

Diversity Sourcing 101:

The Talent Leader's Handbook



Contents

Introduction: Why This Handbook, Now?	3
By the Numbers: The Current State of Diversity	6
Talent is Prioritizing Diversity in Their Career Decisions.....	6
Recruiters and Their Organizations Say D&I is a Priority	6
Despite Their Efforts, Companies are Struggling with D&I.....	7
Obstacles to D&I Initiatives (and Action Items to Counter Them).....	9
Diversity Fatigue	9
Ill-Defined D&I Strategies.....	11
Unconscious Bias	16
Laying the Groundwork for Your Top-of-the-Funnel Diversity Initiatives.....	18
Identify the Gaps in Your Organization.....	18
Create a Diversity Candidate Persona	19
Define Success with Diversity Recruiting/Hiring KPIs	20
How Gem Can Help.....	22

Our survey responses suggest a discrepancy between talent teams' stated intentions (diversity recruiting is a priority) and where their time is actually being spent. Our goal in this handbook is to address that discrepancy, offer action items for the obstacles your team may be facing, and help you come up with a diversity sourcing strategy that's right for your organization.

Introduction

Why This Handbook, *Now*?

According to an open survey by Gem, recruiting teams' number one pain point in 2019 has been diversity sourcing. Indeed, nearly 47% of respondents, who range from recruiters to VPs of People, cite finding underrepresented talent as their top priority for the remainder of 2019 and beyond. Despite this, nearly 60% of respondents say their team doesn't have a formal diversity hiring initiative in place. 23% say they currently spend less than a quarter of their time sourcing for diversity. A whopping 18% say they don't source for diversity *at all*. The takeaway? There's a discrepancy between talent teams' stated intentions and where their time is being spent. This is Part 1 of a three-part series on diversity sourcing called *The Ultimate Guide to Sourcing and Nurturing Diverse Talent Pools*. We hope to address that discrepancy here.

Diversity has played a dominant role in conversations about workforce composition since 2014: the year the tech giants (Apple, Google, and Facebook) released their first diversity reports in response to a call to action raised in a Medium article ("Where Are the Numbers?") by software engineer Tracy Chou. The newly-public data sparked an earnest conversation about the underrepresentation of minority groups—not just in certain roles, but across entire organizations. The five-year-long conversation has only become more urgent as new data continues to roll in about the now-incontestable correlation between diversity metrics and company performance. We've compiled some of that data on our blog in case you need it to support an argument for why your team's resources should be allocated to diversity sourcing.

At Gem, we're in the process of working through our own diversity initiatives, in terms of both our company culture and our product offering. We recognize that the strongest diversity hiring initiatives begin at the top of the funnel, which is why our products are positioned at the earliest stages of the pipeline, before prospects even apply. After all, most channels (think referrals and inbound) are inherently less diverse; so if you're not *actively* sourcing and

Intersectionality, n.

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise. (Oxford Dictionary)

nurturing a diverse talent pool, you won't see a diverse pipeline, a diverse set of interviews, or a diverse team. Which means sourcers and recruiters have perhaps the most important role to play in the “D” of a company's D&I initiatives. Our goal at Gem is to help you track and analyze those efforts.

We've written Part 1 for talent acquisition (TA) leaders in particular because they occupy a crucial space between sourcers and upper management. As such, they're in a position to educate their teams on strategies for sourcing more diverse talent pools and best practices for outreach and nurture campaigns—topics we'll cover in Parts 2 and 3, respectively. But they're also in a position to affect the kinds of organizational change essential to inclusive environments: holding hiring teams accountable for checking their biases during interviews, or strategizing with managers to cultivate cultures of belonging on their respective teams. After all, if new hires don't stick around, the burden is back on sourcers to uncover more talent for the company's diversity initiatives. And so begins a vicious circle of getting more candidates in the door who walk out as quickly as they walked in—because there's no structure to support them once they're there.

It behooves *everyone* to have a team that's educated, mindful of its biases, and willing to put in the work of becoming ever-more-aware of the experiences of underrepresented minorities, both in and out of the workplace. For TA leaders, this may mean adding a few more elements to your job description. But they're elements that will make your job easier—and your workplace healthier—in the long run.

Below, we cover the current state of D&I, consider the obstacles holding organizations back from building and maintaining diverse teams, offer action items TA leaders can take to overcome them, and summarize the steps you'll want to take to get your team started on its diversity initiatives.

