LEVER

The Diversity and Inclusion Handbook

Foreword

Why We're Writing About Diversity and Inclusion

by Sarah Nahm, CEO, Lever

As an Asian-American female CEO in Silicon Valley, I'm afforded an intimate view into the ever-simmering discussion around diversity and inclusion in tech. Even more so, because I'm building a company whose job it is to help other companies do their best hiring.

I prize the luxury of getting to think constantly about how organizations scale, and in speaking with hundreds of talent professionals every year, I'm struck by a common theme: People are more bought in and committed to diversity and inclusion than ever.

Since the very early days, we've embedded diversity and inclusion intentionally in Lever's culture. Our first D&I taskforce formed when we were just 10 employees. Fast forward to today, and at approximately 120 employees, our team's gender balance is 50:50, 53 percent of our managers and 40 percent of our board members are female, and 40 percent of our workforce is non-white.

And so, talent leaders and company executives come to Lever not only for a hiring solution, but guidance, too. Before they've heard about Lever's latest feature rollout, and sometimes before they've even learned that Lever's product is hiring software, they know us as "that company with a deep commitment to diversity and inclusion." They've heard our story and want to know how they can achieve the same results. They're ready for the next level of discourse (one that's aimed at actual solutions), and they want to know what they can do today to build a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

That's why we wrote our blog series to begin with, and that's why we're continuing to engage in this important conversation throughout this handbook. Our goal is to take what we've learned from our fellow Leveroos, innovative customers, industry leaders, and dozens of studies, and compile it into a vision for how we can actually achieve more diverse and inclusive workplaces – step-by-step.

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First things first: building an inclusive environment

Fixing Your Culture

Conversations about solving the diversity problem in tech typically start as, "How do companies hire more minorities?" But some of the most successful diversity efforts don't start with hiring at all; they start with inclusion.

Without an inclusive culture, you simply compound your diversity issues with retention challenges. If your culture doesn't welcome and develop a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and ideas, what will make those hires stay?

Building an inclusive culture that attracts diversity is a business imperative as well. A study by McKinsey found that gender-diverse companies were 15 percent more likely to outperform their national industry median, and ethnically diverse companies were 35 percent more likely to outperform.

Before allocating resources towards diversity recruiting, turn your focus inward. Think about whether your culture can retain all great talent, whether they happen to be underrepresented or not.

From our internal efforts and in speaking to leaders across many companies, we've found two elements that serve as the backbone of inclusive cultures.

1) Equality in the day-to-day

Every company will claim to be a meritocracy, but it takes an honest look at yourself to determine whether all of your employees truly have equal access to rewards and opportunities. Realizing you have room for improvement shouldn't be shameful. It's what you do with the realization that matters.

Who's picking up the slack for administrative work?

Many companies have rightfully focused on compensation policies as a driver of equality. But fairness also manifests itself in smaller things, like

who's taking on more of the extra administrative work or even doing chores around the office. In their joint piece in The New York Times, Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant noted that women end up doing more of the "office housework," and get little payoff for it. "Someone has to take notes, serve on committees and plan meetings — and just as happens with housework, that someone is usually a woman."

Everyone shoulders the load

> *"I saw women taking on extra responsibilities at Lever shockingly early, when we were around 10 employees. There was a lot of work to be done that was nobody's job: the communication, organizational, and operational work. For a while, I fell into a pattern of running around, handling as much as I possibly could on top of my "normal" workload, cajoling people to do what I asked to share the load. Eventually, I noticed other women on the team similarly picking up a lot of the slack. I realized it wasn't just about me; it was about gender.*
>
> *Once we noticed it, we changed it. The whole team — men included — was receptive to hearing about the situation and generating ideas to fix it. We even created a dish duty rotation, to make sure the whole team shared in that responsibility."*
>
> *— Sarah Nahm, CEO, Lever*

What behavior do you reward, and how are promotion decisions made?

Consider who's being promoted in the organization, and how those decisions are made. Is it the people who spend the most time in the office? Those who self-nominate for promotions? The loudest voices in the room? If so, who are you inadvertently holding back? Employees with childcare responsibilities may need more flexible hours. Meetings are often dominated by a few assertive voices, so people with softer communication styles may have great ideas that go unheard. And as Sheryl Sandberg notes in Lean In, women are less likely than men to nominate themselves for promotions, so they may lose out on advancement opportunities.

They key to equality in the workplace is looking at all scopes. Even the most well-intentioned companies discover discrepancies between the equality they want and the equality that exists. Open yourself up to finding these inequalities so that you can you take steps to fix them.

2) Feedback loops, open communication, and empowerment

As Lever has grown, the culture has become less and less something the founders can directly impact or control. And that's as it should be; company culture that is truly embodied by its people isn't built from the top down. Your employees know better than anyone what's working and what's not, but that information won't emerge unless you ask them.

Every company with serious intentions to support diversity should create safe spaces for employees to share their concerns openly. They should know who they can go to when they have criticisms or ideas related to D&I, and that someone should have visible support from leadership.

Build programs where employees can share their experiences. When we initially created our D&I taskforce at Lever, an employee would volunteer to lead a session every month. We've hosted forums around "beginners" education for diversity and inclusion supporters (white men feel passionately about this too, and want to know what part they can play), and discussions about hidden parts of our identities. We held one session called "A Soundtrack to a Life," in which people shared songs that were meaningful to them, which sparked conversation around the cultural and socioeconomic diversity of employees.

We also recently created our first position dedicated to D&I full-time, giving us the opportunity to listen even closer to feedback from Leveroos about current efforts or ones that they would like to see.

Ultimately, the most powerful sign that you are an inclusive workplace is when underrepresented minorities and women can look around and see people like themselves succeeding. Are there people from diverse backgrounds in leadership positions? On promotion paths? If that's happening, then you really have proof.

Spotlight

3 ways we're building an inclusive culture at Yelp

by Rachel Williams, Head of Diversity and Inclusion, Yelp

So far, the tech industry has focused largely on attracting underrepresented minorities and women. But we need to have a different conversation, too. We have to start with the inclusion piece, and examine where our culture is today. Changing hearts and minds must happen before we go out to recruit underrepresented minorities. Here are some of the ways I've worked to engender that inclusive environment at Yelp:

Empower your ERGs (employee resource groups):

When I first entered this role, I started with a listening tour. We had 3500 employees and 7 offices, and I visited every single office. That tour showed me that we already had underground communities getting together casually. The LGBTQ community was gathering on their own, as were women leaders. It became apparent to me that ERGs were where we needed to start, so I began doing research to learn from other companies. I knew that our ERGs would have to focus on what change the group could tangibly make. What business value could they begin creating? How could they consistently educate themselves and the broader company about the challenges their community faces?

Next, I began talking to employees who were vocal with the Human Resources department about wanting to see change. At the time, employees

were voicing the difficulties of being a parent - because that's honestly rare in this industry - and they were also sharing how deeply police brutality has impacted them. I asked HR to forward me those employees' info, and I immediately reached out to them. Those conversations motivated me even further to help create ERGs. There were three when I got here in 2014, and now we have over 70. People actively want to be a part of these communities; they want to unite and give feedback to their team on how to best serve their particular interests.

Ultimately, I can't think of a better way to retain employees than ERGs. I hear that on our employees' toughest days, being apart of these communities has kept them here. Their activism has also helped us refine our own product. Once, one of our employees who's in an ERG said: "I think we should start tracking locations with gender neutral restroom as safe spaces for people of every identity." And we listened, and we took action. Now, people can use Yelp to identify whether locations have gender neutral restrooms. If we hadn't started that LGBT ERG, I'm not sure we would have that feature.

Create an Executive Diversity Council:

Today, we have an Executive Diversity Council of six people, and they've been instrumental in progressing our D&I efforts. If you decide to build your own Council, seek out the greatest influencers at your company. Who are the people that have the largest organizations under them? Who are the leaders that employees listen to? You have to be selective about who you put in that room, not just open it up to people who have an affinity for D&I.

Here's what I've learned: the more you educate your leaders - get them comfortable with what's uncomfortable - the more you loop them in as advocates. In reality, our Council is another ERG for our execs. In our meetings, we spend time looking over current research about how to further

D&I. We learn from other teams in the industry. We try to move the needle on our own diversity metrics.

These days, executives actually ask me when they'll be invited - I never imagined that would happen. They ask questions about what we need to do to achieve our goals. Ultimately, I think it comes down to what I tell them about our employees. Stories about our team are powerful, and execs don't get to hear them. Sharing employee experiences is the key to getting their buy-in for building a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

Bring outside perspectives into your company

We recently asked Stacy Brown, CEO of Taskrabbit, to speak at Yelp. I think it's important for employees to see an African American woman in that position. To create a culture of inclusion, try hosting lunches and fireside chats for leaders who can share a different outlook. And remember that we're all human beings; we're naturally surround ourselves with people who look like us. As D&I advocates, it's our job to help curate new experiences. How can we ensure that people come into contact with perspectives they've never explored? That is the work, and engaging in it can change your culture and your product.

2

Setting diversity goals that resonate with your employees

In the last few years, we've seen large tech companies focus on their demographic breakdowns, but progress is about more than the percentages. Driving results in workplace diversity requires setting goals that align with your employees' values and feedback.

Here are five steps to establishing goals that will galvanize your team.

