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Frontline Analysis by the MRINetwork Team of Global Search Experts

Leveraging Diversity Recruitment as a Branding Strategy

Diversity recruitment programs have long been a means of promoting inclusion and tolerance, and upholding anti-discrimination regulations that began with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We're all familiar with the standard EOE statements and diversity quotas that exist at many organizations.

However, in today's work environment, companies are beginning to look at how they can leverage fresh perspectives on diversity as a branding strategy to recruit and retain top talent. These branding strategies are becoming increasingly important as we prepare to meet the generational challenges and needs of the 2020 workforce, which will contain Millennials, Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers.



Discussions around diversity used to primarily focus on the prevention of labor force discrimination. Employers are now expanding upon that to consider the value and impact that diversity of ideas can have on employee engagement, as well as company growth and performance. Recruiting and retaining talent with unique problem solving approaches, varied skill sets and cultural backgrounds enables everyone on the team to gain insight and inspiration that encourage a more collaborative environment.

The role of diversity will be further challenged by Millennials who are projected to make up 50 percent of the 2020 workforce. This generational group is very focused on the authenticity and meaningfulness of initiatives, so they will potentially seek to reevaluate how diversity recruitment programs should be implemented in the years to come.

"Gone are the days of homogeneous work environments, where everyone basically has the same approach to an organization's business operations," says Nancy Halverson, vice president of global operations for MRINetwork.

"Globalization is the future of commerce, and in order for organizations to remain competitive, they will need to attract and engage top candidates that think differently and attack work differently from what the company has been previous accustomed. Employers that are able to communicate their commitment to this modern version of diversity, as a key component of their branding strategy, will be the most successful at enticing the best talent."

For employers looking to revisit their diversity recruitment and branding efforts, Halverson advises starting with one initiative at a time. Here are some examples of potential initiatives:

Employee Development Committees - Open to all employees, these groups focus on providing networking, mentoring and career development opportunities to meet the specific needs of various members of staff including women, minorities, LGBT and veterans.

Heritage Events - Typically focused on nationally recognized months such as Black History Month (February), Women's History Month (March) or National Disability Employment Awareness Month (October), your organization can use these events to celebrate the contributions of these groups to American society and culture.

Vendor Diversity Programs - Serving as a community outreach effort, the goal of these programs is to partner with small or disadvantaged groups like minority institutions, veteran associations or HUBZone businesses that are interested in working as a supplier for your company, and provide mentoring opportunities that increase the number of successful individuals within these organizations.

Once you determine your starting initiative, be sure to discuss it during the interviewing and onboarding processes. Promote it on the website in areas where you discuss the company culture, leverage it in marketing materials, and via community or public relations initiatives. Internally promote via flyers, email, intranets and internal work-related networks such as Yammer.

For organizations that already have diversity programs, consider surveying your staff annually to gauge their level of satisfaction and determine if these initiatives are meeting their needs. Then look at these programs, one by one, to see how they can be better implemented to provide meaning and value to employees.

Ultimately, companies will have to determine if simply meeting the legal diversity requirements affects productivity and the organization's culture. Halverson adds, "Whether it's acceptance of your employees' race, age, sexual orientation or outside the box thinking, diversity recruitment really should be evaluated by how well employers celebrate and brand, both internally and externally, difference and flexibility within a variety of functions in the workforce."