

Inclusion gets best staff

BY DAVID APLIN

So why would an organization, in a challenging economy, want to spend time and effort getting the subject of interviewer bias on the executive radar screen? Two reasons: It is the law of the land and it's also good business. The blend of employment legislation and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms means all organizations need to avoid bias in the recruiting process.

Better recruiting decisions are usually made when there is a wide and deep talent pool. If an organization eliminates candidates because of gender, race, religion, colour or sexual orientation, it shrinks the number of candidates by more than one-half and, consequently, reduces the quality of the hire. If the quality of the workforce diminishes, company results will follow the same downward trend.

So how does an organization move toward a no-bias model? There are two essential ingredients: Culture and hiring. To be a diversity-friendly organization, a company needs a defined written statement of values that dictates how managers manage and how employees interact with one another. This must be an active document, not something people "can't find." It must be part of the onboarding process and the performance management or assessment process.

Senior and middle management must walk the talk.

■ BUILDING A CULTURE

Principles for inclusive culture

Strategy	Action
Operate as one firm.	Standardize processes in each branch or practice
Take the long view.	Make decisions that develop long-term relationships over short-term gain.
Reward and advance staff based on performance.	Provide regular feedback, give spot bonuses for exemplary contributions.
Demonstrate a genuine concern for all people.	Don't tell inappropriate jokes about race, creed, colour or sexual orientation.
Foster an open working atmosphere.	Don't shoot the messenger and work with doors open as often as possible.
Manage resources responsibly.	Show integrity with expense accounts, book travel early.
Contribute to a spirit of partnership through teamwork, collaboration.	Share information with the whole team.
Show respect and fairness in dealing with fellow associates.	Avoid public criticism of others.
Be inclusive.	Don't play favourites — value each team member equally.
Achieve balance in work, family, community lives.	Support employees in community work.
Be accountable for words, actions and performance.	Do what you say you'll do, when you say you'll do it.
Make socially responsible decisions.	Use charity greeting cards, think "green."

Workplace culture has to start at the top and cascade down. Employees must see culture is important and live every day by the example of management

and supervisory teams. Messages and actions should be synchronized to achieve a consistency all staff see and feel day-to-day.

A culture document should include sections on:

- performance-based promotion
- respect and fairness in dealing with associates
- inclusivity
- the golden rule (treat folks the way you like to be treated).

Many organizations lack a defined hiring process so bias can easily creep into hiring. Good hiring processes have:

- several people involved in the interviews
- several interviews, each with different objectives
- clear statements of outcomes for the position
- clear statements of the competencies required to deliver the outcomes.

It is easier to avoid bias in hiring when multiple people, clear objectives and identifiable competencies are part of the process. With a tight hiring process and inclusive culture, an employer will see better people and, therefore, be more able to achieve excellent results.

Enlightened companies recognize, appreciate and use the unique contributions of diverse groups and create an environment of trust, respect, tolerance and inclusion. In short, they understand the business case for diversity.

David Aplin is the Edmonton-based CEO of David Aplin Recruiting, which has offices across the country. He can be reached at (780) 428-6663 ext. 301, daplin@aplin.com or visit www.aplin.com for more information.