1. Solicit team-wide input

Lever's first diversity goals came straight from the ideas and experiences – both inspirational and horrifying – of our employees.

One of our early goals focused on interviewer calibration to ensure that we weren't disqualifying candidates based on their education. After an early employee surfaced the issue, we stopped adding education requirements to our job postings, and instead began focusing on the tangible skills we needed to see in new Leveroos.

To preserve the influence of employees on our goals, we run surveys using softwares like CultureIQ and Culture Amp. To gauge employee engagement, ask open-ended questions and read the answers thoroughly. For example, asking if they agree with the statement: *"I believe that my company is a safe and inclusive place to work for me"* -- can indicate the environment that you've created.

For more guidance, download our example survey for setting your diversity and inclusion goals.

2. Track and measure existing hiring bias

Ask for feedback from employees, but also take it upon yourself to measure the unconscious bias in your interview process. While it's not possible to fully determine the impact of unconscious bias - there are too many subtle signals to possibly identify - pinpointing your existing biases will help you make incremental goals towards inclusive hiring. Here are some starting-point suggestions:

- Company demographics. Determine the makeup of your team and compare it against local census data. Start a discussion about the trends and discrepancies you see. If D&I efforts are just taking off in your org, we recommend using this step as a current snapshot to compare against in the future.

- Candidate experience. Send a survey to candidates with both quantitative (such as "How likely are you to re-apply for one of our positions in the future?") and qualitative fields ("What was the highlight of your interview experience? What about a low point?"). If you hear about a hiring manager who repeatedly failed to follow up, for example, treat that feedback as a gift to help you improve.

- Conversion rates vs EEO data. Take your conversion rates (e.g. What percentage of resumes submitted are moved to phone screen?) and intersect them with demographic data collected by Equal Employment Opportunity, an optional set of questions that can be enabled in your ATS like Lever. For example, you might find that underrepresented candidates are passing phone screens but falling off after on-site panels at a disproportionately high rate. This tells you there is likely some sort of bias in a particular stage.

3. Analyze your results

When you get the results back, look for stand-out trends. What feedback are candidates providing about their interview experience? How do your conversion rates for underrepresented groups compare to demographic EEO data? Are employees hungry to help more but aren't sure how? Take these results and turn them into actionable next steps. Some example actions include creating interviewer trainings, ERGs, or visibility into equal compensation practices.

4. Set goals and deadlines

To begin with, you may want to set a few goals with fast turnaround times. Early wins that show impact can help you increase support.

- Here are a few ideas for early, measurable goals:
- Percentage of employees to submit responses in an initial benchmark survey
- Number of internal events with a target number of attendees
- Number of diverse candidates in your pipeline
- Number of underrepresented candidates that make it to x stage
- Number of job descriptions overhauled for inclusive language
- Number of blog posts about your culture written by current employees

5. Speak to your wins and opportunities

Once you've hit your goals - or haven't - plan a post mortem. Celebrate your big wins with the team, and share what surprised you. Conversely, admit where you fell short. Examining your failures along with your team will help you work differently in the future. This work is human - it's not meant to be flawless.

3

Leveraging the support of your team the right way

Regardless of how passionate you are about diversity and inclusion, your ability to cultivate it will be limited without buy-in from the broader team. But getting that support can be complicated. D&I is a sensitive subject, and the actions you take can deeply affect people's lives.

With that in mind, here are a few tips to get buy-in from your employees, execs, and HR department:

Buy-in from employees

Respect the right to choose

Underrepresented minorities can be great partners to drive your D&I efforts, but not all of them will want to spend their time working on diversity-related issues. Don't assume that your female software engineer wants to spend her time recruiting other women in engineering, or that a visually impaired colleague wants to spend his time working to improve workplace accessibility.

It's also a mistake to assume that the underrepresented minorities on your team are the only ones that want to work with you on new projects. In the early days at Lever, our D&I taskforce was comprised of our entire company. Think about ways to make your efforts company-wide, while recognizing it may not happen overnight.

Empower with recognition and support

Among the conversations you initiate, you'll find a few passionate employees who continually step forward and contribute. It's no surprise that these individuals can be most impactful.

They'll ask for ways to help, and some ideas include:

- Help recruit at universities
- Blog about their experiences at your company
- Represent the company at conferences in their area of interest
- Lead an employee resource group (ERG)

But tread lightly – many underrepresented minority employees will be shy to speak out on issues because they fear being singled out. An Academy of Management Journal study showed that women and non-white executives can actually get penalized for promoting diversity. Those reported as frequently engaging in diversity-valuing behaviors (like hiring someone else who did not look like them) were rated much lower by their bosses. To truly empower these individuals, diversity efforts have to be supported from the very top.

Buy in from execs

Top-down support for D&I efforts is invaluable. Lever's founding team helped unite our employees behind Lever's goals for workplace diversity. However, it's not always easy to get the executive team's acknowledgment.

Leverage research

To make a strong argument, you'll want to leverage the research and data - much of which underscores the benefits of championing D&I in your workplace.

4 stats proving that diversity is good for the bottom line:

1. "Gender-diverse companies are 15 percent more likely to outperform (have financial returns above their respective national industry medians) non-gender diverse companies, and ethnically diverse companies are 35 percent more likely to outperform." - McKinsey
2. "Companies with at least one female board member had a return on equity of 14.1 percent over the past nine years, greater than the 11.2 percent for those without any women. The stock valuations are also higher for gender diverse boards versus all-male ones." - Credit Suisse
3. "Employees of firms with 2-D diversity [inherent traits and acquired experience] are 45 percent more likely to report a growth in market share over the previous year and 70 percent more likely to report that the firm captured a new market." - HBR
4. Diverse and inclusive workforces demonstrate 1.12x more discretionary effort, 1.19x greater intent to stay, 1.57x more collaboration among teams, and 1.42x greater team commitment. - Corporate Executive Board

5 stats confirming that bias exists:

The stats in points one through five come from Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and Head of People Lori Goler's presentation at the 2016 Makers Conference.

1. 76 percent of respondents more readily associate "males" with "career" and "females" with "family."
2. 70 percent of respondents have an implicit preference for white people over black people.
3. A study of identical resumes – one with a man's name and one with a woman's name – found that 79 percent of applicants with a man's name vs. 49 percent of those with a woman's name were 'worthy of hire.'
4. Resumes with white-sounding names received more calls for interviews than identical resumes with black-sounding names.
5. Without diverse leadership, women are 20 percent less likely than straight white men to win endorsement for their ideas; people of color are 24 percent less likely; and LGBTs are 21 percent less likely. - HBR

Know what you're asking for

After making a compelling argument for why D&I matters, ensure you know exactly what change you want to make. Consider these ways in which your executive team can support your diversity & inclusion efforts:

- Give protection, support, and assurances from retaliation
- Participate visibly
- Be receptive to positive and constructive feedback from the greater team
- Help you build a budget

Buy in from HR

If you aren't a member of HR, it's key to prioritize enlisting their help. As the enforcers of your company values, they have the ability to amplify your company's D&I efforts.

If you are in HR, remember that you have a huge role to play! Diversifying the workforce has been an initiative in HR for decades, but under a different guise, and with subsequently different goals. Since its creation in 1964, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commision (EEOC) has worked alongside the Department of Labor (DOL) to ensure that all Americans have necessary rights to obtain and retain employment. This includes ensuring that HR departments are able to track, identify, and prevent bias against underrepresented groups. This led HR teams to focus on legal liability as the focal point of diversity initiatives. Sounds cold and robotic, right? It doesn't have to be. There are many ways to re-think how you bring EEOC-mandated initiatives to fruition within your HR organizations. For example:

- Build policies that focus on retaining your underrepresented talent. Report on attrition and employment rates as it relates to underrepresented groups.
- When employees exit your company, ask them to weigh in on the company's diversity initiatives. Furthermore, make an effort to request their feedback every six months.

Wearing the HR hat entails advocating for all employees; they are counting on you to create an inclusive environment. If an employee wants to voice concerns about their experiences, for example, they may confide in you. All of this means you can be the ultimate ally for all D&I objectives.

Spotlight

How employee referrals contribute to diversity at Affirm

by Ragini Holloway, Head of Talent, Affirm

I have always come in to fast-growing startups to scale them rapidly, to take them from 1 to 1,000 in a very short period of time. For much of my 15 years in recruiting, my thought process has been: let's find a way to bring in quality talent fast. And what better way to do that than to encourage your team to submit referrals? Show them how to reach out to their networks, to act as brand ambassadors. Referrals have always been successful for me. I always think: this candidate is going to sign this offer, because they want to join someone they trust. Often, they do.

At a previous company, I was bullish on getting referrals from the very beginning. And at the end of my last year there, I saw that 50 percent of hires came from my team's referral efforts.That helped us scale to 100 employees, which was amazing. But the next year, my perspective completely changed. I became responsible for not only recruiting employees - I was working in HR, which meant I was to help retain them as well. That year, we were remarkably successful once again. We hit a 60 percent referral rate and tripled the company. But I noticed that we were surrounded by many of the same people. They were awesome and smart, but they had similar profiles, educations, backgrounds. I realized that our team wasn't diverse, and it was in large part because of referrals. We had to start thinking about how to change that.

On reflection, 60 percent was far too high, and my goal today has become to maintain a rate that's half that. My current team fluctuates between 20 and 30 percent referrals, and it's important to me that we always stay within that range.

