Inclusive Hiring Policy - A practical approach to advance equality, diversity and inclusion in your workplace

Inclusive hiring can be defined as the process of connecting with, interviewing and hiring a diverse set of individuals through understanding and valuing different backgrounds, experiences and opinions. Inclusive recruiting should be intersectional and consider more than just gender or race. An Inclusive Hiring policy is the aim of this initiative with the goal of achieving an inclusive work culture. The initiative can be adapted as part of an organisation's strategy towards an Inclusive Workplace

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Notwithstanding developments in Equality legislation and equality policies, inequality still exists in the workplace. While fully implementing this legislation is important, making the most of the diversity of our societies cannot be done by only focusing on what people and companies should **not** do but also promote proactive efforts by all stakeholders (OECD). Society is being well designed for some and not for others and 'those who consider themselves 'normal' continue to construct institutions and relations in their image; the result is to make 'different' people fit into existing systems" (Day & Brodsky 1996). Intersectionality according to Cho (2013) occurs when a person or group are impacted by more than one factor such as wider social inequalities and discrimination. Kirton et al (2021) describe groups including disabled people, older people, lesbian and gay men and women, religious minorities, Traveller communities, black and minority ethnic people as more disproportionately disadvantaged in the labour market and legislative requirements alone according to the OECD cannot remove structural obstacles for disadvantaged groups. Employment can often be viewed as simply a means to an end, working to earn a wage. The benefits of employment are often thought of in monetary terms alone, however employment according to Vornholt et al (2018) offers greater benefits for a person's health and well-being, including reducing poverty and social isolation, permitting people the opportunity to fully participate in society.

Class, race, and gender patterns are not just the shards of history but are continually created and re-created in today's organisations. Organising processes that produce inequality include the general organisation of work, based on the assumption of an unencumbered worker, organising jobs and hierarchies, recruitment/hiring/promotion, wage setting/supervision, and informal interactions in doing the work (Acker 1990). Even if equality before the law has been established, disadvantage persists, and this disadvantage tends to be concentrated in groups with a particular status such as women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and others. The differing conceptions of equality that exist and their application can lead to differing outcomes for people. Contemporary approaches which view equality 'as participation and inclusion of all groups, which in turn requires valuing difference and at times treating groups relevantly differently' seek to deliver true equality (Westen). Key factors of social inclusion defined as 'a measure of the extent to which a person or groups can participate in aspects of society to the same level as or relative to the average population', are the ability and opportunity to access employment (Brodsky et al; Fredman; McMahon et al).

Diversity can be described as differences in perspectives resulting in potential behavioural differences among cultural groups as well as identity differences among group members in relation to other groups. Definitions and measurements of diversity have evolved to include a wider array of non-observable characteristics that include

cultural, cognitive, and technical differences among employees (Larkey; Kochan et al). Mor Barak and others define inclusion as the extent to which individuals can access information and resources, are involved in work groups, and have the ability to influence decision-making processes. Diversity focuses on organisational demography, whereas inclusion focuses on the removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees in organisations. The concept of diversity more accurately represents 'the varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring' (Thomas & Ely. 1996).

The benefits of hiring for diversity are many, nevertheless, the traditional perceptions of a diverse workforce according to Stoner et al (2013) as a way of contending with labour market volatility, increasing capabilities and competencies of organisations to achieve superior advantages in the market, or representing diversity as equal opportunity, fair treatment, recruitment, and compliance needs to be challenged. Instead, approaches linking diverse employee perspectives and approaches incorporating them into business processes to leverage the benefits of diversity to enhance organisational learning and growth seeks to achieve integration and inclusion (Kirton & Greene; Thomas & Ely, 1996).

Influence of Recruitment practices on Equality Diversity and Inclusion

The impact of employment segregation and disadvantage linked to social group stereotypes have been found to be very significant in recruitment and selection (Kirton & Greene), such choices affect hiring and performance reviews leading to discrimination and disadvantage for marginalised workers. Blau & Khan (2006) describe a person's ability to compete successfully in the labour market as influenced by their human capital, a combination of qualifications, skills, competencies and relevant work experience a person possesses. Three key explanations for disadvantage have been identified by McMahon & O'Brien (2021); a person's human-capital, social and cultural attitudes and norms and institutional barriers.

