

Workforce Diversity Project Recommended Employer Strategies

In phase two of the Workforce Diversity Project, Partners in Diversity™ interviewed people of color and human resources professionals to learn about the most salient barriers communities of color face when trying to secure living wage jobs in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Interviewees recommended the following strategies that employers should adopt to remove employment barriers for people of color. These strategies are delineated under three themes:

- Build trust with communities of color
- Ensure an inclusive company culture
- Cultivate advocates from within

Build Trust with Communities of Color

People of color have historically been disenfranchised for generations, which impacted their trust in American systems, industries and employers. When employers reach out to communities of color where *they* frequent, it demonstrates genuine interest to support communities of color and actualizes employers' convictions on diversity, equity and inclusion.

Examples of direct ways employers can build trust with communities of color include:

1. Promote job opportunities at locations where communities of color often visit including community-based organizations, neighborhood schools, ethnic grocery stores, places of worship, minority-owned businesses, and trusted online sources such as Partners in Diversity's jobs board.
2. Host meet-and-greets and informational booths at multicultural community centers.
3. Sponsor and participate in community-organized fairs, festivals and networking events.
4. Augment job descriptions, applications and company diversity and inclusion statements and policies into languages of the targeted communities.
5. Deploy skills tests to determine job readiness of immigrants and refugees whose credentials from foreign universities and work experience may be difficult to verify.

Ensure an Inclusive Company Culture

The most palpable way to build trust with communities of color is to ensure a work environment that is safe for people of color to work and develop.

Examples of strategies employers can clearly convey their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace include:

1. Codify and promote zero tolerance policies for racism in the workplace.
2. Outline DEI metrics for the company to achieve a workforce and leadership that reflect the racial/ethnic demographics of the community.
3. Require company leaders to publicly champion DEI and hold them accountable for the company's DEI outcomes.
4. Set expectations at new hire orientations that everyone is responsible to ensure a safe and inclusive work environment for all staff.
5. Mandate all hiring managers to go through implicit bias training and become aware of their individual biases as they prepare and conduct interviews.
6. Include employees of color in any stage of the talent acquisition processes.
7. Establish diversity councils and affinity groups to help design the company's DEI plan and monitor its implementation, mediate cross-cultural conflicts, and support new leaders of color who may experience higher discrimination risks.
8. Promote company DEI commitments online, on promotional materials, and at public-facing events.
9. Offer translation services for English language learners at critical company meetings.

Cultivate Advocates from Within

One of the most cost-effective ways to successfully recruit from communities of color is to understand and incorporate their powerful word-of-mouth marketing. Communities of color often leverage their storytelling skills to share about their employment experiences and loyalties to employers. When they vouch for positive experiences, more of their fellow community members are apt to apply to work at their companies.

Examples of how employers can honor communities of color's storytelling power to advance their recruitment efforts include:

1. Match new hires of color with mentors or buddies who can regularly check in with new hires and ensure they feel safe at and supported by the company.
2. Offer onsite English language classes or fee reimbursements for TOEFL exams - empowering English language learners to further develop their communications skills.
3. Partner with education institutions and workforce development centers to offer free or discounted trainings toward industry certifications.
4. Promote a staff referral program among employees of color.
5. Translate career promotional materials in languages of the targeted communities.
6. Offer paid internships to invite people of color to experience the company culture.
7. Invite employees of color to represent the company at employment fairs, meet-and-greets, multicultural events, and other external opportunities. Be mindful not to refer to the same employees as the company's lone representatives of diversity success.

For more resources, visit www.PartnersinDiversity.org or www.WorkforceDiversityProject.org.