To hit that goal, I've had to change the way we gather referrals. We still ask employees to send them over, but now we don't allow the employee who submits the referral to touch that candidate's interview process at all. Instead, we focus on giving them an optimal candidate experience. That way, the candidate is evaluated solely on their merits. We also instill the harm of giving that candidate any kind of white glove treatment in our interview panel. We teach our employees to source within their networks, rather than refer people they know intimately. We ask them to also reach out to their third degree rather than first degree connections.

The truth is, everyone should be involved in hiring, and referrals do help you hit your recruiting goals. To build a diverse pipeline, however, you have to incentivize your employees to approach referrals the right way. Reiterate the value of hiring diverse candidates. Get in front of your underrepresented groups, and stress why you need their referrals.

Since I began seriously investing in this project, I've been so encouraged by the results. I've noticed that hiring managers have more active conversations with the recruiting team about hiring a diverse array of candidates. They're asking me questions like: we have lots of employees from large companies - can we look at candidates from smaller ones? Are we evaluating candidates with different educational backgrounds? Are we fair and inclusive in our interview processes?

In general, I'm seeing employees have more conversations about recruiting diverse candidates. Recently, a female engineer proposed: 'I think we should hire a female engineering manager and every male engineering hiring manager should be required to send over two to three people in their network they'd recommend.' Since we began changing how we think about referrals and - more broadly - the way we measure hiring success, this type of dialogue is happening all the time.

4

Embedding diversity and inclusion goals into your hiring process

Imagine you come across an ad for your dream job. It's exactly what you've been looking for. You submit your resume, wondering if it's too good to be true.

Unfortunately, when you come in to interview, you realize it is. The recruiter proudly tells you that the company happens to be entirely left-handed, and it's a huge part of the culture. You notice pro-left-handedness messages on posters decorating the walls, and feel pangs of anxiety. When you mention to the recruiter that you're right handed, she's taken aback. "Are you sure?" she asks. "Um, pretty sure," you reply, and she looks visibly worried. From there, it gets weirder. Some interviewers seem vaguely confrontational, one remarking, "We haven't had a right-hander work here in years." Another interviewer actually chokes on his coffee when you start taking notes... with your right hand.

You did meet some genuinely nice people, but you just didn't feel good being in the office. So, when the recruiter calls back and invites you to the final round interview, you decline.

What if we told you that this happens all the time? Sure, the above is an exaggerated example, but you can imagine something similar playing out when a candidate who's different walks into your office.

Since everyone (yes, everyone) has inherent biases, it's important to lean into understanding them. Read on to learn how biases show up in hiring, why biases are unavoidable, and tips for curtailing their influence, so the scenario above doesn't happen at your organization.

First, the basics: A common concern we hear about diversity recruiting is around quality. “But we shouldn’t lower the hiring bar.”

And we won’t! No reasonable person is arguing that we should only hire say, women, in favor of more qualified male candidates. D&I supporters share a common goal: building inclusive workplaces to better support *every* demographic.

Here’s the thing: it’s not possible for any one *individual* to be diverse. Diversity is not a fixed trait, but a factor that only becomes relevant when you’re talking about *groups* of people. Individuals are still ultimately responsible for contributing– no free passes – no matter what demographic.

But when we examine groups in aggregate, it’s hard to deny problematic patterns. Some groups are unfairly disadvantaged based on factors they cannot control. This can result in entire industries dominated by men, for example, or entirely-white management.

You’re biased and I am too

Before diving into the tactics, it’s important to acknowledge that all of us have unconscious biases. Repeat: we ALL have unconscious biases. Period. The trouble is, when left unchecked, they lead us to fall prey to stereotypes in decision-making.

Why do we make snap judgments? Humans are social creatures, extremely attuned to other people and whether one “belongs” or not – it used to be critical to our survival. Our ancestors evolved to figure out quickly who was a member of our tribe (“in-group”) vs. not (“out-group”). Choosing wrong and not reacting quickly enough to a potential threat could jeopardize our survival.

What does this mean? We’ve been wired to categorize others quickly friend vs. not. Thousands of years later, most of us aren’t walking around constantly on the alert for a surprise attack from an enemy tribe. Our evolutionary wiring helped us survive in the past, but today – when we evaluate people for our office jobs and the fight for survival is purely metaphorical – it can manifest itself in more negative ways, like implicit stereotyping.

We’re predisposed to feel safe when surrounded by people who look similar. But as research shows over and over, it’s diversity that leads to smarter, more creative teams and better performance for businesses.

That was the biology lesson. Back to hiring!

With greater awareness of biases, hiring teams can become less reliant on ‘shortcuts’ that limit better judgment. It won’t be easy though; educating hiring decision-makers that their reliance on “gut feeling” needs to go is not simple. However, tackling that feeling of initial discomfort is a necessary step in creating better results for the entire team.

Bonus Tip: Harvard has developed a free online tool called the Implicit Association Test (IAT) to help the unconscious become more conscious. Check out the website and try out a few of their tests – you may be surprised by the results.

Below are three actions you can take to reduce biases in recruiting:

1. Write better job descriptions
2. Spark a dialogue about biases
3. Focus and inform interviewers

Write better job descriptions

Job descriptions are often the first real touch point between your prospective candidates and your company. Do people get fired up about submitting a resume? Or do subtle cues discourage would-be-candidates?

Too often, traditional job descriptions are checklists of requirements that may or may not actually match the job. A common complaint about job descriptions in HR circles is that they're descriptive of what the person should *look* like, instead of what needs to be *done* on the job.

At Lever, we invented a new type of job description, called the impact description (see live examples here). Each impact description is made up of two key parts:

1. The outcomes a new hire would be expected to achieve at specific milestones (months 1, 3, 6, then 12).

2. What the new hire would be expected to know already and help others with (labeled as "Teach"), vs. what they would have to develop on the job (labeled as "Learn").

The feedback from applicants has been overwhelmingly positive. Candidates appreciate the clarity of expectations and the signal these send – that these companies care a lot about candidates as people.

Impact descriptions also force the hiring manager to think more seriously about their expectations for new hires. The 1 month and 3 month sections give the hiring manager and new hire alike a shared understanding of where to focus during the first 90 days. For more specific steps on how to make-over your job descriptions, here's a step-by-step guide.

Revamping job descriptions can be especially helpful for D&I efforts. As one often-cited Hewlett Packard study showed, men apply for a job when they meet only 60 percent of the outlined qualifications, but women don't feel confident to apply unless they meet 100 percent. Remove the checklists that impede women and minorities from applying, and you'll have access to a larger talent pool.

There are some exceptions, as in the case of technical skills that are absolutely required for a job. But ask yourself: is it something that must already be possessed by the candidate? Or are you willing to teach someone who is otherwise excellent? If so, why discourage those who may be qualified from applying?

Bonus Tip: If you're not ready to switch over to Impact Descriptions, start small: Textio is a fantastic tool helping companies analyze the language of their job descriptions. Their studies have found that bias in job descriptions can favor/discourage certain candidates. If your postings are laden with words like "hacker," "shark," "dominate," etc., they might inadvertently tell women and minorities they should look elsewhere.

Spark a dialogue about biases

The tricky thing about unconscious bias is that we're usually not aware of them. Still, they sneak into the hiring process in all kinds of ways. Have you heard anything like the following in hiring huddles before?

- *"She was fairly quiet and low-energy, I don't know if she's confident enough."*
- *"Did he feel like a 'leader' to you?"*

These are implicit associations that can get in the way of smart hiring decisions. Sometimes, we also equate stereotypical images to the real deal. Being a white male MIT Computer Science grad is just *one* stereotype of

technical ability, and sometimes it is true. The problem is when we reject a minority female grad from a technical boot camp because she just doesn't quite feel like a *real* engineer.

There are also statements like below, where you end up hiring for prestige and adopting whatever institutional biases exist in your industry.

- *"We should get some Google engineers in here."*
- *"If they're from Facebook, they must be good."*

Then there's the bias that occurs when culture fit is conflated with meaning people who are similar to the existing team, which prevents you from being open to valuable differences:

- *"I'm not sure I can see myself getting a beer with him..."*
- *"I don't think she'd be a fit, but I can't quite put my finger on why."*

A conversation about unconscious biases with your team is a great place to start, as it's something that affects everyone. Decide on safe ways to call each other out. You'll know you're making progress when team members start pointing out, "Hey, that sounds like it might be an unconscious bias. What are some other possible interpretations of this candidate's answer?"

Bonus Tip: The unconscious bias training from Facebook covers several types of biases in easily digestible 5-15 minute modules. They're a great conversation starter.

See also: Materials from Google and Paradigm, one of our favorite leading consultancies offering Unconscious Bias Trainings.

Focus and inform interviewers

By crafting better job descriptions and opening up discussion on unconscious biases, you've laid a strong foundation. Here are three critical areas to set your interviewers up for success in effectively screening candidates:

- Ensure hiring panel alignment on how candidates should be evaluated
- Establish basic guidelines for resume reviewing
- Structure and plan your interviews

The more people you involve in a hiring process, the more complex it gets. There's a greater likelihood of an interviewer not being familiar with the nuances of the role. That lends itself to relying on mental shortcuts, which could prevent you from finding and closing the right candidate.

