

# Talent Management

Excellence 

## Embedding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Into The Talent Life Cycle

Top tips for recruiting, advancing  
and retaining diverse talent

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It's not enough to simply hire underrepresented talent and hope they rise to the top. Eliminating bias from one part of the talent system doesn't work if it is an isolated strategy.

Attracting and keeping the best talent takes a systems approach: it requires integrating diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategies at each touchpoint of the talent life cycle.

With a systems approach, it becomes clear that leadership development or mentoring for underrepresented talent may not be enough in themselves to advance talent. But when done in concert with other systemic interventions, like creating a culture of inclusion, where the talent feels a sense of belonging and engages enthusiastically, they create a domino effect.

In this article, I offer practical tips for embedding DEI approaches at critical junctures: in recruitment, advancement, and retention.

### Recruitment

Sourcing and selecting diverse talent is key to the success of any DEI initiative. Everyone is a recruiter who might be able to refer someone. Every employee is an ambassador for the organization.

- 1. Sourcing** is a first step to ensuring a diverse candidate slate. Enhance traditional sourcing methods through targeted community outreach, leveraging employee resource groups for referrals, and internships for underrepresented groups. Partnering with high schools, women's universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities or Hispanic Serving Institutions can further diversify your applicants.
- 2. Scrutinize your selection criteria** for unconscious bias. Are all the criteria you've listed essential to the job? Diverse interview panels go a long way in ensuring a range of perceptions and demonstrating your organization's commitment to diversity. Some organizations offer



pre-interview preparation skills and coaching to potential candidates.

3. Set realistic and ambitious **targets** for recruiters, with bonuses and incentives for referrals.
4. Identify a diverse **internal talent** pool that can be tapped into for openings. Stay in touch with women who have off-ramped their careers.
5. **Monitor** the diversity of candidate slates and adverse impacts at each stage of the recruitment process. Look for any trends or impact of bias in who is forwarded on to managers and who is ultimately hired.
6. **Train** recruiters and managers in unconscious bias and cross-cultural interview skills.
7. Remember that, an organization's **branding** can attract diverse talent. Build diversity messaging into your corporate brand, and invite employee resource groups, diverse employees, diversity champions, allies and others to be ambassadors for the company at external community events.

## Advancement

Onboarding, developing and promoting diverse talent needs to be deliberate, intentional and tailored - supporting people in their roles, dealing with problems

proactively, and moving people to new positions, if necessary to ensure that each person is set up for success.

1. **Look at the data.** How long are people staying at the company? What are the rates of promotion for underrepresented groups and how do they compare to overall representation? Is underrepresented talent in the successor pool? Are certain groups clustered in certain roles or departments?
2. Provide opportunities for **development**, including high-profile assignments, mentoring, sponsorship and leadership development. Provide exposure to senior leadership, and provide exposure to career paths including encouraging underrepresented talent to take on profit and loss roles as a pathway to senior leadership.
3. Intentionally identify underrepresented high-potential talent for **advancement** in talent reviews and provide them with development plans. Analyze performance review data by diversity to check for bias. Role models can inspire high-potential talent, as can rich dialogue and learning opportunities.
4. Set ambitious, realistic **targets** for diversity in successor pools and promotion, and hold leaders accountable.



## Retention

1. **Analyze the data** from engagement surveys, attrition and retention rates through a diversity lens. Are there some groups who are less engaged or more likely to leave the organization?
2. **Gather employee feedback** through exit and stay interviews. What encourages diverse talent to stay? What pushes them to leave?
3. Engender a **sense of belonging** through inclusive benefits, employee resource groups, community volunteer activities and flexible work arrangements.
4. Work toward **pay equity** by rigorously examining the pay data by level, function and identity demographics. Publishing salary ranges for each position builds transparency, and regular monitoring of bonuses and pay increases for bias can help reduce the pay gap. The practice of salary negotiations can disadvantage some groups, as can the practice of asking for the last salary – which simply perpetuates the pay gap.

When we embed our DEI initiatives into the whole talent life cycle, rather than isolating or prioritizing one angle, it builds our brand and our reputation with external stakeholders, while reinforcing to our current and prospective employees that our commitment is consistent and comes from an authentic desire to

build a diverse, equitable and inclusive organizational culture. That, in turn, attracts talent who share these values and who can actively contribute to reinforcing these values.



**Dr. Rohini Anand** was part of the majority—but when she moved to North America to pursue her education and career, she was perceived as a minority. This experience shaped her multilayered, cross-cultural perspective on privilege, as well as her recognition of identity as “situational and fluid.” In her ground-breaking book, [\*Leading Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Systemic Change in Multinational Organizations\*](#) (November 30, 2021, Berrett-Koehler Publishers), Dr. Anand offers practical advice and examples from around the world to guide leaders who are committed to ensuring that their workplaces are diverse, equitable and inclusive for the long haul.



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