We'll be using the term “diversity” to refer to *all* efforts your organization makes to ensure representation is more equitable; and we'll use “underrepresented minority” (URM) for talent whose inclusion in your organization would help equalize representation. Diversity includes attention to the following set of things (and more):

- ethnicity
- race
- age
- gender identity and expression
- sexual orientation
- veteran status
- disabilities / special needs
- socioeconomic background
- educational experiences
- skill sets
- neurodiversity

By “neurodiversity,” we're referring to neurological differences that are typically stigmatized: think autism, ADHD, or dyslexia. Neurodiversity is *not* the same as “diversity of thought”—a phrase that's gained momentum in the broader

Talent Acquisition Leaders

are in a position to affect the kinds of organizational change essential to inclusive environments: holding hiring teams accountable for checking their biases during interviews, or strategizing with managers to cultivate cultures of belonging on their respective teams.

conversation but can have widely varying meanings depending on context. Instead, we're focusing on a concrete set of traits. The most mature organizations recognize that the various ways these traits overlap in a single individual result in complex lived experiences where multiple forms of discrimination or disadvantage intersect.



57%

of employees think their company should be doing more to increase diversity in its workforce.

(Glassdoor)

By the Numbers: The Current State of Diversity

Studies across the board paint a complex picture of the current state of D&I. In this picture, organizations say they recognize the value of D&I efforts, and the topic is top-of-mind for both recruiters and the talent they're seeking. Yet only a fraction of organizations have realized this goal—and for many, action and progress have recently *regressed*. If there's a takeaway, it's that current D&I strategies, involving everyone from recruiting teams to HR teams, need to be re-examined.

Talent is Prioritizing Diversity in Their Job Searches and Career Decisions

- 67% of both active and passive job seekers claim a diverse workforce is an important consideration when evaluating a company or a job offer. (Glassdoor)
- 47% of millennials actively look for D&I programs in prospective employers during their job searches...and millennials now make up the largest share of the American workforce. (Weber Shandwick / Institute for Public Relations)
- 57% of employees think their company should be doing more to increase diversity in its workforce. (Glassdoor)

Recruiters and TA Leaders Continue to Say that D&I is a Priority for Their Organizations

- 78% of talent leaders say diversity is the most important trend shaping the future of recruiting and hiring. (LinkedIn)
- 87% of agency recruiters say that D&I is a priority for their clients. (Scout)
- 71% of organizations say they aspire to have a truly “inclusive” culture in the future. (Bourke & Dillon / Deloitte)
- The top three reasons organizations give for prioritizing diversity are: to improve culture (78%), to improve company performance (62%), and to better represent customers (49%). (LinkedIn)
- Organizations are focusing their diversity hiring efforts on the following: gender diversity (71%), racial and ethnic diversity (49%), age/generational diversity (48%), educational diversity (43%), and disability diversity (32%). (LinkedIn)

In 2018 there were only

24 female CEOs in
the Fortune 500

...which means that 4.8%
of Fortune 500 companies
are run by women, while the
workforce is 47% female.
(Fortune / Catalyst)



Despite Their Efforts, Companies are Struggling with D&I

They Struggle with Finding Representation

- Talent professionals cited “finding diverse candidates to interview” as the biggest barrier to improving diversity (38%). (LinkedIn)
- In 2018, there were only 24 female CEOs in the Fortune 500. That means that only 4.8% of Fortune 500 companies are run by women—despite the fact that women make up about 47% of the workforce. (Fortune / Catalyst)
- In 2018, there were only 3 Black CEOs in the Fortune 500 companies. (Fortune)

They Struggle with Belonging and Promotion...and Therefore, with Retention

- Less than 30% of underrepresented groups report feeling a sense of representation or belonging at their respective companies. (Atlassian)
- 20% of LGBT employees who left jobs in tech in 2017 did so because they were bullied; 24% left because they “experienced public humiliation or embarrassment.” The same study found that nearly 25% of underrepresented men and women of color experienced stereotyping—twice the rate of White and Asian talent. And almost 1/3 of underrepresented women of color were passed over for promotion—more than any other group. (Kapoor Center)
- 46% of LGBTQ employees are still closeted at work. (Human Rights Campaign)
- In corporations in 2017, there was a distinct drop-off in women of color when moving up the ranks: from entry-level employees (17%), to managers (12%), to senior managers or directors (8%), to vice presidents (6%) and C-Suite execs (4%). (McKinsey)
- This data might explain why the second biggest barrier talent professionals cited to improving diversity is “retaining diverse employees” (27%). For example, African-American women have a quit rate 61.29% greater than White men, while Hispanic-American women have a quit rate 67.5% greater than White men. (LinkedIn / Dr. Peter Hom)

