PERCEPTION INSTITUTE
Addressing Bias in Hiring & Retention

Best Practices

JOB DESCRIPTION CREATION
- Use language that promotes diversity (e.g. we WANT people from different religions, class backgrounds, etc.)
  - This reduces resume “whitening,” where candidates remove cues of racial identity from their resume
- Avoid language that references one gender over another (spokesperson vs. spokesman)
  - Be mindful of that have different meaning for different identity groups (e.g. “dominant”/“competitive”, which have gendered meaning)

RECRUITMENT
- Create a list of the job qualifications that matter most, and then identify schools and other places where potential applicants have these qualities
  - Don’t rely simply on what is most familiar
- Talk to local organizations with community connections - churches, cultural institutions and colleges that can help connect you with candidates
- Be mindful of the demographics of places you are looking to recruit from - ex. don’t go to career fairs at schools with all white students, be thoughtful about the websites you post the position because they may appeal to a particular audience
- Make sure that your recruitment tools (videos, website, etc.) reflect the kind of diversity that you are looking to expand on (i.e. include images reflecting a range of races, genders, ages)

RESUME EVALUATION
- Develop a standard evaluation form with a detailed scoring metric early on – before you start résumé review. Use it the same way for every résumé.
- Redefine merit and criteria for success as requiring the specific credentials, rather than focusing on “fit.”
  - Set out a standardized set of qualifications
  - Option to use mandatory hiring tests assessing the skills of candidates
- “Blind” the initial review: eliminate information about race or gender from résumés so it doesn’t play a role in the decision-making process.
  - Remove names and photos from resumes before reviewing them
- Identify and communicate standards and decision points for hiring to candidates (before the interview)
- Discuss in-group preference and elite bias, which might lead to subtle preference for one candidate but not for another
Ex. you might not realize that you favored education over experience because you felt a connection to the white candidate with an Ivy League degree rather than the Asian candidate with 10 more years of experience.

This is especially common in ambiguous situations or when 2 candidates have different but equal qualifications.

INTERVIEWS

- In advance of the interview, use simulations for conducting interviews to practice and be critical of the process.
- Developed a standardized interview script and scoring metric in advance. Use it consistently across all candidates.
- Use structured interviews: every candidate gets the same questions in the same order.
  - Score the questions in real time.
- Pay attention to automatic preferences for familiar metrics of status and success (prestige of alma mater, experience at an elite institution, references from existing employees).
- Resist the urge to “go with your gut.”

ONBOARDING → INTEGRATION

- Increasing feelings of belonging for newly hired individuals.
- Do not undervalue basic orientation + team building workshops.
- Be deliberate about mentoring or sponsorship programs for marginalized groups.
- Make equal treatment part of code of ethics: reinforce it in practice, so it isn’t just on paper.
- Review and refine policies to promote inclusion of all identities.
  - e.g. different religious practices: include time or days off for observances and dietary restrictions; gender-neutral parental leave; etc.

INTERNAL DEI APPROACH

- Pro-equity, rather than anti-discrimination.
- Proactive rather than reactive. Ask employees:
  - Have you experienced any barriers to success at this company related to your race?
  - Have you noticed any other obstacles in the way to your success?
  - Is there anything we can do better to facilitate your success and sense of inclusion?
  - In terms of mentorship and promotion, do you sense that those happen without bias?
- Create equity incentives for employees:
  - Identify, support and collaborate with effective programs that increase diversity in the pipeline.
  - Reward employees who volunteer with these groups, create internships and other bridges, and celebrate the stories of those who successfully overcome obstacles.
- Conduct anonymous surveys with former employees to understand:
  - What were the issues they faced?
  - What steps could be taken for them to consider coming back?
Whether they encourage or discourage prospective employees from applying for positions at your school and whether they encourage or discourage prospective students/families from engaging with the school.

- Talk about it!
  - Leaders should make it clear that your school environment promotes free speaking.
  - Encourage all employees to speak out against biases
  - Empower all employees to hold each other accountable.

PERFORMANCE RATINGS
- Base promotions on someone’s objectively measured performance, rather than the their supervisor’s feelings about them.
- Create standardized tools, implement them uniformly.
- *Be mindful of metrics* –self evaluation tools can make it difficult for supervisors to get an accurate view of employee’s performance
  - e.g. men are often more comfortable bragging about themselves than women (more overconfident)

RESPONDING TO AMBIGUOUS DISCRIMINATION
- Highlight the importance of being engaged and guarding against shutting down.
- Deep breathing, taking a step back from your thought process, questioning your perceptions
- Avoiding judgements about each other and about themselves, accepting each person’s perceptions as their truth.
- Emphasize the importance of empathy.

Sources

https://hbr.org/2016/07/designing-a-bias-free-organization


https://recruiterbox.com/blog/remove-hiring-bias-from-recruitment-process/


https://www.wsj.com/articles/seven-steps-to-reduce-bias-in-hiring-1487646840

https://www.raceforward.org/research/reports/confronting-racial-bias-work