

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

It is expected that 2015 will bring with it an unprecedented focus on diversity and inclusion (D&I). Most notably, 2015 will mark the deadline for Lord Davies' target for FTSE 100 companies to achieve at least 25 per cent female representation at board level. There will also be Vince Cable's review into the lack of ethnic minority directors in Britain's boardrooms. These topics will provide widespread media coverage of diversity at the highest levels of UK business, and are likely to provide a platform for additional underlying topics surrounding diversity to come to the surface.

To date, the recruitment industry has been slow to address the growing focus that businesses are placing on D&I, while it is the recruitment industry that can be seen to be both the cause and the solution. Equal Approach anticipates that the next 12 months will see a significant shift in the recruitment industry's attitude and focus on D&I. It looks like diversity and inclusion are firmly on the agenda, and that's where they'll stay.

The business case

For the purpose of brevity, I have refined the business case for diversity into three key points:

1: Improved financial performance

Diversity has been proven to have a positive impact on financial performance:

- The McKinsey consultancy recently found that companies in the top quartile of gender diversity were 15 per cent more likely to have above-average financial returns relative to their domestic peers, while those in the top quartile of racial and ethnic diversity were 30 per cent more likely to perform better.
- The American Sociological Association recently published a report that found for every one per cent rise in the rate of gender diversity and ethnic diversity in a workforce, there is a three and nine per cent rise in sales revenue, respectively.

2: Workforce reflects customers

Organisations whose workforce is reflective of their customer base are better positioned to recognise and react to the changing needs and wants of their customers.

- Women control the majority of consumer goods purchasing decisions, and are estimated to account for 85 per cent of all consumer purchases.
- The UK's 11.9 million disabled people are said to have disposable income collectively worth £80bn.
- The LGBT community in the UK has an estimated spending power of £81bn, and it is also suggested that 78 per cent of the LGBT community, their friends and relatives would switch to LGBT-friendly brands.

3: Do the right thing

Diversity and inclusion can be seen to fall under the banner of corporate social responsibility, which customers, employees, suppliers, and indeed society are all placing an increasing amount of importance on, and D&I also contributes towards how ethical organisations are, showing that they are doing the right thing.

The impact on recruitment

As recruiters, we need to be aware of our clients' changing demands, whether agency or in-house, our clients are those who we are recruiting for. Recruiters shouldn't focus on the business case for diversity, but rather on their clients' perception of the benefits of diversity. With the increased focus that we forecast 2015 to have on D&I, it's not a matter of 'if' but 'when' your clients recognise the value of diversity and want to recruit from a wider talent pool, and you're going to need to be able to meet their demands.

As an early adopter of inclusive recruitment, Equal Approach has positioned itself as an inclusive recruitment agency, which champions candidates with difference, and we have communicated this over a number of years to our clients and it has allowed us to develop an expansive network of diverse candidates. Many of our clients have had a focus on D&I for a number of years, but we are increasingly dealing with new organisations that are at the start of their D&I journey, and are looking for an inclusive recruitment provider and we anticipate this to accelerate in 2015.

Inclusive recruitment

Inclusive recruitment is the process of removing barriers for candidates, in order to ensure that the recruitment process is inclusive for all candidates whatever their difference may be. The value of an 'inclusive recruitment process' is that it creates a level playing field for candidates who may have been overlooked in traditional recruitment processes due to their barriers, and allows you as a recruiter to search a wider talent pool. By adopting an inclusive recruitment process, not only will you have a wider range of people to find the best candidate from, you will also be looking at candidates your competitors may never have considered, giving you a competitive advantage.

The competitive advantage

Diversity can be seen to fall in line with corporate social responsibility, which can be a source of competitive advantage and can allow you to differentiate yourself in the marketplace. As more organisations begin to place a greater emphasis on D&I, the value of inclusive recruitment as a competitive advantage is set to soar.

Equal Approach has been established as an inclusive recruitment agency for over 10 years, and the inclusive recruitment process that we have pioneered allows us to attract and recruit diverse candidates from across the wide range of diversity strands for our clients. The competitive advantage that D&I brings to Equal Approach stems well beyond that of our positioning and differentiation in the marketplace, our team represent a wide range of diversity strands – with 65 per cent of our workforce having a disability or long term health condition and we have 57 per cent female representation at board level – Equal Approach have benefited from the positive impact that a diverse

Dawn Milman-Hurst, owner, founder and CEO of Equal Approach gives a guide to recruiting for diversity and inclusion.

team brings, as our team are more reflective of our clients and the diverse candidates we attract.

Developing the process

With the anticipated focus that we expect 2015 to have on D&I, I would recommend that recruiters take a long hard look at themselves and address D&I as a matter of urgency, in order to future-proof their organisation before it's too late.

1: Develop a Diverse Candidate Attraction Strategy

Develop a diverse candidate attraction strategy to specifically target diverse candidates for your vacancies. Utilise additional attraction methods to specifically target diverse candidates, such as diverse job boards like Diversity Jobs, which attracts thousands of diverse job seekers.

2: Education and Training

Successfully developing and implementing an inclusive recruitment process requires buy in at all levels, and changes to the recruitment process and the day to day handling of candidates' applications. Effective education and training will ensure a buy in and provide your team with the knowledge and skills they need.

3: Ensure Your Recruitment Process is Accessible

Accessibility needs to be considered throughout your recruitment process, and an oversight in any area can exclude a range of potential candidates from your process. Accessibility can include reasonable adjustments, for example it has been shown that individuals with dyslexia struggle to complete online application processes, so it is best practice to provide alternative ways of applying.



4: Accreditations and Voluntary Campaigns

There are a wide range of accreditations and voluntary campaigns that you can work toward to ensure that your recruitment process is inclusive, and evidence your commitment to D&I, including:

- Business Disability Forum Recruitment Protocol
- Business Disability Forum Disability Standard
- REC Good Recruitment Campaign
- Two Ticks Positive about Disability
- Investors in Diversity
- Age Positive
- Mindful Employer

5: Join a Diversity Focused Membership Organisations

There are a range of membership organisations that can provide you with best practice advice and guidance to support you to attract and recruit diverse candidates, including:

- Business Disability Forum
- enei (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion)

Ongoing commitment

A commitment to diversity and inclusion is a long term strategy, and it's not something which can be implemented overnight. Embedding a focus on diversity, and ensuring your recruitment process is inclusive will require a significant investment of both time and money, and will require an element organisational change.

There are a number of ways to monitor how inclusive your recruitment process is, with one of the simplest being conducting equal opportunities monitoring of candidates throughout your recruitment process, in order to give you live data on the range of diverse candidates you are successfully attracting, and highlight the strands of diversity that you are failing to reach.

In terms gaining recognition for your commitment to D&I, in addition to the numerous accreditations that are available for you to achieve, most of the major recruitment awards have D&I categories and there are also a range of awards that have a specific focus on D&I, including:

- Business Disability Forum Disability Smart Awards
- enei Awards (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion)
- RIDI Awards - (Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative)

Diversity and inclusion are relatively new topics within the recruitment industry, and as a result the field is constantly evolving. To ensure that your organisation keeps up to date with these changes, you should consider appointing a 'Diversity Champion' within your organisation to be responsible for overseeing the D&I agenda. ■

Diversity and inclusion will be a central theme at The Global Recruiters UK Summit 2015. It will include a presentation by Susan Scott-Parker founder and chief executive of Business Disability Forum. for more information please visit <http://tinyurl.com/grsummit2015>