Formal D&I Programs are Not Only Falling Short; They're Regressing

- Despite admirable D&I aspirations, studies show that actual maturity levels in organizations are very low. 42% of organizations are at what Deloitte calls “Level 1” maturity (compliance-focused), while 31% are at “Level 2” maturity (programmatic). But deep change doesn't happen until Levels 3 and 4, when organizations start addressing systemic cultural barriers and leveraging difference to create business value. (Bersin by Deloitte / Bourke & Dillon)

- D&I efforts in U.S. tech companies have stalled. The number of formal D&I programs dropped by 10% between 2017 and 2018, and the participation of individual employees has fallen by up to 50% year-over-year. Between 2017 and 2018, 33% fewer respondents reported engaging leaders on how to create more inclusive environments; 13% fewer respondents reported learning about the experiences of colleagues different than themselves; and 7% fewer respondents reported participating in discussions about diversity in tech. (Atlassian)



Obstacles to D&I Initiatives (and Action Items to Counter Them)

We can't start generating solutions until we know the nature of the disconnect between the apparent desire organizations have to diversify their teams and the reality of stalled efforts and declining participation rates. What is driving the apparent inadequacy of current practices? We've grouped our answer into three high-level explanations:

- Diversity fatigue
- Ill-defined D&I strategies
- Unconscious bias

A fourth obstacle is the struggle sourcers voice around discovering underrepresented talent to begin with. We'll give this obstacle comprehensive coverage in Part 2.

Obstacle 1: Diversity Fatigue

"Diversity fatigue" can take many forms, depending on where an organization and its employees are on their D&I journeys. Here are a few of those forms:

1. For employees laboring under the misconception that diversity hiring "lowers the bar," fatigue takes the form of frustration (*Why are we still talking about this?!*).
2. For white, cisgender, heterosexual men—typically the majority in a given organization—diversity fatigue often manifests in feelings of being threatened. Majority employees sometimes interpret diversity initiatives as something they're "on the wrong side" of, or as a conversation meant to exclude them.
3. For TA teams who think challenges in diversity sourcing are ultimately a product of talent scarcity, fatigue can take the form of resignation. After all, they're being pushed to source a diverse candidate pool in the face of what is ultimately "a supply-and-demand problem."
4. For employees who are deeply invested in the cause—as is so often the case for on-the-ground advocacy—there's a significant amount of emotional labor expended in D&I initiatives. Like compassion fatigue, this has real physiological effects. Diversity fatigue looks like burnout for these folks.

This list isn't exhaustive, of course; but these are the more common responses we see. You might notice that three of these forms of fatigue are based on common misconceptions. Here's how to counter them:

1. **Diversity hiring doesn't "lower the bar."** The real goal of diversity hiring is to identify and—as thoroughly as possible—to eliminate the procedures and biases that have kept some of the best and most qualified talent from

Some Forms of Diversity Fatigue

- Frustration
- Feeling excluded
- Resignation
- Burnout

your organization until now. In that sense, diversity hiring is actually *more* merit-based than hiring practices that don't take diversity into account. It broadens your prospect pool exponentially, giving you access to even more qualified talent. As Aubrey Blanche, Global Head of Diversity & Belonging at Atlassian, put it: “We care about diversity but we want to make sure we're not lowering the bar, right? If had a nickel for each time I heard a variation of this pushback on diversity and hiring, I think I'd be a billionaire...My response is always no, I'm actually asking you to raise the bar. A lack of diversity is the first indication that a company isn't a meritocracy. So really, the joke's on you because you've already lowered the bar without realizing it.”

2. Diversity initiatives don't seek to exclude or malign non-minority talent. There *is* no wrong side of diversity—indeed, the diversity initiative of a company made up of queer Black women would include strategies to source straight White men. In that sense, workplace diversity is relative. What's more, no one is trying to exclude White men from the conversation. On the contrary, we need everyone to be part of the dialogue! And we need everyone's efforts to make these initiatives happen. Make sure your majority talent knows that they, too, contribute to a diverse workforce.

