injustice if we don't include diverse candidates in the recruitment process. The goal is to 'hire the best' and we must not deprive organizations we serve from having the best possible workforce. It's all about having solid, beneficial, legally compliant recruitment and HR processes. As trusted advisors, we can share those constructively with our recruitment partners.

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