

**SCOUT  
TALENT**  
SEE PEOPLE FIRST

# USING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DE&I) STRATEGIES TO ATTRACT TOP TALENT



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
What DE&I means for your organization	4
How to hire diverse talent	11
How to retain diverse talent	20
Takeaways	27
Contact Us	28
References	29

# INTRODUCTION

As recruiters, we want to do everything in our power to attract top talent. A fair and equal work environment is necessary for all team members to feel empowered to do their best work, regardless of their age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and/or disability.

Many employees seek representation at every stage of the candidate lifecycle, from the initial stages of recruitment, throughout the onboarding process, to when they're well and truly settled into their role. Because of this, it is imperative for organizations to authentically implement diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) practices in all areas of the business.

Celebrating diversity, equity, and inclusion in your workplace is a necessary and exciting step for any organization, but it's easy to do incorrectly.

DE&I is not a program that you can set up and ignore; it's not a policy that you can write and refer to ad hoc; it's not a goal that you can merely hope to one day achieve. DE&I is about people. It's about empowering these people to feel safe and secure in your workplace as a result of your action. And ultimately, DE&I can take a disengaged workforce and plug them back into a meaningful organisational culture.

This guide will take you through the importance of DE&I through your recruitment process and beyond, and will give you some actionable tips to make sure your organisation is equitable for everyone.



**WHAT DE&I  
MEANS FOR YOUR  
ORGANIZATION**

Before diving into strategies to improve your DE&I practices in the workplace, let's break down what each letter stands for. It can be easy to lump the components of DE&I together under one banner when, in fact, it requires every aspect of the acronym in order to succeed. All three elements are necessary and essential, and each relies on the other to inform best practice.



## DIVERSITY

Diversity is what makes us unique, regardless of whether it's seen or unseen. All of the elements that constitute who we are contribute to our diversity.

Workplace diversity allows for different perspectives on how to approach tasks, strategies, business goals, and relationships.

## EQUITY

It's important to know that equity and equality are not the same thing.

Equality is about giving people the same resources regardless of systemic barriers, while equity is about giving some people resources that help them overcome systemic barriers. The key difference is fairness, and in the workplace, it means giving all team members the tools they need to succeed, even if these tools differ from one employee to another.

## INCLUSION

Inclusion entails creating fairness and structure that supports diversity.

Inclusion makes room for everything that makes us diverse and creates opportunities and practices that allow all team members to participate. It also fulfills a human need for us to feel a sense of belonging in an authentic way. By fostering this sense of belonging within your workplace culture, you reduce the risk of team members feeling like they have to pretend to be something they're not to gain acceptance.

Diversity of ideas has a positive impact at every level of your business.

Diverse leadership teams are more likely to innovate and forge lasting relationships, while diversity in the broader workforce brings new, fresh perspectives to a range of projects. Diversity positively impacts everything from how to approach particular tasks to how to grow your business.

While it sounds like DE&I would be a nice optional add-on for organizations if they had the capacity to deliver such programs, the reality is that inclusive programs and strategies in the workplace are *no longer optional*.

As the younger generation enters the workforce, they seek purpose and diversity in the workplace. This diversity is not just limited to the people around them, but also a diversity of thought, diversity of experience, and diversity of culture.

Workplaces are no longer able to ask people to leave their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and identities

at the door. These aspects of our identity are woven into the fiber of our being. Industry leaders need to equip their staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to have conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion, and ensure that the space they exist in is accommodating for everyone.



# EXPLORING DIFFERENT KINDS OF DIVERSITY

Diversity, by nature, comes in all shapes and sizes. No one area we've listed below is more important than another, and the choice is yours which area you choose to start to grow your DE&I practices.

Regardless of the size of your organization, the world will continue to change and grow around you, so it is important to stay up to date with relevant industry resources to make sure your DE&I goals are still considered best practice.

Let's unpack a few different types of diversity, and how they can be defined:



## GENDER DIVERSITY

The term 'gender diverse' refers to individuals who express or identify themselves beyond the binary framework of 'male' or 'female'. For many gender diverse people, the concept of *binary gender* (having to present as male or female) is constraining. Some people would prefer to have the freedom to change from one gender to another, or to not have a gender identity at all. Gender identity is not the same as sexual orientation. Gender identity is who you are, sexuality is who you love.