3. There's enough underrepresented talent out there to fill your open roles. At Gem, we've seen two outcomes ensue when our customers turn their attention to devising more inclusive sourcing and hiring practices. The first is that they start discovering and acknowledging underrepresented communities of qualified talent that they've overlooked in the past. The second is that they begin appealing to prospective candidates from diverse backgrounds who may not have considered them before. Combined, these outcomes lead to significant increases in the size of our customers' talent pools.

That last form of fatigue—burnout for D&I advocates and champions—demands more complex action items. Let's start with this:

4. D&I is a long game. The reality is that diversifying an organization at every level and increasing feelings of belonging across the board are both long games. Indeed, there'd be something suspicious—and possibly illegal—about an organization that suddenly quintupled its URM numbers over the course of a quarter. There was a great deal of enthusiasm and expectation across industries when diversity became a focal point in 2014; but it was perhaps easy to underestimate how long those initiatives would take. After all, it's one thing to implement (and even to meet) diversity recruiting KPIs; it's another to acknowledge—and work toward dismantling—the implicit biases and ingrained perceptions that all members of the organization carry. So as you help implement the action items we offer here, remind those D&I champions of the nature of the long game. And, when possible, openly celebrate their efforts and acknowledge the impact of their work. Progress will necessarily be incremental. They (and you) may need support systems to buoy them up when feelings of defeat start creeping in. What do your fiercest advocates most need when they start feeling discouraged? Structure your support systems around those needs.

Action Items for Diversity Fatigue

→ Clear those common

misconceptions. The truth is that diversity hiring doesn't "lower the bar," diversity initiatives don't seek to exclude or malign non-minority talent, and there's enough underrepresented talent out there to fill your open roles.

→ Remember that you're in the early stages of a long journey.

Setting unrealistic expectations will only demoralize everyone involved.

→ Look at your sourcing and hiring

data and ask about the "why" behind the numbers: why certain hiring KPIs aren't being met, why the demographic makeup of certain roles is what it is, why retention of underrepresented talent is so difficult for certain teams, and so on. (You might get some of the answers to these questions directly from exit interviews, or from underrepresented talent that's still with you.) This should become a routine check-in; but the sooner you can get initial answers to these questions, the sooner you'll know where to begin your efforts.

→ Know that discovering the answers is half the battle.

Celebrate the small successes—not so you can rest on your laurels; but because they'll help the organization in the long run. Be actively-endeavoring; but be patient.

Obstacle 2: Ill-defined D&I Strategies

One form of fatigue we didn't discuss above manifests when one team is carrying the lion's share of the labor (both material and emotional), but its efforts keep getting undermined through negligence in other areas of the organization. For TA teams, this often occurs when the company is under-indexing on the "I" (inclusion) or the "E" (equity). Diversity is about objective, measurable numbers, and ultimately equals concrete representation. *Inclusion* is its less determinate, more elusive sister-term. It's subjective and based on feelings of belonging. While inclusion invites each person's contribution and ensures every voice in the room is heard, *equity* ensures each person receives access to

opportunities, information, and resources that will help them grow and thrive.

Equity and inclusion *must* play substantial roles in your organization's efforts. It's great for TA to move the needle on a set of numbers and realize more diverse representation in your business. But the organization will only become a revolving door for underrepresented talent if company-wide initiatives—from sourcing to recruiting to interviewing to onboarding to HR and people management—remain non-existent. A comprehensive program that takes equity and inclusion into account thwarts harassment, ensures fair promotional practices, and fosters a community of team players who respect and support each other.

As a talent leader, you're less directly involved in the "I" and "E" of the business; but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be a part of those conversations. After all, your job is directly affected by how inclusive the organization's culture is. Broadly speaking, there are three primary areas your organization should focus on when it comes to a D&I strategy:

1. Diversifying the pipeline of prospects and candidates that will ultimately be considered
2. Ensuring each step in the interviewing and hiring processes is as free of bias as possible
3. Improving the sense of belonging—and therefore, of retention—for underrepresented talent once they're hired

Taken together, these areas require a long-term, holistic approach that should be embedded in the company culture, from recruiters to hiring managers to HR. It may be your job to help your organization recognize that any D&I initiative will only be as strong as its weakest element.



My team wouldn't be successful without the deep commitment to diversity and inclusion that Dropbox emanates, from the top leadership team on down. Hiring underrepresented talent is a critical piece of our long-term strategy; but without a culture of inclusion, our hiring efforts would be short-lived and inauthentic. That's why we work so closely with both our hiring partners and the internal DEI team to ensure the experience we're promising candidates is aligned with the measure of belonging employees feel when they get here.

