3 common diversity breakdowns — and how to overcome them

Are you struggling to hire and retain diverse, talented faculty and staff?

PEOPLEADMIN

A higher degree of talent management

Below are three of the most common areas where diversity initiatives fall apart, and tips on how to address them.

BREAKDOWN NO. 1: DIVERSE CANDIDATES GET ELIMINATED DURING THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

Solution: Examine the inclusion and diversity activities of your search committees or interviewers. We are all more likely to hire people who look and sound like us — it's a form on unconscious bias — so keep diversity top of mind when developing a search committee.

Additionally, it may be necessary to address bias in the interview process by offering bias training or recruiting diverse committees.

To combat the implicit biases of search committee members and hiring managers at Salt Lake Community College, leaders such as Roderic Land, Ph.D., special assistant to the president, and James Broadbent, human resources director of faculty services, completed search advocate training at Oregon State University.

"We use that training to think about how we can bring hiring committee members together to question some of the implicit biases they may have," Roderic said.

That process includes reviewing everything from position descriptions to interview questions and selection criteria.

"We act as a soundboard for the search committee and help them identify where biases are affecting their selection," James said. "That is what being a search advocate really boils down to."

BREAKDOWN NO. 2: DIVERSE CANDIDATES REJECT YOUR OFFERS

Solution: Explore the interactions between candidates and university employees with a keen eye toward unintentional, possibly marginalizing micro-messages. Determine when and where coaching and training may make a positive impact.

According to NeeCee Cornish, director of enterprise database and integrations at the Western University of Health Sciences, training is also necessary to ensure compliance.

"Us Regular Joes, we don't know what's ok to ask and what might be a violation," she said. "We can't necessarily interpret law the way that an expert can. As long as they have those training programs for hiring managers, everything should be fine."

BREAKDOWN NO. 3: HIGH TURNOVER RATE AMONG DIVERSE EMPLOYEES

Solution: Use exit interviews to assess why candidates are leaving. Do they feel unsupported? Excluded? Misunderstood? Identify the core reasons they're leaving and address them head-on.

Your findings may surprise you, as they did at Georgia Southern University when the HR team uncovered a retention disparity among minority employees. After reviewing employee surveys and exit interviews, leadership discovered employees with disabilities were significantly less likely to feel they had sufficient opportunities for promotion and growth than nondisabled employees.

They worked to improve this by first focusing on professional development for new hires with disabilities. Demetrius Bynes, director of employment services, coached managers and established a clear pathway for these employees to move from temporary positions to permanent positions, largely through mentorship and professional development.

By focusing on the cause of turnover for this population, Demetrius significantly improved retention of Georgia Southern's disabled workforce.

"What we're doing now is keeping our workforce diverse and helping them be more successful in their jobs," Demetrius said. "We're working toward a better future."

PeopleAdmin has spent more than 17 years partnering with hundreds of higher education institutions to help them recruit, hire, onboard, manage, develop and retain diverse, talented faculty and staff. To learn how PeopleAdmin's suite of talent management solutions empowers diversity, positive onboarding experiences, simplified reporting, faculty recruiting, search committee management, and more, visit PeopleAdmin.com or call 877.637.5800.

PEOPLEADMIN
A higher degree of talent management