Ensure hiring panel alignment on how candidates should be evaluated

At the beginning of every search, gather the hiring panel for a short meeting. Make sure everyone's on the same page about the evaluation criteria for the role. If your sales hiring manager asks for former athletes, for example, or an engineer demonstrates a strong preference for a technology that's not critical, ask thoughtful questions to suss out what is Required vs. Desired.

Establish basic guidelines for reviewing resumes

Walk through the basics of resume evaluation with your hiring team. Explain that just relying on schools and past organizations tells a small part of the story. Instead, use the resume to understand the whole story behind a person, with questions like these:

- Does this person demonstrably show growth in their environment?
- Does their resume indicate a conscientious ability to communicate with others?

Structure and plan your interviews

You'd be surprised at how impactful basic structure can be. Structured interviews (planned questions, asked across multiple candidates) with behavioral questions are more likely to get you the information you need for a sound hiring decision. Focus on the "why" and "how" to learn about the candidate – what their strengths/weaknesses are, as well as how they learn and problem-solve. Ask open-ended questions to gather stories:

- "Tell me about a time when a customer was upset or displeased."
- "When's the last time you had to do something in your job you had no idea how to do?"

This is as opposed to oddball questions like "Why is a manhole round?" or "How many golf balls would fit inside a 747 airplane?" Brain teasers have been found to be not that helpful in predicting great hires vs. those who need to be rejected.

Remember that stronger predictors of success in a potential employee are found in the tapestry of work samples, peer/manager ratings, and motivation fit. Focus on these areas to make sure you can identify top talent, no matter their background or privileges.

Bonus Tip: The People Operations team at Google has taken their learnings from thousands of interviews over many years to publish a guide for Structured Interviewing. Check it out for a further deep-dive into the why's and the mechanics of structured interviewing, along with specific examples and sample tools you can copy and adopt.

Ultimately, combating bias isn't glorious – it can be quite tedious. It's about taking the additional time to do what's right, even when doing it the same way comes easier. When you take it step-by-step, you'll start to see a difference. And by then, you'll be empowered to tackle bigger challenges, to make a real dent in building inclusive organizations.

Spotlight

How inclusion and diversity advocates partner with Recruiting at Lyft

by Tariq Meyers, Head of Inclusion and Diversity, Lyft

Building diverse teams means nothing if we don't talk about inclusion first. That's inclusion at every level, from how we've positioned our employer value proposition in underrepresented communities, to how we develop and retain our talent once they've walked through our doors. It's critically important that diversity and inclusion leaders partner with their talent teams to deliver the most inclusive experience as they keep diversity top of mind. Here are three steps to help you get started:

1) Earn trust with underrepresented communities

It's not lost on underrepresented communities that Silicon Valley is working every day to "compete" for their talent. It's also not lost on them that Silicon Valley, and other historical and systemic harms, have created the very circumstances that limit their ability to attain their talent. We often describe this dynamic at Lyft as underrepresented communities wielding "talent power", or the ability to choose, now more than ever, which companies they want to work for. As members of the tech community, it's important that we continue to build trust, to be transparent about who we are and what we stand for, and more importantly demonstrate our commitment to developing this talent. In partnership with our talent teams at Lyft, we've taken steps to build trust in a number of ways.

For starters, we open our doors to our community. We've hosted "Black in Tech" events at our largest offices. These gatherings aren't recruiting focused, but experience and inclusion focused. That is, rather than throwing traditional events that focus on filling particular roles (and that often have a selling feel to them), we create community-based spaces where we can kick back, break bread, and have a broader conversation about the challenges facing underrepresented communities in tech. In doing so, we're able to share the Lyft workforce story, talk about the experience of working here, yet still propel the journey toward shifting our entire industry's demographics forward.

2) Build allegiances with hiring managers and interviewers

Let's face it, managers are often either new or developing within their role, and we know that a team member's experience is inextricably intertwined with their relationship to their managers. For hiring managers specifically, we've found it important to help them become champions of building diverse and inclusive teams. In partnership with our talent team, we've:

- Developed Unconscious Bias Training with a focus on creating conscious action. This means being conscious about referring to a candidate as diverse, moving away from 'culture fit' to 'culture add', encouraging diverse interview loops, requiring pre-interview meetings to identify candidate attributes prior to the candidate's onsite, requiring written feedback before an offer can be made after the candidate's onsite, and not moving forward in any process until a full debrief.
- Developed Lyft-specific interview training that deeply focuses on creating a bias-free process.
- Looked to change behaviors, making sure that D&I is seen as part of every selection process, not apart from it.

3) Prioritize empathy, transparency and communication

We all know the struggle that recruiters face when it comes to the demands of hiring managers. D&I leaders must partner with recruiters to provide the "cover" necessary to mitigate some of those challenges. This includes patience and pushing back against the stereotype of "identifying the best candidate" or moving at a particular speed.

Transparency and communication are also key. Often, D&I leaders have a high-level understanding of where the organization is going in terms of diversity and how to get there. It's important that folks in my capacity are transparent in these goals with our recruiting partners. For Lyft, this has meant meeting with each individual department head, alongside their recruiting and business partners, to deep dive into department-specific demographics and identify areas for growth. This process has been effective in highlighting the challenges facing industries within tech (i.e. the challenges of recruiting for marketing vs. the challenges of recruiting for eng or product design). We don't just want to take a blanket approach to growing our overall diversity, but want to understand at a deep level what each department is experiencing. Change occurs in small increments, not huge undertakings.

5

Diversifying Your Pipeline

5 New Places to Find Candidates from Underrepresented Communities

If you are thinking about how to diversify your workforce, chances are you're also thinking about how you'll strategically draw underrepresented candidates into your recruiting process. Which platforms work best? What kind of language should you be using? It can be challenging to bring in candidates with different experiences, backgrounds and perspectives without clearly mapping out how you'll do it.

Underrepresented minorities with significant experience in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) are likely receiving reach-outs from several recruiters looking to diversify their companies. How do you plan to differentiate yourself?

When you begin looking for candidates, delve deep into their interests. Look for what they've done, not where they've done it. Identify the different projects they've owned, or the level of responsibility they have in their current role. Then, use that information to meaningfully engage them in your reach-out. Finally, look in a wide range of places to find candidates. Here are a few sites we suggest looking:

Social media platforms for sourcing:

Medium - A great place to find substance at length. Medium gives you the chance to see which blog posts your candidate has recommended, and shows you which topics they follow. Medium also makes it easy to search by topics and keywords. So if you were looking for say, someone passionate about 'Data Science', running that search could surface a rich pool of talent to potentially contact.

Quora - A site where you can ask questions and other users will often answer them. From there, upvoted answers rise to the top. The key on this platform is to find a topic related to the role that you're looking for, and scan through the users who answer questions that are posed.

Non-traditional recruiting platforms:

Jopwell - A site for black and Hispanic job hunters to browse and apply for jobs. The interface is very user-friendly and simple, making it an easy place to source and post jobs. Jopwell's user base is growing rapidly, meaning there are more promising candidates each day.

include.io - A recruiting and retention platform that uses mentoring sessions to validate diverse and non-traditional technical talent. They also make it easy for employers to search for candidates through opt-in diversity data and referrals. Include.io was started by Leanne Pittsford, CEO of Lesbians Who Tech, which is a great community of more than 25,000 queer women and allies.

Your company's blog - This has been a hugely rewarding platform for us here at Lever, particularly when it comes to attracting candidates. If possible, shed light on what you're doing in the D&I space. Share how you celebrate milestones. Chronicle projects you have tried to kickstart that haven't worked. This will create an intimate view into your company and show candidates that your culture supports D&I. Here are a few of our posts that have been meaningful to candidates:

- A Technical Interview Gone Wrong
- Why We Need More Women in Tech Sales
- How to Fight the Imposter Syndrome and Rebuild Your Confidence
- 1 Second Every Day at Lever - 2016 edition!

Diversifying your pipeline isn't an easy feat, but taking these steps can help immensely. As always, don't forget to set measureable goals for your sourcing initiatives so that you can gauge your progress.

Spotlight

Shopify's top tactics for sourcing and engaging diverse candidates

by Jess Verbruggen, Recruiting Researcher, Shopify

Shopify knows the value of having a mix of perspectives on our team, but we also know it doesn't happen without some very intentional work. One way we're being more purposeful about increasing the diversity of thought at Shopify is by proactively diversifying our candidate pool. I want to share a bit of context on our current sourcing and outreach strategy.

Part 1

Our 7 Quick Sourcing Tricks

Our Talent Acquisition team uses a variety of platforms to source candidates. The main reason for this is that not all talented people are on LinkedIn. We've attempted various sourcing strategies, and have tried to figure out which platforms and tools are the most effective for finding candidates from underrepresented groups. Here's what has worked well for us:

1) Tap into the *People Also Viewed Section* on LinkedIn

As you source, you'll likely come across a diverse pool of candidates organically, whether that be people with different levels of education, socioeconomic status, gender, or ethnicity. When you uncover these candidates, check out the People Also Viewed section. A candidate's network is generally comprised of people who share similar backgrounds, so taking a look at their connections, as well as who Linkedin suggests you look at next, is a simple way to find candidates who will bring diversity of thought to your organization.

