

HRD

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“DIVERSITY IS ABOUT LEADERSHIP
WITH DIFFERENT STRENGTHS AND
WEAKNESSES THAT ALL VALUE
ACCOUNTABILITY AND EXCELLENCE”

MAXINE BONWICK
HR DIRECTOR (UK)
RENAULT

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ARTICLE BY SUZIE WALKER, MD & FOUNDER - SUZIE WALKER EXECUTIVE SEARCH

BREAK THE MOULD

TRUE PARITY BEGINS WITH THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS, WHERE ALL THOSE HIRING UNDERSTAND BIAS, WHERE POLICIES ARE IN PLACE TO MITIGATE BIAS AND WHERE PROCESSES ARE CONSISTENT FOR EACH CANDIDATE. HR AND TALENT FUNCTIONS, HIRING MANAGERS AND RECRUITMENT SPECIALISTS MUST WORK TOGETHER, TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN EMPLOYEES AND BRING A BREADTH AND DEPTH OF EXPERIENCE, AS WELL AS DIVERSITY-OF-THOUGHT.

The very first step on the road to true parity is making sure that HR, talent teams, hiring managers and the entire workplace, have undertaken good quality unconscious bias training, which is the foundation of fair hiring. Unconscious bias training isn't perfect, or enough, but it does provide awareness that is sometimes lacking and fosters an environment that encourages learning. To start putting fair processes in place for hiring, it's then essential to define the skills, qualifications and experience required for the role, along with objective and relevant parameters within the evaluation criteria. These criteria should align with the specific needs of the role, along with clear standards for evaluation. This will ensure that any evaluation is consistent for all candidates and based on merit rather than potentially biased judgement. The process should be applied to every role, to every vacancy and to every candidate, ensuring true parity from the first touchpoint of every employee's journey.

When processes are in place and it's time to advertise a role, teams should consider how best to maximise outreach efforts and referrals, in order to access a diverse pool of candidates, meeting the agreed and consistent parameters for the role. Those parameters include skills, qualifications and experience, nothing more and nothing less. Here, utilising the network of an external recruitment partner is not so much about "who they

know" - because that could encourage bias - but more about utilising the technology that is at the cutting-edge of recruitment, with the capacity to extract candidates through a skill, qualification and experience-based search that excludes perceptions and/or biases.

"UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAINING ISN'T PERFECT, OR ENOUGH, BUT IT DOES PROVIDE AWARENESS THAT IS SOMETIMES LACKING AND FOSTERS AN ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES LEARNING"

By independently removing identifying information from CVs and applications, internal decision-makers are then considering candidates through the agreed criteria alone. An early and 'long list' of candidates will then only be evaluated on merit, because biases that may arise from names, gender or other identifiable characteristics have been removed. This will enable a diverse and inclusive first interview stage.

By following the guidance so far, an interview will be the first potential stumbling block for hiring teams, because it's the first opportunity for biases to

emerge. That's why it's so important to have diversity within the interview panel itself, mitigating any biases that may emerge and providing a fresh perspective. Diversity-of-thought will ensure a fair evaluation of candidates and an environment where interviews allow candidates to feel heard and valued. It's also important to include interview questions on the topic of DEI itself, so that anyone entering the organisation has values that align and will uphold a supportive environment. Whatever evaluation methods are used - structured interviews, skills assessments and psychometric testing - they must be applied to all candidates. Standardised questions should be used within the interview - skills assessments should even be applied to those you're confident meet the requirements - and psychometric testing should even be carried out for those you feel would be 'a good fit'. Assessments can be surprising, which is why they are so important. This approach ensures objectivity, which not only reinforces commitment to DEI, it also identifies the very best candidates for the role. Fundamentally, structured and comprehensive recruitment processes really help to achieve true parity within organisations, providing they are clear, consistent and sustainable.

FOR FURTHER INFO
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