Lindsey Sailors
Diversity Sourcing Lead



How inclusive is your organization?

This can be challenging to assess. The questions on this page can help you get a clearer picture.

Gauging Inclusion: Questions for HR and Senior Management

To determine how broad your organization's commitment to inclusion and equity is, sit down with HR and management—and in some cases, simply look around—and get the answers to these questions. (Note: These aren't issues you'll tackle all at once! These questions are just to give you a sense of your current inclusion-landscape):

- Does the company have a code of conduct and a non-discrimination policy in place? Does it have a diversity mission statement?
- Have those at the highest levels of management formally opted in to the commitment?
- Do you have employee resource groups or affinity groups? How about formal mentoring and sponsorship programs?
- Does the company offer trainings on topics such as unconscious bias, cultural awareness, and gender identity/expression?
- Do employees have flexible work options?
- What safeguards are in place to ensure leadership assessments and promotion processes are as free of bias as possible?
- How frequently does underrepresented talent get promoted? What do their career trajectories look like compared to their White/male/cisgender/heterosexual counterparts?
- How much are underrepresented employees paid compared to majority employees who hold similar roles?
- Are company benefits inclusive of underrepresented talent (coverage for domestic partners, for example; or appropriate health care plans for transgender employees)?
- Does the company allow employees to take their religious/cultural holidays of choice off? Do you celebrate gay pride together? Do you collectively honor International Women's Day?
- Are the bathroom signs in your office/s inclusive?
- If your organization offers employee awards, are the award-winners diverse?
- Do employees use their pronouns in email signatures? Are they pronoun-forward when introducing themselves?
- Are company social events inclusive? For instance, do they always involve the same things (happy hour drinks, which may alienate non-drinkers, parents, and caretakers who must get home); or do they take diverse lifestyles into account?

Again, these details aren't your "responsibility" per se; but they certainly bear on your efforts. (They're also things underrepresented talent will want to hear about in your messaging; so consider it research for your outreach campaigns.) Plant the seeds of conversation around these matters—and if you're in a position to do so, support those teams to get their respective initiatives going.



Our company-wide efforts around diversity, inclusion, and belonging (DIB) have been essential to keeping our culture intact and thriving. At LiveRamp, every employee is a guardian of DIB and its value is filtered from the top. Currently, we are focused on:

- Integrating D&I into our leadership attributes, creating a fluency and call-to-action around it
- Identifying areas of system bias and observing where we need to make changes
- Integrating D&I into LiveRamp's core business strategy
- Integrating D&I within our recruiting and retention strategy and practices

We conscientiously integrate inclusion into each of the six stages of the employee journey: Attraction, Recruitment, Onboarding, Development, Retention, and Separation. Because if even one of those stages is lacking in inclusive practices, the entire structure that holds candidates and employees up is weakened.

Daniel Kornreich
Technical Recruiter



Action Items for More Thorough D&I Strategies

- **Take a hard look at how your organization is currently supporting underrepresented talent.** Use the questions we offer here, exit interviews and one-on-ones with employees, and data from your talent CRM. Which groups aren't accepting offers? Which have the highest attrition rates? What is the current culture failing to offer? How could it better support them?
- **Use those answers—in tandem with external research and guidance from D&I professionals**—to help upper management strategize policies and programs to increase feelings of inclusion in the organization.
- **Tackle the issues one (or two) at a time.** While well-intentioned, a strategy that attempts to tackle every issue at once is likely to only address those issues at the surface level, rather than repair them at their roots. With the data in hand, you'll know where your earliest efforts need to be.
- **Come up with a sourcing strategy for each role you have to fill** based on what that team currently lacks in representation. Data-driven decisions will feel less overwhelming; and teams are small enough units that you can affect visible change in them, which may mitigate the sense of overwhelm.
- **Map out a 1-year plan and a 5-year plan** so you can see how your efforts will evolve and build on each other over time.

Before jumping back into LinkedIn:

Recognize that difficulty discovering underrepresented talent isn't a function of talent scarcity

Sit down with your team and plan a strategic approach to diversity sourcing

Obstacle 3: Unconscious Bias

This final impediment to building and maintaining diverse teams is the slipperiest. After all, we're talking about a set of neurological, decision-making patterns that aren't...well, *conscious*. Study after study shows that even self-professed egalitarians often make subconscious associations that they don't consciously agree with. We can't discount how influential and deeply ingrained these associations are.