## SEXUALITY DIVERSITY

The terms 'sexuality' and 'sexual orientation' refer to the nature of an individual's sexual and/or romantic attraction to another person. This includes, but is not limited to, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, asexuals, and heterosexuals. The way a person refers to their sexuality is often influenced by their gender, but not prescribed by it.

## RACIAL DIVERSITY

The term 'race' refers to the physical characteristics and shared ancestry of major groupings of humankind. Race also relates to the particular social, historical, and geographic context of a given person. Latino, Asian, African, and Caucasian are examples of races. Racial classifications are commonly based on ethnicity or nationality, religion, language, and skin colour. Whilst racial diversity focuses on physical characteristics, cultural diversity focuses more on the cultural impact of a person's upbringing.

## RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The term 'religion' refers to a person's spiritual or divine beliefs, with a focus on faith and worship. There are many religions across the globe, each of which has its own set of beliefs and characteristics. Examples of major religions include Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Judaism.

## DISABILITY DIVERSITY

The term 'disability' refers to individuals with an impairment or condition that impacts their daily activities, communication and/or mobility. A person's disability can be characterised by a limitation of activities or a restriction in participation (disabilities can be either physical or mental, and may not be visible or obvious). It's important to note that disabilities can be multiple as well as visible (more noticeable) or invisible.

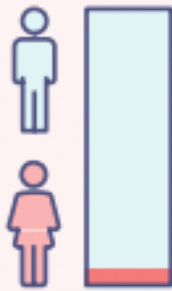




# **HOW TO HIRE DIVERSE TALENT**

# IT STARTS FROM THE TOP DOWN

**6.6% of the time,  
the chair** of a  
TSX-listed company  
**is a woman**



**4.8% of the time, the CEO**  
of a TSX-listed company  
**is a woman**

**Given that just over 50% of the Canadian population is female, these statistics go to show: the level of diversity in senior leadership positions needs to be improved.**

“Such a narrow pool of executive talent does a disservice to organisations, clients, stakeholders, the business community overall”

*- Conrad Liveris, NFP Executive Director,  
HR Consultant, and Economist*



People look to the leaders of organisations to see if the values touted in promotional material are actually lived day-to-day. If someone from a minority group steps back and looks at executive leadership more broadly, there's a chance that they won't see themselves represented in the same proportion as they are in the general population.

Candidates can tell early on in the recruitment process whether an organisation's value statement starts and ends on a piece of paper. You can't fake authentic DE&I; it needs to be actively and organically implemented in every area of your business.

Many leaders want a DE&I checklist that they can use to tick off certain tasks and then claim that their organisation is inclusive. Unfortunately, it's not that simple. Great DE&I can't be limited to ticking objectives off a list; it needs to soak into all levels of your business and get buy-in from team members of all different backgrounds.

It's also important to note that improving your diversity, equity, and inclusion practices should be seen as a marathon, not a sprint. While the tips on the following pages are a great place to start, they should only serve as a foundation for your organisation. The goal is to build and improve upon these principles over time, and to start thinking critically about other practices that may not be obvious initially.

**Let's take a look at how to improve DE&I practices at all stages of the recruitment process.**

# REMOVE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS FROM YOUR HIRING PROCESS

To realise your goal of a more diverse and inclusive workforce, you need to critically assess your recruitment practices to make sure you're building diverse talent pools from day one.

To do this, it's imperative that you strip unconscious bias from your recruitment process, and start to hire based on merit and skill, rather than preconceived notions and unintended preferences.

This isn't to say that if you have unconscious bias, you're a bad person, or that you should remove yourself from the hiring process. We all have biases!

Absolute objectivity is impossible. The trick here is not to have NO bias; it's to recognise how this bias holds you back, and then to implement practices that overcome it.

Now that you've decided that you want to combat unconscious bias in your hiring process, the question is, how do you do this?

**Let's find out.**

“It’s important to understand unconscious bias! Don’t fear it. Lean into it.”

- Stacey Gordon, Founder and CEO of Rework Work

## LISTEN TO YOUR STAFF

Who better to ask about their experience with your organisation’s recruitment process than those who have already gone through it! Ask current or former team members how they felt about the recruitment process when they first started, and see what experiences (positive or negative) keep cropping up. People will remember how they felt more than what was said, so engaging with your team gives you a good initial idea of how your employer brand impacts prospective employees.