Decisions on recruitment are made based on acceptability criteria leading to discrimination and disadvantage for minority workers, how we accept certain perceptions of groups in society as 'normal' and 'acceptable' as society develops over time. Men's (usually white, non-disabled, heterosexual) employment and career patterns are taken as the desirable norm. An inability to commit to the 'desirable norm' can result in career setbacks or becoming trapped in the secondary labour market with difficulty exiting. Influences of employment outcomes (e.g. pay, status, or type of occupation) have several interpretations;

- Employment outcomes simply reflect a combination of individual merit, preferences, and choices.
- Inequalities exist because the capitalist system of production is based on the principles of market competition, which inherently creates winners and losers in order to provide sources of cheap labour.
- Employment discrimination and patterns of inequality do not simply happen; they occur because of the actions of organisations and individuals and therefore are not inevitable or insurmountable. From this viewpoint policymaking can make a difference (Kirton & Greene 2021).

In order to affect change in the workplace and to create an inclusive workplace, it is necessary to challenge the 'desirable norms' and biases that exist in recruitment and selection processes. The implementation of an Inclusive Hiring process can be an important step towards creating an inclusive workplace.

Making a Difference - Inclusive Hiring Implementation

The overall aim of the recruitment and selection process according to Gunnigle at al (2006) is 'essentially concerned with finding, accessing and engaging new employees. Institutional barriers from dominant structures, systems, rules can intentionally or unintentionally limit access and opportunity for certain people in the workplace' (Kulkarni & Kote, 2014). Monetary and nonmonetary rewards such as occupational growth ladders, competitive compensation, and better working conditions are used to attract diverse talent. Multiple pieces of evidence shine a light on the issue of bias in recruitment, from job advert wording to call-back rates for interview.

Case Study - An Inclusive Hiring policy for a 4-star hotel

The case study aims to challenge the traditional perceptions of a diverse workforce as a way of contending with labour market volatility or representing diversity as equal opportunity, fair treatment, recruitment, and compliance (Thomas & Ely, 1996). The hospitality sector was chosen for this case study due to the well documented difficulties experienced by the sector in hiring and retaining staff. The Inclusive Hiring policy is being developed for a fictional 4-star hotel in the midlands region of Ireland with a requirement for 50 staff members and a variable number of part time / occasional staff. According to Failte Ireland, 88% (percent) of hospitality businesses have difficulty recruiting new staff, 68% (percent) of businesses have difficulty in rehiring. It is assumed for the purposes of the case study that the organisation currently operates an ad hoc recruitment policy, primarily informal recruitment methods e.g. 'word of mouth', online job adverts, local media outlets and social media. The hotel complies with current Employment legislation but does not pro-actively recruit for or measure diversity within its organisation. The hotel management team consists of Managing Director, HR Department consisting of Human Resources Manager and HR administrator, Operations Manager and Sales and Banqueting Manager. The goals of this Inclusive Hiring policy are to:

- Improve awareness of diversity and inclusion issues in the workplace
- Promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace
- Develop strategies to recruit talent from diverse backgrounds
- Survey employees

The following actions have been identified to achieve these goals:

- All vacancies advertised publicly and ensure proactive use of diverse job boards for advertisements.
- Candidates being interviewed have applied for and been shortlisted based on suitability criteria for the role for which they are being interviewed.
- Management at all levels will be trained in offering and providing reasonable accommodations at recruitment and selection stage and during employment for candidates.
- An intersectional approach will be taken to the complete hiring process, with leadership and management confident in provision of supports.
- Candidate pool will be monitored for diversity at all stages of the process.

The rollout and monitoring of this initiative will be overseen by the Human Resource team (Headed by HR Manager) in conjunction with senior management (MD, Operations and Sales & Banqueting Manager). Achieving these goals will result in a recruitment process that allows the organisation access to a broader recruitment pool, improved diversity awareness and will support an inclusive workplace.

Inclusive Hiring initiative rollout

The HR Manager gives a presentation to Senior Management on the influences of hiring decisions on equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and highlights the benefits of this initiative. The first step is to analyse the current recruitment process with management and document the process in order to identify organisational gaps to equality, diversity and inclusion. The roles of the staff to be involved are outlined and a programme timeline to be agreed.