So even the most well-intentioned recruiters have to check their biases. It's worth remembering the 2004 study from MIT and the University of Chicago on perceived race in hiring, in which 5,000 fictitious resumes were sent to 1,250 employers: "White-sounding" names (Emily and Greg) received 50% more callbacks than "Black-sounding" names (Lakisha and Jamal). And as recently as 2017, data from 80,000 recruiters worldwide revealed that when recruiters source candidates on LinkedIn—regardless of the gender of the sourcer—they're more likely to click into male profiles. (LinkedIn confirmed this in its Gender Insights Report: Recruiters are 13% less likely to click into a woman's profile when she shows up in a search.)

The takeaway? Unconscious bias toward minorities in sourcing occurs *even when URM's are doing the sourcing*. It's a complex battle taking place on many fronts—from racism to sexism to ageism to ableism. And of course, it directly affects the quality of the employee who will ultimately be hired at the end of process.

The type of bias we hear about most often is the "affinity bias"—when we develop a fast fondness for prospects due to something we share in common with them, privileging that commonality to the prospect's skillsets or to the value they'd bring to the team. But there are many biases at play as we move through the world (and through LinkedIn). There's the "beauty bias," which stems from the subconscious notion that beautiful people are more successful. There's the "halo effect" (its inverse is the "horns effect"), wherein we assume that because a prospect excels at one thing, they'll excel at other things as well. There's the "effective heuristic" bias, wherein a person's perceived suitability for a role is based on superficial factors such as body weight, expressed masculinity, or tattoos.

Think you're immune? We all do. But the subtle power of the effective heuristic bias *alone* can be seen in the fact that the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies are, on average, 2.5 inches taller than the average American. It's seen in studies showing that "HR professionals are prone to pronounced weight stigmatization" because they tend to

underestimate the competence and qualifications of obese employees. In other words, we *all* have implicit ideas of what a leader and a prestigious employee should “look like.”

Unconscious bias training is humbling work. But it'll diversify your pipeline, encourage retention of underrepresented minorities—and everything in-between.

Action Items for Unconscious Bias

- **Educate yourself on unconscious biases**, and identify where your own lie. (This will require curiosity, honesty, and vulnerability.) One valuable resource is Harvard's Project Implicit, which offers a series of Implicit Association Tests to bring the unconscious into the conscious. Facebook offers a training called “Managing Unconscious Bias” with a series of video modules, each of which covers a different bias. These are great starting points; but there are a wealth of resources out there.
- **Share these resources with your recruiting team**, hiring managers, upper management—anyone in the organization you can.
- **Be rigorous about addressing the importance of self-awareness.** You might even help organize unconscious bias trainings so all teams can ultimately engage in more inclusive sourcing, hiring, and assessing practices.
- **Engage in the bias management strategies** you've learned about. For full-cycle recruiters, this might mean that you:
- **Ban the term “culture fit”**—both as a reason for reaching out to a prospect and as a blanket reason for rejecting a candidate. (You might replace it with “culture add”—a term that gives prospects and candidates room to offer something unique and fresh to your current workforce, rather than reinforcing the homogeneity in the group.)
- **Challenge interviewers to articulate a more specific expression** for why a candidate should be hired than “gut feeling” or “culture fit.” Doing so will demand that they focus on key competencies and value alignment, rather than personal rapport.
- **Make the case for structured interviews** with hiring teams. When all qualified candidates answer the same set of questions, they begin on an even playing field.

Assessing the breakdown of your workforce, teams, and roles:

Compare them to industry averages. If you're in an industry that struggles with URM representation, your initial diversity targets might be more moderate. But if you're trailing far behind your competitors, you might consider a more aggressive acquisition strategy.

Compare them to the demographics of your company's location. Does your workforce reflect the diversity of the communities you're situated in?

Compare them to the demographics of your customers. Does your workforce reflect the diversity of the communities you serve?

The disparities between your company's data and any of these data sets will serve you when it's time to set target demographics for individual roles—as well as for your entire talent pipeline.

