

An Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit





Introduction

We have both an historic opportunity and a moral obligation to build more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces. This much has been clear for some time. But there is a problem: progress to date has been far too slow. Decades of fine words and good intentions have failed to transform organisations in the way that the original champions of this agenda had hoped. That is particularly true at the senior executive and Board levels, which is where our company, Society, does most of its work.

As a firm of headhunters, we have dedicated ourselves to driving positive change by helping our clients to attract, appoint and onboard more diverse and representative talent. In doing so, we have learned a bit about how to bridge the gap between good intentions and concrete results. We have now tried to distil that experience into this short document: a succinct compendium of practical actions that you can consider and challenge yourself with in order to refine and improve your recruitment approach. We have drawn the content from our own executive search practice and from extensive conversations with others committed to inclusive recruitment.

This toolkit is not intended as a rigid prescription. We do not claim to have produced the final and definitive word on inclusive hiring. After all, this remains a rapidly evolving space, where constant vigilance and innovation is needed. But we recognise that organisations need practical, grounded ways of freeing their processes from arbitrary barriers, prejudices, and preferences. Because good intentions alone do not reliably deliver results.

We are making this document freely available with the hope of provoking meaningful change. Whether your organisation is a fresh convert to this agenda, or a longstanding champion of it, we challenge you to go through the 'Practical Steps for Success' below and to pick out some new actions that you might be able to embrace and implement.

You can [sign up to our quarterly newsletter](#) for examples of this Toolkit in action. We also invite readers to contact us directly should they wish to discuss or debate any of the suggestions shared within

Thank you for joining us in this vital and important work.

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Definitions



Equality is the state of being equal, particularly in terms of rights and opportunities.



Equity is recognising each person's various circumstances and distributing the resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.



Diversity is a range of differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, disability, religious or political beliefs.



Inclusion is the practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for groups of people that might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

Different acronyms are routinely bandied around these concepts - EDI, DEI, and even JEDI' (the J is for 'Justice'). There has been a recent pivot towards the 'E' in EDI focusing on 'Equity' rather than Equality, with companies such as Google now choosing to use this term when talking about their commitments.

So how might these concepts manifest within the workplace?



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When an organisation possesses all of these attributes and commits to consistently working on them, it has successfully created the conditions where all people can truly thrive.

Dimensions of Diversity

• Gender	Women
• Ethnicity	Ethnic minorities
• Disability	The disabled
• Sexuality	LGBTQI people
• Age	The young/the old
• Neurodiversity	The neurodiverse or autistic
• Socio-economic	People who have experienced financial hardship
• Personal circumstances	Pregnant women, care givers, the married/unmarried
• Faith	Those with/without a specific religion or belief
• Academic background	Non-graduates
• Historical prejudice	People previously incarcerated, veterans

Commonly Affected Groups

The Business Case

There is a moral case in favour of diversity: the belief that we have a responsibility to correct historic inequities in society. But we believe there is also a business case for diversity. There is extensive academic literature on this topic.

The evidence points to several key advantages:



Increased Creativity and Innovation

Rocío Lorenzo[1] and her team surveyed 171 companies to understand the link between diverse companies and innovation. They analysed innovation revenue (share of revenue being made from new products or services) against each company's diversity statistics in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, etc. The data showed that companies with an above-average level of diversity also reported an innovation revenue that was 19% higher than those with below-average levels of diversity.



Better Decision Making

The US software company Cloverpop[2] studied almost 600 business decisions made by 200 different business teams and found that those with the most diverse teams in terms of gender, geography, and age made better business decisions 87% of the time.



Faster Problem Solving

Harvard Business Review[3] found that teams with cognitive diversity solve problems faster. Cognitive diversity is defined as the inclusion of people who have unique perspectives and therefore process information or solve problems differently. In this study, researchers ran a strategic exercise with six teams and found that the teams with higher cognitive diversity all completed the challenge more quickly than those with less diversity, who either took longer or failed to complete it at all.



Enhanced Ability to Design Products/ Services That Reach Wider Markets

Creating a diverse workplace leaves companies in a better position to meet the demands of a wider customer base. Harvard Business Review[4] found that firms with more diversity are 70% more likely to succeed in venturing into new markets than those who do not invest in recruiting talent from under-represented groups.