## INVEST IN UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAINING

Having an advanced recruitment process is great, but unless your hiring managers are aware of how their unconscious biases can directly influence the recruitment process, it is difficult to successfully diversify your workforce. If you don’t have the capacity or budget to create an internal team or engage an external consultant, consider upskilling key shortlisting or hiring team members in this space to champion unconscious bias for other staff.

## REMOVE GENDERED LANGUAGE FROM YOUR JOB ADS

Without knowing it, using gendered language in job listings can hold qualified candidates back from applying for your role. Studies show that using gendered words like “aggressive”, “dominant”, “ambitious”, “assertive”, “go-getter”, “banter”, “headstrong”, and “ninja” (to name a few) will make a job less appealing to women, and will therefore reduce the diversity of your talent pool. Using inclusive language means that your job ad appeals to a wider audience and ensures that your opportunity gets seen by more people.

## REMOVE UNNECESSARY INFORMATION

It's hard to be biased towards candidates when you're only given job-specific information. Removing unnecessary information from your interview process, even in the initial stages, is a great way to combat unconscious bias and recruit a more diverse pool of candidates. Anonymise candidates that enter your pipeline by removing names, ages, schools, marital status, and headshots. Thereafter, hiring managers are able to shortlist candidates based on merit, rather than unconscious biases that might influence their judgement. Recruitment software, like Scout's :Recruit package allows you to take steps to reduce your unconscious bias quickly and easily.

## USE A DIVERSE PANEL

Once you've finalised your shortlist, ensure candidates are hearing from a range of voices in your organisation. Using a diverse panel of existing staff to interview candidates reduces the chance of a single hiring manager's unconscious bias influencing the decision. If the candidate progresses to a second interview, encourage them to connect with your organisation's current team on LinkedIn. Then, they can hear directly from the source about your company's DE&I processes and what it's like to work with the team. This shows candidates that you are proud of your diverse workforce, and eager for candidates to make well-informed decisions before signing a contract.

## STANDARDISE INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

As best you can, standardise the structure of your interview process, and focus your line of questioning on capability rather than unconscious bias. For example, instead of asking about salary history, which often gives way to gender and racial bias, rather focus on salary expectations in line with the candidate's skills.



Furthermore, avoid asking personal questions in interviews that have no impact on someone's ability to do the job. Often, women, people of colour, people with a disability, and LGBTQIA+ people feel they need to conceal parts of who they are during an interview in order to secure the job. To combat this, avoid asking candidates personal questions that could unknowingly create bias.



# **HOW TO RETAIN DIVERSE TALENT**

So you've implemented some of the strategies outlined in the previous section, and you've reduced unconscious bias in your recruitment. Now, you'll hopefully reap the benefits of an inclusive and fair recruitment process and onboard the best people for the job. Congratulations!

## NOW WHAT

Engaging diverse talent and retaining diverse talent are two sides of the same coin. If your DE&I practices don't manifest in the workplace, it is hard to get diverse talent to stay. This is doubly true if there are no structured support systems. Similarly, if you don't have any examples of lived inclusion to point to during the recruitment process, it will be hard to recruit staff who align with these values in the first place.

If diverse staff enter the office on their first day and don't see the signs of others like them thriving in the workplace, it's likely they'll already have one foot out the door.

This is why it's so important to build your diversity, equity, and inclusion practices into the foundation of your growth strategy. Recruiting diverse staff contributes to diverse ideas, and there are several simple practices to implement that have significant impacts on the culture of your workplace.

It's important to note that the steps in this section are intended to be stepping stones for you to build upon within your organization once they've taken root. As we've stated previously, DE&I isn't as simple as setting it and forgetting it; you need to constantly check in and drive positive change for it to be effective. You should be looking to continuously develop your DE&I practices on an ongoing basis as your priorities and team dynamics shift.

Read on to explore ways to keep diverse talent engaged and supported once you've gotten them through the door.



## CREATE THE SPACE

For marginalised people, it is often confronting or difficult to live their truth at work.

Studies show that those in the majority “mask” themselves roughly 25% of the time in the workplace. Those in the minority, however, spend 50% to 100% of their time at work consciously masking who they are. Imagine the emotional energy it takes to conceal a core part of who you are for several hours a day!

For example, LGBTQIA+ employees often are not open about their sexuality or gender identity in the workplace if they feel like they won't be accepted by their colleagues. This is why it's so important for people in positions of power to create the space for all team members to live their truth.

People respond well to storytelling. It's often how people feel at the end of a story (rather than the details of the story itself) that they remember the most.