Review of existing recruitment and selection processes

Current Recruitment	Current Selection
Job advertisement/word of mouth;	Shortlisting (often skipped);
Internal/external sourcing;	Interview;
Application form/CV	Job trial/practical element
	Job offer

SWOT Analysis of the current recruitment and selection process identifying strengths and weaknesses of current process:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Established businesses	Competitive labour market	Use difficulties experienced in recruiting as a launching point for new EDI initiative	High demand for staff in the hospitality sector
Good terms & conditions	Poor response level to advertised vacancies	Engage new staff and bring a fresh perspective to the business	Lack of engagement with diverse groups
Excellent training & development opportunities	Reliance on informal recruitment		Lack of flexible work policies
Hotel location vibrant town	No measurement of diversity within the organisation		Lack of "buy in" from management

Following the analysis, in discussion with management the HR Manager sets out an Agenda for Change:

- Company culture and values - establishing the 'tone from the top' of the company, Directors should lead by example in order to encourage good behaviours throughout the organisation. Establish and embed Diversity policy within company leadership and management. Establish an EDI task force in the hotel from all staff levels.
- Highlight diversity in job adverts – institutional discrimination is described as one of the primary ways societies produce and maintain group-based inequality, gendered language, wording associated with individualism used in job advertisements likely serves as a covert institutional practice. Review job adverts for gendered or other biased wording and amend accordingly.
- Leverage diverse job boards - review talent attraction methods, currently the hotel has a heavy reliance on 'word of mouth' and other informal recruitment methods. Ask for diverse referrals by contacting

organisations working with marginalised groups and those experiencing barriers to employment. Use a diverse range of job boards.

- Teach recruiters to avoid biases - providing unconscious bias training for those involved in the recruitment, selection, development and promotion processes helps raise awareness of subconscious preconceptions so that bias does not affect their decision making. Individuals involved in the recruiting process are themselves recruited and socialised in a manner that ensures they will act in such a way that undesirable actions and outcomes are avoided. Ensure recruitment and selection panels are diverse and openly inclusive in their focus.
- Implement anonymised screening – various measures can be taken to address unconscious bias in the recruitment process; anonymised recruitment is the process of removing personally identifiable information from application information; CVs are sifted without personal details included.
- Diverse interview panels – establish interview panels within the organisation. Seek outside assistance to ensure gender balance and diversity if necessary.
- Flexible working policies – review all positions within the company and assess flexibility options within roles and establish flexible working policies. Monitor uptake of policies and success of initiatives for staff and hotel.
- Work shadow opportunities – establish contact with local schools, third level institutions and organisations working with marginalised groups and those experiencing barriers to employment with a view to offering work shadow/placements within the company. Offer student/job seekers visits or open days and guest lectures by staff members.

Measuring the success of the Inclusive Hiring Initiative

The HR Manager together with the Senior Management Team will conduct a review of the results of current practices and use this data to establish a baseline and timetable for ongoing monitoring of the initiative. Dates to be set for presenting results to Senior Management for discussion in relation to future business strategy.

Ongoing initiatives for measurement to be considered includes:

- Examine recruitment data to understand how diverse the pool is at all stages of the process.
- Review organisational policies and implement change to ensure a fair and intersectional approach is taken
- Monitor and review socio-economic backgrounds of current employees
- Gender balance in roles
- Employees feedback – employee surveys and suggestions gathered and reviewed
- Review pay and progression data to highlight where intervention may be needed.
- Develop and establish flexible work options within the hotel. Ongoing monitoring of uptake and staff feedback of flexible working options.
- Monitor employee retention rate.

Monitoring will be ongoing and discussed at management meetings along with the Employee Survey feedback and ongoing engagement with employees at all levels within the organisation and from all backgrounds. Findings and employee feedback will be used to ensure continuous improvement in Equality Diversity and Inclusion throughout the organisation.

Inclusive Hiring Policy Conclusion

This case study can be adapted to any sector as part of an inclusive recruitment and selection strategy, indeed implementing the individual actions can be beneficial. A SWOT analysis of the current recruitment process can identify organisational gaps in equality, diversity and inclusion. The findings of this analysis can be used to introduce an inclusive recruitment strategy for the organisation, as a proactive approach to inclusive hiring and as a training and discussion platform for workplace inclusion. This offers an opportunity to challenge existing bias and discrimination.

There is discrimination and bias at every stage of an individual's career, and even before it begins. From networks to recruitment and then in the workforce, it is there' (McGregor-Smith review, 2017).

It is crucial that employers adopt a proactive approach to recruitment and selection rather than focusing on compliance with employment law and a rigid view of diversity. A proactive approach to recruitment and selection offers many advantages to both organisations and job seekers. It opens a whole new cohort of jobseekers to organisations who bring a fresh perspective to the business and offers an opportunity to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. While presenting a 'level playing field' to jobseekers who experience discrimination and disadvantage in accessing and remaining in the workplace. The organisation can also benefit from improved awareness of diversity and inclusion within its workplace. The initiative aims to create a proactive approach to inclusive hiring.

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