Laying the Groundwork for Your Top-of-the-Funnel Diversity Initiatives

Now it's time to plan your own strategic approach to diversity recruiting. Good intentions alone aren't enough to achieve results; you'll want to source and nurture underrepresented talent deliberately and thoughtfully. It will take time to build relationships with the talent you hope to attract (and retain). On the sourcing side, here are the steps you should take before haphazardly jumping back into LinkedIn:

Identify the Gaps in Your Organization

You can't start sourcing underrepresented talent until you know where you are deficient. Think broadly. Adding female-identified talent to your teams is a great start; but a "gender-add" initiative won't have the same business impact as an initiative that looks for—and honors—diversity of age, race, socioeconomic background, education, sexuality, life experience, veteran status, and more. The more diverse identities your organization employs, the stronger it will be.

So take a demographic survey of your organization. Disaggregated data should be available from your HR department (it should exist in compliance with the EEOC and Civil Rights law). Ask for the numbers from the last ten years. Slice the data by race, age, gender, professional experience, personality type, LGBTQIA+ identity. Some of these metrics will be imperfect—indeed, some aren't quantitatively measurable. Team leaders will be valuable resources to call in at this point, since they know their employees more intimately.

Dig deeper than company-level metrics. It's one thing for your organization to realize a 50/50 split of male and female employees; but if your male employees are all C-levels and your female employees are all in HR, your organization isn't nearly as equitable as it appears with surface-level statistics. Slice by department, role, and seniority level to give yourself the complete view of your diversity landscape. This way you can come up with a sourcing strategy for *each* role you have to fill, based on what that team currently lacks in representation. The other benefit to digging in is that when managers can move the needle on their respective teams, they'll feel like they've accomplished something important—which ultimately minimizes the likelihood of diversity fatigue.

Two additional considerations for diversity candidate personas:

“Required” education, experience, and skillsets should be absolutely essential to the role.

Include the unique reasons talent from specific URM or stigmatized groups would be looking to leave their current position, or would accept an offer with your organization.

Create a Diversity Candidate Persona

Once you’ve got a sourcing strategy for each open role based on what diversity looks like for that team, it’s time to create a candidate persona: a semi-fictional representation of your ideal candidate for that position. After all, sourcers won’t know how to engage top talent in their outreach without a good grasp of whom they’re writing to and what drives that prospect. Persona-creation is a process your team is likely familiar with: Personas take into account the skill sets and experiences essential to the job, the dominant traits of your ideal hire, the values they hold, and more. But there are at least two additional things to consider for diversity personas.

The first is that the skill sets, experience, and education that your ideal candidate has should be *absolutely essential* to the role. Why? For one, studies have shown that men will apply for a position when they meet only 60% of a job’s prerequisites, while women typically won’t apply unless they meet all of them. What’s more, data suggests that underrepresented talent tends to underestimate their own skills (and conversely, that majority talent typically overestimates their own skills), making a skills-abilities approach to a persona unintentionally biased. In other words, every prerequisite you add beyond the “must-haves” means you’re closing the door on underrepresented talent. Indeed, if you can create your persona with an eye to results, responsibilities, and expected impact rather than prerequisites, you’ll open up your talent pool exponentially.



One topic I don’t think gets enough attention in D&I conversations is the focus on running a structured interview process. At Enigma, we’re very conscious of our candidate persona when we’re scoping a new role. Our job descriptions highlight key results expected of the role, rather than “required” backgrounds. What does success look like for this role on a day-to-day basis? What actionable expectations do we have of this hire? Sitting down to answer these kinds of questions is invaluable because it helps us define what those “must-have” skills are. When every candidate is evaluated against the same criteria, we reduce unconscious bias in what is ultimately a more objective decision-making process. It’s our way of doing diligence up-front.

Lee Gutman
Head of Talent

enigma

The importance of your candidate persona

The stronger your grasp of your candidate persona, the stronger your team's messaging will be—and the more you'll resonate with prospects' desires and concerns.

The second is that you'll need to give special consideration to what might attract underrepresented talent to your organization (and, conversely, to what signals might send them in the other direction). TA professionals at the early stage of the funnel will have to create materials—or send collateral produced by another team—that communicate the company's values and EVP *and* remove barriers that might ultimately drive underrepresented talent away. The concerns that keep underrepresented talent up at night aren't necessarily the same concerns that keep the average applicant up at night. Perhaps they've stayed at unfulfilling jobs because at least they've felt a sense of safety there. Perhaps they're desperate to move to an organization that will support their gender transition. Perhaps they're frustrated at the dearth of female leadership at their current company and would gladly move to an organization whose leadership makeup suggested career advancement is possible for them. And so on. Of course, you'll segment prospects in your CRM so you can share content most appropriate to each segment.