2) Look at the networks of candidates from underrepresented communities on GitHub

This strategy is similar to looking through the "People Also Viewed" section on LinkedIn. Find one GitHub user from an underrepresented group, and take a look at their repositories to find other contributors who may also be from an underrepresented group. Also, scroll though that GitHub user's followers to find others from different backgrounds. One caveat, though: I've found that the diversity on GitHub isn't great. Only about 6 percent of users with over 10 contributions are female, so if you are looking to improve the gender balance on your teams, this may not always be the best place.

3) Embrace Slack communities as a great resource for candidates

Tech is probably one of the most collaborative industries that exists. Slack communities are a great place for collaboration, because they're filled with people who unite around a common interest. Slack is particularly popular with developers and designers who don't always check their LinkedIn profiles or respond to cold recruiting emails. And often, these communities are open to anyone. For example, I often peruse the Women in Tech slack channel or the Ruby Developers channel looking for diverse talent. Some other great slack channels include TechFam, BIT (Blacks in Tech), ChiTech - the list goes on. If you're not sure where to start, check out slofile.com.

4) Look closely at Twitter lists

Sourcing passive candidates means being where they are, and a lot of them are on Twitter. Twitter lists are groups of Twitter accounts you can curate to help organize your feed. When you view a list, you'll only see tweets from its members. Public Twitter lists gather professionals from a specific industry who usually tweet about related topics. Here are a few examples of some Twitter lists to check out: Diversity in Tech, Top Women in Tech, Black in Tech, and Women in Tech.

5) Use she/her as a part of your keyword searches

This a great way to find women who describe their work in the third person, or have a high number of recommendations. Adding "women OR women's" as part of your search string is also an easy way to improve sourcing on the dimension of gender.

6) **Get creative with your search strings**

We've compiled a list of common women first names that can be used as a boolean string in LinkedIn. Feel free to use it! Here's a chunk of the string:

Aicha OR Amahle OR Amina OR Aminata OR Amogelang OR Ashraqat OR Awa OR Aya OR Bintou OR Bokamoso OR Dalal OR Djeneba OR Doha OR Eisha OR Esperanza OR Fajr OR Fanta OR Farah OR Farida OR Fatiha OR Fatima OR Fatin OR Fatma OR Fatoumata OR Gamalat OR Gamila OR Habiba OR Hana OR Hasnaa OR Hawa OR Hoda OR Hosna OR Hosniya OR Iminathi OR Irene OR Isabel OR Kadiatou OR Karabo OR Karima OR Khadija OR Khawla OR Kheira OR Lesedi OR Maha OR Malak OR Malika OR María OR Mariam OR Marie OR Marina OR Marwa OR Mary OR Meriem OR Milagrosa OR Minenhle OR Mona OR Nada OR Nadia OR Naima OR Nesreen OR Oumou OR Rachida, Nadia OR Rania OR Reem OR Rethabile OR Rowan OR Sahar OR Saida OR Salma OR Sara OR Sarah OR Shahd OR Shaimaa OR Shayma OR Suha OR Teresa OR Thandolwethu OR Tshegofatso OR Zoé OR Lovelie OR Valentina OR Béatrice OR Chedeline OR Gabriela OR Brianna OR Elena OR Ava OR Widelene OR Amelia OR "Alysha Isabella" OR Daniela OR Isabelle OR Valeria OR Josefa OR Emily

You can do this for virtually anything. For example, we've also done it for a bunch of community groups (i.e. Hack the Hood, Black Girls Code, Lesbians who Tech, Women who Code, Queer Coders, Vets who Code, Code 2040, Project Include, /dev/color), as well as different universities and colleges.

7) **Leverage your recruiting tools**

To source diverse candidates, we often use Entelo. It's a sourcing tool with a diversity search feature that allows you to filter by different dimensions of diversity. This involves less manual work than creating our own boolean strings. There are plenty of other great tools out there though. I recommend checking out: Blendoor, Textio, GapJumpers, Power to Fly, Door of Clubs, and Plum.io.

Part 2

8 Key Outreach Tricks

Outreach to diverse candidates is similar to reaching out to all candidates, in that it's essential to customize to the audience. Talented and diverse talent in tech receive upwards of dozens of emails a week from recruiters. More than just differentiating ourselves, customizing our outreach shows that we value candidates for their unique skills and experiences.

When it comes to reach-outs, here are a few things that have prompted higher response rates:

1) **Write an email you'd like to receive:**

First thing's first: think about what would pique your interest. What would compel you to respond to an email? References to your hobbies? A hilarious joke? Consider incorporating those elements.

2) **Keep it light and friendly:**

We don't believe in scripts at Shopify, so let your personality shine through, and don't be afraid to be funny.

3) **A little personalization goes a long way:**

Mention an awesome project of theirs you've seen on GitHub, their profile photo, an article they linked to on Twitter, or ask about somewhere they've worked.

Have a descriptive subject line. Research compiled by mailchimp showed that the emails that are most often opened are the ones that explain what the email is about.

4) **Consider asking your hiring manager, or their future team to write a template:**

Your hiring manager knows the work they'll do better than anyone, and they can write about it with authority. Encourage them to reach out to candidates!

You can also try experimenting with different senders using Lever Nurture. Some of our Directors and Leads, especially in R&D, can achieve more than a 20 percent higher response rate than someone on the recruitment team. Partner with your hiring managers to run some A/B tests and see what works best for you.

5) **Add context about your company:**

Describe what your company does.

Talk a bit about the position you think would suit them, and why.

Include relevant links. Folks are interested in reading content that could help them form a better mental image of your company, such as department-specific blogs.

6) **Keep it short and sweet:**

Aim to confine your email to a couple paragraphs at most.

If it's on the longer side, make sure the text is worth it. Provide detail about your team, for example, to ensure they keep reading.

7) **End with a question:**

People feel obligated to answer a question - by ending with one, you're more likely to get a higher amount of responses.

8) **Send a follow-up email, ideally a week later:**

We've noticed that if people don't respond to our initial reach-out, they're likely to respond to the follow-up. It shows that we are truly interested in them.

Here's an example of one of our outreach templates! Take a look:

Hi {{Candidate first name}}!

My name is {{Your first name}} and I work with the Security Team here at Shopify. I came across your profile and thought your experience could be a good fit on our growing team.

{{Add in a line or two of personalization here}}

Here's a bit about what we do, in case you're curious: we have a lot of critical and sensitive information being processed, stored, and transmitted through our systems and we need to ensure its security. Our Application Security Team hunts for security vulnerabilities throughout our applications, works with developers to fix bugs, and prevent new ones from occurring. We also build tools to detect and prevent security issues. We also give regular talks to the whole of the engineering organisation, to help everyone better understand secure development in an environment where every developer can push to master. Finally, we run two separate bug bounty programs through HackerOne. We've had a lot of success pairing with researchers on our core whitehat program and made the choice to invest heavily in a new program last year, opening up a second bug bounty program specifically for Shopify Scripts. We were floored by the response and our engineers were kept very busy triaging all the reports. I'm sure you can relate. 😬

Let me know if you're interested in a chat, but in any case I appreciate your time (and the line in your inbox). 📪🙈

Thanks,

{{Your full name}} | Shopify

Ultimately, it's not actually that hard to find and attract diverse talent - too many teams have distorted perceptions about how difficult it is. Sourcing is mainly trial and error, so don't be afraid to try a method that fails. Consider every failure a success - they ultimately provide you with anchors to begin all of your future searches.

As recruiters, we have to be part of the solution. If we can't find these candidates, we have to help create them. It's on us to change the narrative around hiring underrepresented groups - demonstrate their value, question our hiring managers, and call out biases.

6

Committing to Fair Compensation

There is no higher proof of a workplace that values diversity or practices equality than it being backed up by compensation data.

Only a few people within an organization are privileged to directly influence compensation. This chapter is authored for those who hold that power, to inspire them to take action in a way that disproportionately impacts the movement towards workplace diversity.

Realize the gravity of the situation

Worldwide, women make less than men, even when comparing across similar titles and seniority. In one study, Glassdoor found that women still only earn about 95 cents for every dollar men earn. The problem was the most acute for female computer programmers, chefs, and dentists, who make 72 cents per dollar made by their male counterparts. More research from the firm Procurement Leaders found that the pay gap persists even in upper levels of management. Women with "CPO, Global Head, or SVP," in their titles, for example, make 84 cents to the male dollar.

The gap exists by race as well. Pew Research, for example, found that college-educated black and Hispanic men earn roughly 80 percent the hourly wages of white college-educated men.

Despite being one of the most sensitive, and potentially toxic subjects in the workplace, compensation is also quite public. Not only are many online sites gathering anonymous compensation data for the public, but employees talk about compensation among themselves more than you think.

Whatever the reasons, committing to fair compensation is paramount for retaining your talent from underrepresented groups. Also, doing the right thing is good for the bottom line. When employees feel they're compensated fairly, you'll have less costly turnover, and it will be easier to budget and plan.

Document your status-quo compensation philosophy

You may not immediately be in a position to change your compensation philosophy, but just tracking your current compensation practices can help you adopt more consistent behaviors.