Higher Employee Engagement

Sodexo conducts a major internal employee survey every two years.[5] They have found that greater diversity in their workforce – particularly in terms of gender balance – has played a key role in driving a 20% improvement in employee engagement over the past 20 years.



Reduced Employee Turnover

A report by Deloitte[6] shows that organisations that invest in recruiting, retaining and developing an inclusive and diverse workforce have 22% lower turnover rates than those without. Millennials in particular were 83% more likely to be engaged when they felt that their employer is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion.



Better Company Reputation

In a survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers[7], over 80% of its participants said that when deciding whether to work for an organisation or not, its policy and work on equality, diversity and inclusion played a major part in this decision.



All of which Lead to Increased Profit and Impact

McKinsey[8] reported in 2019 that the companies with the highest gender diversity on executive teams were 25 percent more likely to have above-average profitability than those with the least diversity, a figure which itself has increased from 2017 (21%) and in 2014 (15%). Additionally, organisations with “more than 30 percent women executives were more likely to outperform companies where this percentage ranged from 10 to 30”.

[1] How Diverse Leadership Teams Boost Innovation (2018)
 [2] Hacking Diversity with Inclusive Decision Making (2017)
 [3] Collaboration And Teams: Teams Solve Problems Faster When They're More Cognitively Diverse (2017)
 [4] How Diversity Can Drive Innovation (2013) [5] Sodexo: How Employee Engagement is Transforming the Catering Giant (2019)
 [5] Sodexo: How Employee Engagement is Transforming the Catering Giant (2019)
 [6] Inclusive Mobility: How Mobilizing a Diverse Workforce Can Drive Business Performance (2018)
 [7] Magnet for talent: Managing diversity as a reputational risk and business opportunity (2017)
 [8] Diversity wins: How inclusion matters (2020)

01

Campaign Development



Establish Your EDI Commitment – Get Your House in Order!

- Secure meaningful buy-in for your EDI strategy from the very top.
- Identify your EDI successes and gaps - both within your organisation and through the impact of your work – and set concrete goals.
- Make your commitments and values public and reflect them in your written and visual communications.
- Champion and invest in the visibility and progression of existing colleagues from under-represented groups.
- Talk to your team and canvass their opinions on your EDI successes and gaps, creating safe pathways for colleagues from under-represented groups to share honest feedback.
- Build up your diversity data and establish clear benchmarks against your industry, your customer base, and your wider community.
- Ensure you have thorough and regular training in place for all colleagues.



Define the Role - Do You Know What You Want?

- Keep the job description/person specification clear, sharp and focused. Be prepared to part ways with specifications that are too lengthy, or no longer fit for purpose.
- Focus your person specification on skills, not on experience.
- Recruit with openness to part-time, job-share and flexibly structured contracts.
- Avoid time-based or unnecessarily restrictive requirements. eg. 'Must have at least ten years of senior management experience'.
- Avoid vague and unquantifiable language like 'culture fit'.
- Remove degree requirements unless absolutely essential.
- Develop a Candidate Pack that features relevant organisational, departmental and contextual feedback, as well as details about the assessment process.
- Publish all the process dates, so that candidates can forward plan – this is particularly useful for those with caring responsibilities.
- If you are open to providing development support for the appointed person, explicitly state this.
- Consider gathering input and feedback on drafts of the Candidate Pack from stakeholders within the organisation, particularly colleagues from under-represented groups.
- Consider translating the Candidate Pack into British Sign Language (BSL) clips and offering a Word version that is readable by assistive technologies such as screen readers.
- Pick a sans serif font and clearly contrasting colours for all text.

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Candidate Attraction



Advertising

- Include a clear salary range - doing so demonstrates your commitment to fair wage negotiations and transparently helps people decide on the financial viability of a role.
- Pick inclusive job boards or social networks that are targeting specific under-represented groups and/or making demonstrable efforts to broaden their viewership.
- Consider promoting the role through an independent consultant or prominent figure who can broaden your reach within particular under-represented groups.
- Think broadly about where you advertise. Consider options beyond the obvious trade press in your sector.
- Include a meaningful diversity statement that goes beyond intent by truly reflecting how the campaign might address gaps in your current team. eg. 'We are committed to appointing individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, lived experiences and cultures. We particularly encourage applications from communities under-represented in our organisation, including ethnically minoritized and disabled individuals.'
- Film a short introductory video to give candidates a sense of the hiring manager, the team and role priorities.