The stronger your grasp of your candidate persona, the stronger your team's messaging will be—and the more you'll resonate with prospects' desires and concerns. If you don't have a strong grasp on what lights your prospects up, survey the underrepresented employees and candidates currently in (or in conversation with) your organization. Find out what attracted them to your company to begin with. Ask about their perspectives, interests, unique challenges, and personal drivers. What makes them tick? Their answers will be the data that better informs both your persona and the content of your messaging.

Define Success with Diversity Recruiting/Hiring KPIs

It's hard to know what “success” is if you have nothing to measure it by, so sit down with hiring managers and upper management to define what “end composition” success looks like in a particular initiative. Maybe it's “increasing the number of female employees in tech-related roles by 15% within the next 8 months.” Maybe it's “doubling the number of minorities on our sales team this year.” These bottom-of-funnel goals should be realistic, but ambitious.

Your TA team will use these end-composition goals to guide its own goals for the top of the funnel. Naturally, each initiative will have a unique top-of-funnel quota. Maybe it's “50% diversity in initial phone screens for our VP of Sales role.” Maybe it's “3 onsite with female engineers in Q3.” Remember, you'll be getting both referrals and inbound applicants all the while. Since those channels tend to be less diverse, you'll want to offset those numbers by targeting and sourcing passive talent. Metrics will alert you to how roles typically get filled. If you observe that some roles are strongly driven by referrals—and that those referrals tend to make it through process—you might raise the quota for out-of-network diversity sourcing at the top of the funnel. After all, this is the only part of the funnel in which you can exert control. Once candidates are interviewing, you'll have to evaluate them all equally.

Once explicit goals are in place, create action items and strategies to meet them. Include key milestones in your map so you know—and can celebrate—when you're making progress. To tie sourcer and recruiter performance to your hiring KPIs, look at the number of hires your organization makes through diversity sourcing strategies and divide that number by the total number of hires per quarter. Use this number to analyze the overall effectiveness of your diversity sourcing. For more detailed insight into what is and isn't working in your outreach, look at email open rates, click-through rates, and reply rates. These analytics will help you fine-tune your outreach strategies for talent of all kinds.

Once your strategies and end goals are in place, it's time to get sourcing.



From our sourcing team to our CEO, at Thumbtack we hold ourselves accountable to build an inclusive community that celebrates our differences. We create a defined structure and data-driven goals around diversity recruiting and regularly measure our progress. It's key to set a clear direction and commit to driving impact in diversity recruiting the same way you do with other areas of your business!

Annie Carnahan
Diversity Recruiting Lead

Thumbtack

How Gem Can Help

We're clear, at this point, about the value of D&I to your organization. So where's the software to make your sourcing easier, your outreach simultaneously automated *and* personalized, and your pipeline more visible?

Gem is an all-in-one recruiting platform that integrates with LinkedIn, email, and your Applicant Tracking System. We enable world-class recruiting teams to find, engage, and nurture top talent. With Gem, recruiting teams can manage candidate pipeline with predictability.

These days, recruiting teams are engaging with diverse talent pools in all sorts of ways: from hosting D&I events and meetups for diverse professional groups, to sponsoring and attending conferences geared toward URM talent, to sharing compelling collateral about their core values and culture. We don't want recruiters to be stuck managing these efforts in one-off spreadsheets or cobbling together a set of tools that don't talk to each other. Our talent CRM brings all these efforts into one place and streamlines manual workflows.

What's more, Gem helps companies track diversity at the very top of the funnel—which means recruiting teams don't have to wait until someone applies to have visibility. Rather, they can track diversity metrics in the most actionable part of the funnel: before prospects become candidates. By providing full-pipeline metrics, Gem helps recruiters measure (and improve) their sourcing, events, and communications to prioritize diversity and inclusion.

But don't take it from us; take it from our customers:



To learn more about the Gem recruiting platform and see a demo, visit gem.com



Lauren Shufuran, Author

Lauren is a content strategist with a penchant for 16th-century literature. When she's not trying to tap into talent teams' pain points, she's on her yoga mat or hiking the hills of Marin County. Come at her with your favorite Shakespeare quote.

Gem is an all-in-one recruiting platform that integrates with LinkedIn, email, and your Applicant Tracking System (ATS). We enable world-class recruiting teams to find, engage, and nurture top talent. With Gem, recruiting teams can manage candidate pipeline with predictability.

To learn more and see a demo, visit
gem.com