A compensation philosophy answers these kinds of questions:

What are the various components of our compensation and what purpose do they serve? For example, they could be:

— Cash salary
— Equity
— Starting bonus
— Relocation bonus
— Title
— Perks
— Intangibles like mission, growth opportunity, and culture

In the recruiting process, which components of compensation are negotiable and to what extent? Which structural factors affect compensation? Examples include:

— Cost of living
— Hiring markets
— Employee tenure

Who is making compensation decisions? Is it:

— Managers: as a tool in their performance, bonusing, and promotion
— Recruiters: to be equally articulate and consistent in how they explain an offer

Who is documenting or reviewing compensation decisions for:

— Adherence to established policies or philosophy
— Consistency across employees
— Alignment to values

Don't rely on cash to win candidates

If you're reliant on cash to recruit candidates, your highest-compensated employees (relative to their seniority and role) will simply reflect your toughest negotiators. Instead, train the recruiters and hiring managers who extend offers on your compensation philosophy, how to handle objections, and how to sell your company's intangibles.

At Lever, we have geared our recruiting process to minimize negotiation. Unsurprisingly, that means very narrow compensation bands and the risk of losing great talent to companies that will pay more; but it also means a heavier emphasis on candidate experience and a higher likelihood of hiring those who align with our values.

Long before it's time to make an offer, we must explain our compensation philosophy to the candidate and take the time to highlight the ways it ties back to our company values. A candidate's reaction to the conversation can actually be helpful for evaluating a very crucial dimension to culture fit.

Negotiation-proof your offers

By investing in richer and more persuasive offer letters, you can decrease the likelihood of negotiation. Here are a few things to consider adding to your letters:

- Include a reference to your compensation philosophy.
- If you benchmark data, leverage it in the document (see eshares).
- List out the skills of the candidate on the document as justification for the current role, title, and comp, so they see evidence that you understand what they bring to the table.
- List out the intangibles of the opportunity.
- Include a section which describes why others accepted the job, and how they thought about it.

If you can't get away from negotiation, you can at least create fair guard rails, like:

- Introduce compensation bands for each role if you don't yet have them. And if you already do, push to make your bands narrower.
- Designate certain parts of compensation packages as negotiable in order to protect equality of other aspects. Sometimes, you can choose something that is of relatively low monetary value and high perceived value like vacation days or the ability to be sponsored for training. Also, establish "budgets" for each hiring manager (or recruiter) to negotiate with candidates.

Keep a list of exceptions

Exceptions happen, but ensure you're able to explain them. Keep a list for when you make exceptions, and ensure that participants each decision document them as well.

Every time you have to vary on comp, ask the parties involved richer questions that can indicate weak links, like these example below.

- Do you believe the compensation bands set for this role are inaccurate?
- Did you lack any information or resources in order to negotiate more successfully?
- Did the best person possible extend the offer or negotiate it? If not, who would have had better results?

Many companies have formal processes for reviewing offers that go outside a given compensation range. Make sure that the people evaluating those offers are well-versed on the compensation philosophy of your workplace diversity program.

If you're an executive, get involved

Executive buy-in matters immensely in a company's ability to adhere to its compensation practices in all areas – in offer packages during the recruiting process, in granting raises, and in designing leveling and career pathing.

Ask yourself how you anchor compensation within your org (is it against market data?), and if you're comfortable standing by variances in your comp. You may also find that you have a leveling problem. Can you explain which roles fetch the highest compensation, and why?

At Lever, we have chosen to do leveling regularly and do look at gender and race/ethnicity as a dimension.

For executives who can commit to fair comp practices, this undertaking might mean pushing your team to discover uncomfortable things. You might find that close relationships lead to certain privileges, or that you can't seem to consistently uphold your negotiation strategy. But companies that claim to take diversity seriously, must take fair compensation seriously.

7

Baking Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives into Onboarding

So, you've hired some stellar candidates. They have come to appreciate -- and expect -- the inclusive culture you've shown them throughout the interview process. Now, they're looking forward to enhancing your company culture. How do you make sure that you're walking the talk?

At Lever, we use our onboarding program to immerse new Leveroos in our traditions, company lore, HR resources, and mission and values. New Leveroos spend their first week *learning* instead of jumping immediately into their work. This not only teaches them what it *means* to work here, it shows them what we *believe* in. "Ramp camp" - as we call it - has proven to be a meaningful introduction to our company culture.

When you discuss the importance of D&I during onboarding, your new hires see that it's fundamental to your culture. Below, we're sharing a few ways you can begin that dialogue:

- Define what diversity and inclusion means for your company
- Include a D&I onboarding session
- Train people managers on how they can be diversity leaders, too
- Coach the existing team to be inclusive to new hires

Define what diversity and inclusion means at your company

If you don't think it's obvious what D&I means at your company, mapping out your onboarding process is a great opportunity to ask for more clarity. If the definition is deficient, ask your leadership to iterate on it. Once they establish a better one, think about ways your team can circulate or proudly display it.

Include a D&I onboarding session

At Lever, we include a D&I session as part of onboarding for new employees, and it has been very well-received.

The purpose of our training is not to instruct, but rather to communicate why Lever cares about being an inclusive workplace, and how we define

it. The ultimate goal? To ensure that people feel comfortable talking about diversity and inclusion-related issues. We deliberately exclude extensive teaching (such as 'What is privilege?' and 'What are the most pressing diversity and inclusion issues in tech?') to avoid making the session overwhelming. We do consciously emphasize some topics that we want Leveroos to be aware of, however, such as the definition of a micro-aggression, and what an exclusive environment looks like to us.

After the onboarding session, we send new hires an email with resources to learn more. We also have a Slack channel - #inclusion - in which many Leveroos post meaningful articles and initiate discussion.

Coach the existing team to be inclusive to new hires

Remember that an inclusive culture isn't one that inducts new hires into the existing company culture. Instead, it expands to incorporate the fresh perspectives that new hires bring. This means that a huge part of a successful onboarding is working with the existing team to integrate the new hire.

Leveling up your existing team to welcome newcomers may involve educating them. You can lead a workshop on how to accommodate different communication styles, for example, or engage in 1:1 coaching with employees. Encourage regular feedback. Responding to their input - no matter what it is - will make them feel invested in your culture as it changes.

Empower your people managers to be diversity and inclusion leaders, too

Often, a candidate's hiring manager is a fundamental reason they decide to join your team. That manager may also be a primary reason they decide to stay. Equip your leaders with the right resources - that way, they can serve as an advocate for every single one of their reports, no matter what their background.

Consider leading a manager training to ensure they feel comfortable speaking to D&I initiatives at your company. There are a variety of leadership trainings available - whether it be sensitivity or communication training.

A strong, thorough onboarding is key to ensuring that your new hires are bought into your diversity efforts. It's also a way to reinforce your company values: your new hires will become your brand ambassadors if you show them how inclusive your culture is.

8

Navigating When Things Go Wrong

Pop quiz: What year was the term "sexual harassment" coined?

A) 1895
B) 1923
C) 1940
D) 1975

The answer is the most recent option, 1975. In the grand scheme of things, that's not very long ago, is it? In fact, gender discrimination in the workplace only became a mainstream social issue in the 1970s, leading up to a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case in 1986. Before that, abuse and harassment was rampant for working women in the era of "Mad Men." But our society only realized it was a problem a few decades ago.

Your work to embed D&I in your culture won't be easy or perfect; it never has been. Not only is this field still nascent, it is deeply personal. Decisions can trigger very emotional, polarized responses. What works for one company won't necessarily work for another. We have to learn from our mistakes to see what works and what doesn't.

Given those challenges, it's not surprising that D&I efforts can get derailed. In the course of our work at Lever, as well as through conversations with dozens of startups tackling D&I initiatives, we've seen the following patterns emerge.

1. Diversity and Inclusion is seen as a joke, or your employees are skeptical of the importance and benefits.

What it looks like: Announcements about new programs are met with snickers. Instead of being taken seriously, they get pushed aside as more office chores. Or, the employees asking questions seem ready for a debate, making the interaction seem confrontational.

Why is it happening? There are two types of detractors. The first: those who are so egregiously prejudiced, they may never see how this work benefits them too. Call us optimists, but we believe this type are relatively few among us. We can get to a more productive place by engaging the second type: those who don't feel comfortable around this topic, but are open to discussion.

When we feel uncomfortable, a common response is to invoke humor. Some employees are suspicious of programs that seem too "touchy-feely." Others may say D&I feels "corporate" or superficial.

What to do about it: Your approach may not feel relatable. Often, D&I discussions can focus solely on underrepresented groups, which alienates those who are just becoming curious. But those folks are probably the majority of your company. When messages don't resonate, it may be that the initiatives are too ambitious, or lacking in authenticity. Start small, and get more concrete:

1. *Focus on the human aspects.* When discussing the "why" behind D&I, focus more on storytelling than data. It's powerful when your coworker with a disability shares a story about the everyday challenges she faces in the office, for example. When the discourse becomes concrete and personal, as opposed to abstract and distant, the case for diversity and inclusion becomes so much more compelling.

2. *Address detractors directly, but kindly.* Engage them in one-on-one conversations, while always assuming good intentions and seeking to understand. Only when we feel heard can we fully consider the experiences of others. Some people will feel threatened. Even if that doesn't make any sense to you, those feelings are still valid.

3. *Respect people's timelines and offer accountability.* Some employees come from workplaces where diversity was promoted without authenticity. Remember that, and you'll better understand their ambivalence towards D&I. Instead of dismissing these skeptics, fully own your initiatives and commit to transparency. Demonstrate regular progress, and you might find that some people just need more time and proof than others.

