

Effective Hiring With Inclusivity in Mind

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Here is an example of how a conversation frequently unfolds when considering hiring a new employee with diversity in mind.

Person #1: We need to hire people who reflect the population we serve.

Person #2: I agree, but, I think we should hire the most qualified person and not lower our standards.

Person #1: Well, I think we can hire minorities and still maintain quality staff.

Person #2: Hmm...but I also think we should avoid quotas.

This conversation may not be your experience, however, this is a conversation I've heard often when consulting or attending conferences in the nonprofit sector.

There are many interpretations of diversity and inclusion. I rely on the work of Cox (2001) who defines diversity as "the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in a defined employment or market setting" (p. 3). Social and cultural identities refers to categories like race, gender, gender expression, national origin, religion, age cohort etc. Employment and market settings refers to the workplace, and other social systems like church, schools etc.

Inclusive organizations are "learning-centered organizations that value the perspectives and contributions of all people, and they incorporate the needs, assets, and perspectives of communities of color into the design and implementation of universal and inclusive programs. Furthermore, inclusive organizations recruit and retain diverse staff and volunteers to reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the communities they serve" (Denver Foundation, 2005, p. XIV). Diversity is an important component of inclusion. It is possible to have an organization that is diverse but not inclusive. However, it is unlikely that you will have an inclusive workplace without diversity.

In the above conversation, diversity is thought of in negative terms. Quality must be sacrificed in order to maintain diversity. This is a false assumption. Quality and creativity are enhanced through diversity. Bringing people together with different experiences, traditions, backgrounds, and beliefs opens the door to thinking differently about organizational opportunities and challenges. A common misconception is that diversity requires nonprofit organizations to establish quotas. Diversity is not

synonymous with quotas. Diversity is not the same as equal employment opportunity (EEO) or affirmative action (AA).

EEO refers to a company's obligation to provide its employees a discrimination-free work environment based on race, sex, religion, national origin or status as a Vietnam-era or special disabled veteran, or status as an individual with a disability. Affirmative Action requires that companies make good faith efforts to recruit, hire, and promote women, minorities, Vietnam-era veterans or veterans with disabilities, and people with disabilities (Brown, Snedeker & Sykes, 1997).

I recommend pondering the following four questions when thinking about creating an inclusive workplace.

- ❖ What do I want, really?
- ❖ What role am I willing to play in creating a diverse, inclusive workplace?
- ❖ How open am I to change?
- ❖ How open is my organization to change?

Hiring people from diverse communities is not a task to check off a "to-do" list. Inclusion is a commitment to honor, respect and value the thoughts, ideas, and perspectives of people who are different. Inclusive organizations are not color-blind organizations. Rather, inclusive organizations recognize that race/ethnicity differences exist. Managing diversity refers to the organizations capacity to utilize fully employees' potential based on an awareness of employees' uniqueness (Brown, Snedeker, & Sykes, 1997).

Within the framework of work groups, diversity creates both opportunities and challenges that are not present in homogeneous work groups. It is important to understand the effects and implementing behaviors, workplace practices and policy changes that may be required to create a diverse workforce. Developing an inclusive organization takes time. Therefore, the leadership of the organization must be committed to staying engaged as the nonprofit moves through various cycles of change.

The Denver Foundation's Inclusiveness Project (<http://www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org/>) offers a blueprint for developing an inclusiveness plan for nonprofit organizations. Additionally, studies and other resources for the nonprofit sector are located on the Denver Foundation website.

Carolyn Love, Ph.D. is the founder of Kebaya Coaching & Consulting. Their vision is to maximize leadership talent and enhance the performance of managers and leaders in nonprofit organizations.

References

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