Inclusive Recruitment Practices

Resume Screening

By establishing and adhering to inclusive recruitment practices your organisation can improve the way they attract and retain individuals from underrepresented groups, fostering a workplace that reflects the diversity of the wider community.

Screening resumes

A resume is often your first impression of a candidate. It is also the first point at which unconscious bias can have an impact on the diversity of your organisation, because you may make assumptions about a candidate based on factors such their name, age, or educational background.

The resume screening process is therefore an important opportunity to objectively assess the talent that is interested in your role, and "screen in" high quality candidates. Unlike the conventional approach of "screening out" candidates whose resumes don't meet the job description, "screening in" is a more inclusive approach to hiring that considers candidates who may bring other valuable experiences, skills, and abilities to the role.

The resumes of candidates from diverse backgrounds (for example, women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, neurodiverse people, Defence Force veterans, or those from multicultural backgrounds) may raise questions or challenges for you when it comes to understanding their past credentials and experience. These guidelines are designed to help you navigate these challenges.

When screening resumes consider the following factors:

Essential and non-essential skills

- Separate essential skills from the desired skills needed for the job.

- Candidates from diverse backgrounds who don't meet your wish list of desired skills may have other skills that could be just as valuable.

Ability

- Look for signs that the candidate has the potential to do the job. This could be shown through past achievements and practical scenarios demonstrating their skills in action, including volunteer experience.

- Assess a candidate's abilities by presenting hypothetical scenarios relevant to the role. This helps gauge their approach to challenges and how they apply their skills.

Experience

- Look for a candidate's related work experience instead of screening very specifically for a type of experience, a certain number of years of experience, or recent experience.

- While industry-specific experience is important, consider transferable skills that could be applied to the new role. Hiring someone who has done a similar job is great but there are also benefits to bringing in someone who can learn the job, and who has additional skills.

Communication

- Look for the candidate's ability to carry out the specific communication tasks needed for the job, rather than generalised "effective communication skills".

- Assess problems with readability, spelling, or grammar in a resume carefully. For example, a person whose first language is not English may make written errors but could still be able to communicate verbally at an acceptable level to do the job. Other diverse candidates might also struggle with traditional resume formatting (for example, multicultural or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates).

Cultural norms

- Be aware that applicants from diverse backgrounds may include religious greetings, mention of their family, or other personal information that you may not expect to see on a resume.

- Focus on the content not the style of the resume. The way information is communicated varies widely across cultures and diverse groups of people.

Time at previous jobs

- Remember that a long time at a job can be interpreted either as a sign of loyalty or a lack of ambition, and frequent job changes could mean a lack of commitment to employers.

- Applicants from diverse backgrounds may have many reasons for unconventional employment histories, and it's best to ask for clarification before making assumptions and dismissing a potentially excellent candidate.