2. People don't see diversity and inclusion as 'their problem' and are too scared of saying the wrong thing.

What it looks like: Conversations and events repeatedly draw in the same small subset of the company. Despite repeated invitations, participation can be distilled down to "the usual suspects." Even the supportive members of the majority group (e.g. straight, white men) decline to get involved further, though they reassure you that the particular program is a great idea. They appreciate the work for how it benefits others... but they prefer to stay to stay on the sidelines for now, thank you.

Why is it happening? Lack of participation is often connected to fear of what will happen if they do speak up. As a Google study found, psychological safety is critical to an employee's sense of belonging and their ability to achieve full potential. Say you're a well-intended member of the majority group. Attending a seminar focused on LGBTQ issues or the struggles of those who identify as PoC (People of Color) might feel like walking into the lion's den. Ultimately, the fear of saying the wrong thing kicks in – so attendance just doesn't seem worth it.

What to do about it: Design and implement ways to amplify psychological safety, the principles of which are core to building highly productive and cohesive teams in general, not just diverse ones.

1. *Set some ground rules.* Explain how to address issues around D&I in company communications and feedback. FAQs, codes of conduct, and lists of "do"s and "don't"s are especially helpful, as they provide objectivity and transparency. Setting these explicit guidelines will provide clarity to everyone. (You're welcome to borrow/adapt our phrasing: "If you notice someone being left out or unfairly treated, say something. You're just as much at fault if you stand by and watch.")

2. *Lay out guidelines for a shared vocabulary.* Sometimes, it helps to spell out the fundamentals. Explain that it's ok to use words like "black" or "gay" at a workplace diversity group meeting. Not wanting to feel stupid ("How don't you know that already?") can hinder further participation. Assure the team that if and when they do mess up, their words will not be twisted against them to assign blame.

3. *Lower the barriers to entry.* Ideally, your programs will speak to a range of employees on the wide spectrum of awareness and advocacy. If most initiatives are targeted to the already-active participants, it creates divisions via artificial, binary labels of "diverse" people and "non-diverse" people. Nobody wants to be labeled either. These categorizations often further alienate those who are just starting their own journey of awareness.

3. Initiatives fall short of their full potential, despite employees' excitement and good intentions.

What it looks like: D&I is certainly present in conversations, but initiatives have not resulted in significant changes. New programs get a lot of fanfare at launch, but fizzle out quickly. You're tapped out on programs that everyone else seems to be doing, e.g., Unconscious Bias Training. Even worse, employees start questioning whether the focus on D&I is to "look" good instead of doing the right thing. Finally, new hires keep committing "sins of the past," and you spend a lot of time "policing" small behaviors here and there.

Why is it happening? Likely a combination of two root causes: (1) D&I supporters show high enthusiasm, but underestimate the need for rigorous execution, just like any other business initiative. (2) Scaling and adapting is difficult; the strategies that used to work a year ago no longer do.

Because this work is so personal, its advocates are often motivated by emotions. Emotions are critical, but when it comes to actually implementing organizational change, being "fired up" is not enough. D&I must be worked on like any professional problem: through research, collaboration, experimentation, and receptiveness to feedback. A passionate group of volunteers may be great catalysts, but without organizational support, their impact will be limited.

And speaking of volunteers... again, they serve an important purpose as catalysts, but as time goes on, D&I must be built into the company culture for it to scale. Band-aid solutions that address problems in the moment will lead to bigger problems as the company scales. Unless, that is, you switch to big-picture thinking and problem-solving.

What to do about it: Shift from talk to action, and adopt a business mindset as you would in your normal job. And remember that you can't be the only torch-carrier in this work.

1. *Give diversity and inclusion visibility*. Incorporate commitments into the code of conduct / employee handbook. Put posters around your office (You're welcome to borrow and adapt from ours).

2. *Pilot liberally and ship things in bite-sized pieces*. If past initiatives haven't gone well, try pilot programs, or engaging beta testers. Before launching things company-wide, message ideas to a smaller subset that's willing to help by giving feedback.

3. *Go small*. It's tempting to go straight to the ambitious goals ("We will become 50 percent women in engineering!" or "Let's build a university recruiting program covering 25 schools!"). But ultimately, a few smaller ideas executed well are better than one big idea abandoned halfway through. Build momentum by taking action on things you know you can get done.

Things will go wrong; they always do. Humans are far too complicated, and the workplace is too full of biases, assumptions, and misunderstandings. Add to that the deeply personal nature of diversity work and you have yourself a perfect storm of potential landmines. It's how you address the challenges that defines the integrity of your programs.

A few good rules of thumb: Be ready to act on-the-spot with good intentions, and with as much empathy for all sides as possible. Follow up with formalized documentation, so that expectations and rules of engagement are clear. Develop an explicit mechanism for bottom-up feedback and suggestions.

Above all, keep on experimenting – because as long as you're trying and open to feedback, you'll move the needle.

9

Elevating your efforts to the next level

In this section, we'll share radical ideas for creating diverse, inclusive, transparent, and fair organizations. These ideas require the next level of commitment, are rarely comfortable, and ultimately permeate how your company is run (or even where you set up shop).

It might be hard to imagine this new world today, but if we push our companies to the next level, change will come faster than expected. At Lever, we've only just begun exploring the ideas below. Some of them stem from the greater D&I community and those who are leading by example: our source for constant inspiration. We look forward to the day when these ideas, as far out as they may seem, are embraced in the mainstream.

1) Move your company to a location with more diversity

If diverse candidates aren't coming to you, you can literally move to them. Slack chose Toronto for its newest office expansion, citing the diversity of the city and growing beyond Silicon Valley among the primary considerations. According to then Director of Engineering Leslie Miley, they were also considering expanding into areas in the U.S. that one might not expect for a Valley startup, like Detroit, Richmond, and Nashville. It's a smart move that more companies should consider; intense competition is clustered in a handful of tech hubs, while talent and potential is everywhere.1)

2) Consider how to make your product or service inclusive

Most conversations around D&I pertain to employees, but there are countless opportunities to provide more inclusive services for your customers. At Lever, for example, we've made product decisions aimed at reducing bias in the hiring process, including the ability to hide other interviewers' feedback until you've completed your own, to minimize groupthink. It's also about what we don't do. For instance, we often receive feature requests around showing LinkedIn photos in candidate profiles. Given that showing applicants' photos can lead to more discrimination in the hiring process, we've turned down the request many times, explaining our stance each time.

Not all products relate so obviously to D&I as Lever's hiring software. If you're not sure how yours does, dedicate time to thinking about it. A U.K.-based business in the hospitality industry recently hosted an evening just for people with learning difficulties, and plans to make it a monthly event. If they can find ways to become more inclusive, you can too.

Not incorporating D&I in your product development can have dire consequences. When the first airbag deployment systems were tested, only dummies modeled after men were used. As a result, women and children were

estimated to be 47 percent more likely to be injured in accidents. Today, there is facial recognition software that cannot identify black faces.

The next generation of technological tools can either reinforce existing biases or help break them down. What will your product do?

3) Build diversity and inclusion into your decision framework

A common shortcoming for well-intentioned companies is siloed effort in D&I. Decisions are made in one sphere, and if the results disproportionately affect certain groups of people, they're dealt with in retrospect, if at all.

Instead, what if we automatically baked D&I into how we make decisions, or our "decision frameworks," in the same way that every company unfailingly does with cost? The goal for creating a framework should be to ensure that a range of perspectives are taken into account in order to arrive at the best answer. Without deliberately designed decision-making frameworks, the loudest voices in the room may end up dominating conversations, as opposed to the best ideas. By integrating D&I into decisions like where to open new offices (as Slack did), selecting a company healthcare plan, or even choosing a brand color scale that caters to the visually impaired, companies can more proactively and organically live their commitment to it.

For more on creating a decision framework, read "Square Defangs Difficult Decisions with this System — Here's How".

4) Put your full-time diversity and inclusion team out of a job

Despite companies dedicating headcount to full-time diversity and inclusion employees at an increasing rate, there's actually quite a bit of debate in the community about whether that's wise. D&I at Lever started in the grassroots, and we believe that this is one of the key reasons we've been able to build an inclusive culture so far. It was championed by multiple passionate employees and spread organically throughout Lever.

As the team grew rapidly, however, it took more work to harness that energy, and we decided to put headcount towards executing and scaling our original strategy. But similar to the way the CEO of eShares says that hiring is not a consequence of success, but rather, hiring means we failed to execute and need help – a dedicated D&I role at Lever is a sign that as an organization, we have something to fix.

How encouraging would it be to get to a place where a D&I leader is redundant? Where inclusion is so deeply entwined in the organization that having a separate role doesn't make sense? The full-time leaders and task forces we see today are great initial steps to kickstart a company transition, but ideally, if everything goes well, they put themselves out of a job.

5) Evaluate people manager performance on inclusion

The question, then, is who to transition the work to? The best answer is people managers, your leaders on the front-lines who are responsible for engaging their employees. It seems natural that people managers should own the inclusiveness of their teams and that their performance be measured by it.

The first step here is articulating during people manager training that this is something they own, and defining how it will be measured. As people managers become adept at owning the inclusion and diversity of their teams, the interim D&I leader would own less and become more like a consultant – doing research, leading workshops, and advising people managers on how to improve.