Active Search

- Team up with an executive search firm that will proactively build a talent pool that is more diverse and that can speak to candidates honestly and objectively about your EDI track record.
- Ensure someone is available to field questions from the market in an informative and engaging way. This gives candidates an important first impression of your organisation and helps them to assess their fit.
- Offer a freely accessible online 'Open Hour' where those thinking of applying can access the recruiting manager/team and ask questions. Consider different mediums such as Zoom or Instagram Live. Use this opportunity to showcase representation within your organisation.
- Offer video relay services through organisations like SignVideo.
- Communicate transparently to candidates about the process and their potential fit, and always offer and request feedback. This safeguards against negative effects on mental health that can accompany the logistically and emotionally draining process of applying for a job.



Application Method

- Do not ask candidates to provide details of their current salary. Judge them on their merits not their previous remuneration.
- Know the rules of criminal record disclosure and commit to 'Ban the Box', a campaign that calls on employers to remove the criminal conviction tick-box from application forms.
- Ditch the traditional covering letter approach and instead ask candidates to answer focused, role-relevant questions that test for capability and potential.
- Recruit on a name-blind basis where any personal identifiers are removed from application material, or explore e-platforms that offer anonymised, randomised candidate assessment.
- If you're using pre-screening software or AI, regularly and rigorously audit it for bias.
- Avoid reviewing applications until after the deadline date. In doing so, you will assess the full field holistically rather than risking favouritism towards those that apply early.

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Assessment and Selection



Ground Rules

- Consider what 'selection for potential' looks like in your organisation. How do you recruit for growth/evolution versus outdated needs?
- Over explain and pre-brief candidates about what will happen at every stage of the process, and give the rationale behind it. Summarise this through a short, written assessment brief.
- Invite candidates to discuss their access needs without putting the onus on them to raise these first.
- Be intentional and reflective when designing assessments. Challenge yourself to start from a blank sheet of paper rather than simply recycling what you have always done before.
- Field a selection panel that has a mix of backgrounds, lived experience, and perspectives on the role. If you cannot easily find that mix, then bring in some panel members from outside your organisation.
- Include a selection panel member whose role is to call out biases in post interview discussions, such as confirmation bias (interpreting information in a way that confirms or supports one's prior beliefs or values) or halo/horns (where one trait, either good or bad, overshadows the rest).
- Be cautious of decisions linked to 'culture fit'. This can be code for affinity bias, the unconscious tendency to get along with others who are like you.
- Do not hire someone solely because they possess an under-represented characteristic. Instead, ensure all candidates are fairly assessed against your agreed selection criteria.



Selection Process

- Include a candidate-led 'fact finding' session that gives candidates the opportunity ask questions and to develop a sense of what it is like to work at your organisation.
- Include a 'workshop' session, where candidates discuss a live issue with colleagues and test collaboration in action through a real-life scenario.
- Allow candidates to present interview tasks through their preferred medium.
- Develop interview questions that test for capability and potential versus an over-reliance on historic questions linked to past performance.
- Share interview questions/themes in advance, or give candidates some reflection time on the questions/themes directly ahead of their interview.
- Build in time for candidates to ask questions to you.
- Ask candidates for feedback on their assessment experience.



Offers and Onboarding

- Offer the advertised salary (ie. what the job is worth), not what the person is already being paid plus a little bit extra. If you do not, you risk simply perpetuating exciting income equalities that particularly affect women and minority groups.
- Offer the successful candidate the opportunity to take references on the recruiting manager.
- Formalise agreements in clear, concise language that all parties can understand. New employees should not need to hire a lawyer to understand your employment contracts.
- Develop a clear on-boarding plan.



About Society and Note of Thanks

Society is a global executive search firm and certified B Corporation committed to open, inclusive recruitment. With colleagues in the United Kingdom, the United States, and New Zealand, we solve senior hiring challenges for responsible businesses and purpose-driven organisations around the world. We believe that we can bring about positive change by placing exceptional people into meaningful roles within good organisations.

www.society-search.com

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