When leaders tell a personal story that lets listeners in on who they are, not just what they do, it creates the space for team members to do the same. Using targeted emotion, compassion, and empathy as teaching tools is a great way to set the tone for your team, and to foster a more emotionally honest environment at work.

Everyone is entitled to share or not share personal details in the workplace, but by creating the space from the top down, your staff will feel empowered to live authentically and know that their place of work is a safe space they can feel free to be themselves.

## TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK LOOPS

DE&I is not prescriptive. An inclusion strategy without buy-in from stakeholders in different areas of your business is unlikely to gain traction, as it won't encompass the breadth of viewpoints and lived experiences present in your team.

A big part of inclusivity involves taking the time to listen to your team and find out what matters to them. It seems simple, but the best way to do this is by asking them. Open and honest feedback from all corners of your organization (from long-term staff and recent hires, to junior and senior team members) is what will give your DE&I strategy the buy-in to go the distance.

If you're struggling to get feedback on a large scale, break it down into smaller tasks that can be rolled out by team leaders and collated down the track.

Schedule time for feedback in weekly team meetings, monthly 1-1s, or quarterly performance reviews, and prioritise honesty and transparency between team leaders and direct reports. Consider creating a mentor program, where new team members buddy up with long-term staff, and have a monthly coffee to talk about how they're settling into the role.

If you've got team members who have expressed an interest in DE&I, empower them to drive your program! People with a passion for DE&I will always have ideas for how to implement positive changes tailored to your business. By enabling them to take the lead, your team will feel seen, heard, and is more likely to drive tangible change rather than push policies that will seldom be used.

## CELEBRATE, DON'T TOLERATE

When people from minority groups enter a new workplace, hearing that diversity is merely tolerated can be a red flag that suggests more insidious behaviours could be in store further down the track. Celebration is the way forward, and there are many ways that you can collaborate with diverse staff to create an inclusive workplace that celebrates differences, rather than merely tolerates them.

Familiarise yourself with popular events, holidays, and cultural practices that are observed by people of various cultures and religions, and publicly celebrate them internally. Start by creating a cultural calendar that everyone can add important dates to, and work with internal teams to plan and celebrate festive activities observed by team members.

Furthermore, you are not expected to know everything right away! DE&I is an opportunity to grow, and part of this includes building your knowledge about cultures, religions, or minorities that you aren't personally involved in. If your employees are open to sharing about their cultures, backgrounds, and lifestyles, ask if they would be willing to lead educational opportunities that highlight different aspects of their traditions.

Start the conversation, and encourage education to increase your team's bond and cultural knowledge.

“The first step is reframing  
diversity and inclusion  
from an obligation to an  
opportunity”

- Ita Buttrose, Chair of the ABC



# TAKEAWAYS

If there's one thing that you take from this guide, it's this:

## DE&I is not prescriptive.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution that you can plug into your organization and expect to see immediate results. You can't set it and forget it, and wait for change to happen.

The efficacy of DE&I hinges on buy-in from stakeholders from all areas of your business, and the passion and planning of the people who drive it forward.

There are changes you can make at every step of the recruitment process that will help take people from strangers, to candidates, to employees, to cheerleaders for your brand.

Best of luck on your journey, and we would love to hear how your organisation has implemented any or all of the changes outlined in this guide!

# CONTACT US

If you would like to chat about making your talent acquisition strategy more inclusive, please reach out to the Scout Talent team using the contact details below and we'll connect you with one of our specialists.

**SCOUT  
TALENT**  
SEE PEOPLE FIRST



(866) 474 3140



hello@scouttalent.ca



Suite 200, 1190 Melville St,  
Vancouver, BC, V6E 3M3



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fraser Rubens (he/him) is the Content Specialist for Scout Talent. He is responsible for conceptualising and writing articles, guides, webinars, and other marketing collateral for Scout Talent. He is passionate about DE&I in the workplace, and continually strives to create workplace initiatives that are equitable for all.

# REFERENCES

**2021 Diversity Disclosure Practices: Diversity and leadership at Canadian public companies (Osler, 2021)**

**To be Meritorious: Gender Equality At Work 2017 (Liveris, C, 2017)**

**Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (Wadors, P, 2019)**

**Unconscious Bias (Gordon, S, 2017)**

**The Ultimate Diversity & Inclusion Starter Kit (Diversely, 2021)**