This transition will never happen, though, if we think and act as if the D&I leader is a permanent position.

10

40+ Ways to Begin Cultivating a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace

We've covered a lot of ground in this handbook, because there's a lot to do - and the longer you wait to build a diverse and inclusive working environment, the harder it will be in the future. To help you get started today, we've compiled over 40 different ways you can invest in D&I. While we've shared some of these strategies throughout our handbook, you'll find even more ways to implement change in your culture below.

1. Convert all job descriptions to using gender-neutral language. Audit all of your JDs to check for any use of 'he/his/him' as a default and convert them to gender-neutral pronouns like 'they'. Text.io is a fantastic platform for this, as well as this app you can copy-paste your JDs into.

2. State your commitment to building a diverse and inclusive culture in your job descriptions and careers page. One simple sentence can send a strong message to your applicants.

3. Write results-based job descriptions. Studies have found that men apply for a job when they meet only 60 percent of the qualifications, but women will only apply when they meet 100 percent of them. Instead of focusing on a checklist of skills that may weed out great female and minority candidates, JDs should ideally focus on what a candidate will be expected to achieve, say, a month, six months, and a year into the job. Here are some examples you can adapt.

4. Conduct blind screenings to minimize unconscious biases in the resume review process. Studies have shown that people with ethnic names need to send out more resumes before they get a callback, and that resumes with female names are rated lower than ones with male names when all else is equal.

5. Ban "culture fit" as a reason for rejecting a candidate. When interviewers want to reject candidates for "culture fit," or a "gut feeling", it's an indication that unconscious bias is at play. Challenge your interviewers to articulate a more specific explanation – it's a great way to uncover hidden biases and have open conversations about them (never punish or shame people – we are ALL inherently biased!).

6. Invest in a structured interviewing process and training. This isn't to say that you must stick to a strict script in your interviews – candidates often share important insights when conversations flow naturally – but structured interviews lead to higher-quality hires because they help reduce bias and "gut-feeling" hiring. By asking each candidate a similar set of questions, you have a consistent "data set" to help boost objective decision-making. Structured interviews allow your team to learn and improve your recruiting process faster, as well. We've built robust interview kits into the Lever platform to support more consistent hiring.

7. Ensure that underrepresented employees are included in your interviews. But don't overload them either! As much as candidates want to meet their diverse potential coworkers, if your sole female engineer is in every single interview panel, it's not fair to her performance and sanity either.

8. Use Alex to catch gendered language in team communications. Alex is an open source tool that you can install wherever you do text editing (like Chrome or Slack). It will catch potentially hurtful language and subtly remind individuals how they might rephrase.

9. Start a "guys jar." Take a page from the Bay Area startup npm's book, and implement a "Guys jar" for a friendly reminder against unnecessarily gendered language in the office. Whenever someone at npm accidentally genders something gender-neutral, they put a dollar in the jar. When they reach $50, they donate the money to a charity.

10. Have every employee take a working styles test to help coworkers understand each other's work and communication approaches. Understanding ourselves leads to better empathy towards others, and furthermore, appreciation of differences. At Lever, we chose the Insights Discovery test; every new hire takes the assessment and attends a workshop with their results during their onboarding.

11. Celebrate holidays and events for underrepresented minorities like Black History Month or Gay Pride Week. Why should Christmas get all the love?

12. Give visible recognition when employees go above and beyond to pick up extra duties. Contributing to your workplace isn't just hitting sales goals or shipping product - it's also doing your part to make your company a great place to work, and it deserves props too.

13. Allow flexible work hours. Show your employees you trust them to get their work done with the freedom to create their own work hours. People have all sorts of personal situations that may affect their ability to work a strict 9 to 5 (like picking up or dropping off children at school). Lack of flexibility makes the lives of some employees unnecessarily difficult – they may respond by leaving for a company that does, and we all want to retain our best talent.

14. Order a set of knowledge cards. It can be hard to know how to talk about D&I and bring awareness to your coworkers. The Society of Women's Engineers partnered to create a set of knowledge cards designed to facilitate a discussion and prompt reflection around D&I.

15. Have coworkers take an Implicit Association Test to help them realize their own biases. Acknowledging that we all have biases and that it's okay, is often a very important first step in deeper D&I conversations.

16. Check the temperature of your office. The temperature in most buildings defaults to what's most comfortable for men. It's entirely possible a subset of your employees can't even be comfortable at work without constantly layering themselves in jackets.

17. Check what reading materials you have in your lobby. If you're going to provide magazines, try to make them relevant to your industry as opposed to providing clearly gendered options. Unless you're in fashion, GQ probably doesn't belong in your reception area.

18. Print inclusive bathroom signs. Lever's bathroom doors have a sticker that says "For those who identify as," above the men's and women's signs.

19. Hang a poster describing how every employee can contribute to an inclusive workplace.

20. Establish a mother's room where nursing women have a private space for pumping breast milk. If you're strapped for space, try converting a conference room into a mother's room. When it's not in use, you can still use it as a conference space.

21. Schedule team bonding activities during the day. When everything fun happens at 5 PM, working parents may not be able to participate.

22. Order swag in women's sizes or from a non-gender binary shirt company.

23. Hold an international foods potluck as a way of appreciating different cultures present in your employee population and opening up organic discussion.

24. Take a fresh look at the visuals of your careers page. Which demographics are represented in your photos? In your leadership bios? Candidates can interpret a non-diverse careers page as a sign of a non-inclusive workplace.

25. Share discussion points and an agenda prior to meetings so more voices are heard. Some people like to talk through new information immediately, whereas others prefer having time to process information. By presenting a problem on the spot, you're less likely to receive the latter group's contributions.

26. Try the Round Robin technique in meetings, where you ask every person in the room for a contribution to the discussion at hand. People can either share an idea, or pass.

27. Point out interruptions. Studies show that women are far more likely than men to be interrupted in meetings.

28. Have a parental leave policy. Read Optimizely's post on how they increased their parental leave policy from six to 17 weeks – along with the financial model they used to advocate the policy – for a helpful blueprint.

29. Hold office hours. If your HR team has the bandwidth, hold recurring office hours and welcome input around D&I.

30. Sponsor an event. Get other companies together to talk about D&I, what's working and what isn't working. Turns out all you need is something to drink and somewhere to gather for ideas to flow.

31. Sponsor diversity-focused community organizations. If there are organizations doing work that you admire or aspire to, offer to sponsor them. By doing so, you're dedicating funds to their cause even if you don't think you have the resources to help in any other way.

32. Have a performance review system. Standardized reviews help reduce unfairness in promotion decisions. If you're not in a position to implement a formal review process, solicit 360 reviews, so managers at least have multiple perspectives.

33. Include D&I in performance conversations. If you're not tying D&I directly to individual goals, you can still touch upon hiring managers' efforts, progress, and the expectations you have for them in performance conversations.

34. Provide workshops for adjacent skills like communication and empathy for employees. An inclusive workforce is an emotionally intelligent one.

35. Offer flexible PTO. Empower your employees to decide when's the right time for them to take a break. By giving them the option to take time when they need it, you're inherently telling them that you trust their judgment.

36. Check your office decorations. Make an effort to put up decorations, signage, or even fun company memories that promote the values you want your employees to hold.

37. Approve budget for ergonomic workspaces. Everyone is different, so promote a healthy working environment by catering to individual needs in their workspaces.

38. Expand benefits coverage to domestic partners. Legality of same-sex marriage varies state by state in the US still, but if you have the power to expand your benefits offerings, your employees will appreciate the extra mile you go for them.

39. Host a book club. There's so much great literature out there that can stimulate valuable conversation. Hosting a book club can get employees to open up to each other. Here's one example of a successful office book club.

40. Host a movie night. A movie night is another way to stimulate meaningful conversation without the commitment of reading a full book. The historical drama Selma was a good one, as was Hidden Figures.

41. Above all else, listen to your employees. Invest in the things they care about. Start small. Don't let the immense scope of things that need to be done keep you from doing anything at all. You can talk about diversity and inclusion forever, but taking action is the only way to change anything.

Conclusion

To take diversity and inclusion to the next level, we need to remove it from its silo and fundamentally bake it into the way we hire, what we value culturally, how decisions are made, and how we evaluate our leaders. We will get there when we all embrace diversity and inclusion as our responsibility.

We know how hard it is to make a sweeping changes and drive obvious results. We have yet to hear about a team able to accomplish far-reaching D&I goals all at once. Tangible change is deeply rooted in both persistence and patience. Rather than expecting immediate improvements, we hope that this handbook provides you with the right tools to make ongoing, tangible progress in your diversity and inclusion efforts.

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About Lever

Built from the conviction that recruiting is the responsibility of everyone at the company, Lever's Talent Acquisition Suite draws the entire team together to efficiently source, nurture, interview, and hire top talent through effortless collaboration. Lever has been intentionally designed to help employers develop stronger candidate relationships in fewer clicks, and its modern interface combines powerful ATS and CRM functionality in one platform.

Lever was founded in 2012 and supports the hiring needs of over 1,300 leading companies around the globe including the teams at Netflix, Lyft, Hot Topic, and Cirque du Soleil. With an overall gender ratio of 50:50, Lever is also fiercely committed to building a team culture that celebrates diversity and inclusion. For more information, visit https://www.lever.co.