

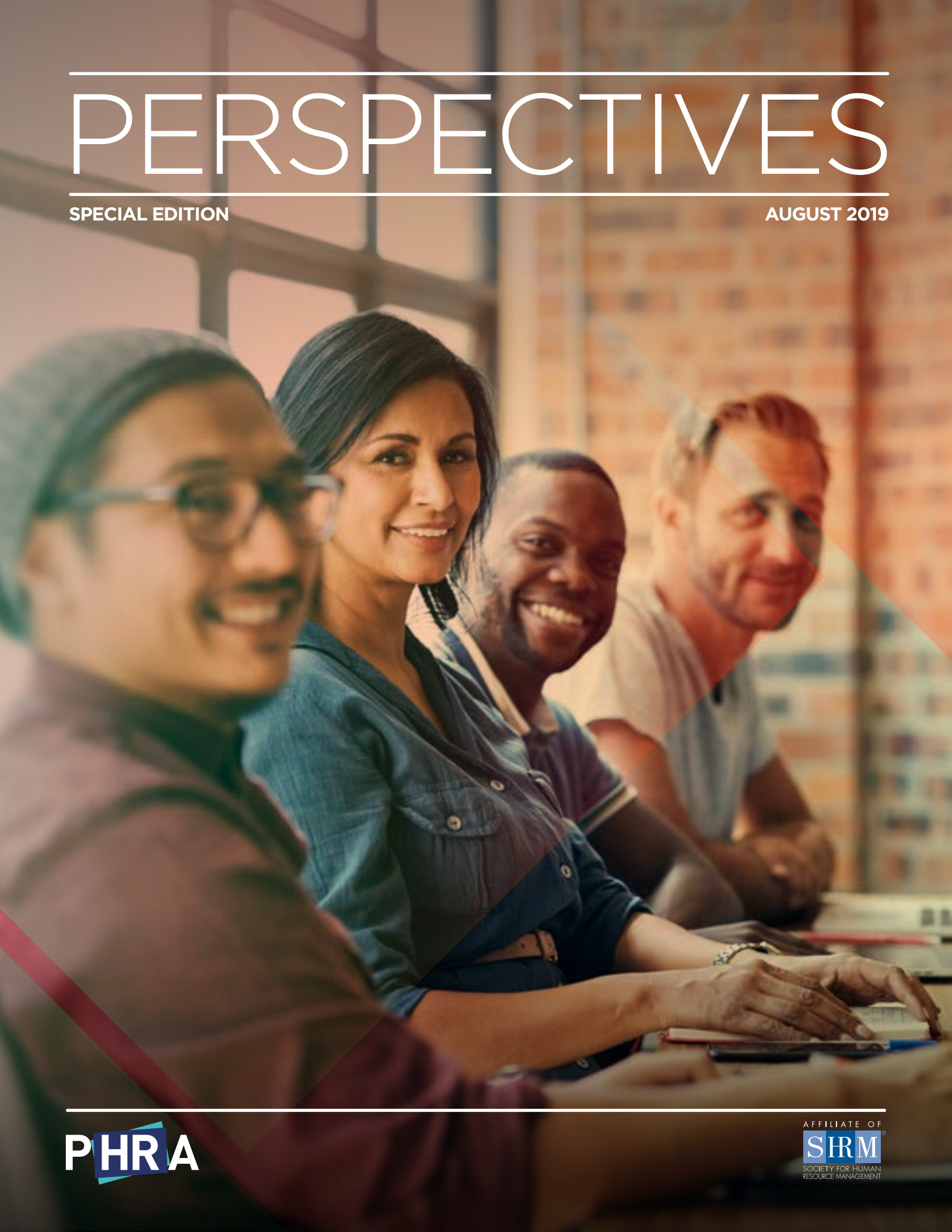
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# PERSPECTIVES

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SPECIAL EDITION

AUGUST 2019



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**PHRA**

AFFILIATE OF  
**SHRM**  
SOCIETY FOR HUMAN  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



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## PHRA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

# Diversity and Inclusion – One of the Hottest HR Topics!

Janet Manuel SHRM-CP, PHR, President, PHRA

The conversation around Diversity and Inclusion continues to heighten for the HR professional and the workplace. Why? What is all the conversation about and why is it so important? What the workplaces consist of today are different races, ethnicities, genders, ages, religions, disabilities, and sexual orientations with differences in education, personalities, skill sets, experiences, and knowledge bases. This is a historic moment for the HR professional but how do you make it work?

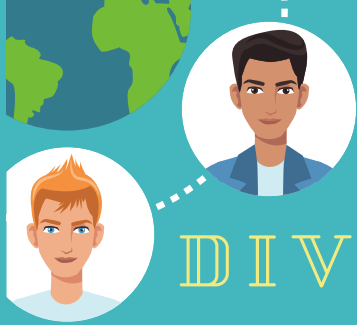
Having the knowledge necessary to understand this dynamic is needed. The timing is perfect for the PHRA Inaugural Diversity and Inclusion month as it will provide the tools necessary. I encourage you to glean from the following topics that will be addressed during this month:

- How to Develop a Diversity and Inclusion Initiative
- Finding My D&I 'Why': A Tale of Two Trainings
- Practice Makes Proficient: Global and Cultural Effectiveness – a Big Concept
- Second Chance Employment: Hiring the Formerly Incarcerated
- Making Employment Accessible to Autistic Adults
- Dialog in the Workplace: Generational and Social Cognizance and Awareness
- Getting Talent Back to Work

I hope you enjoy our special edition of Perspectives which will provide you content to help you confidently meet the challenges of living in the 21st century. PHRA's Month of Diversity and Inclusion will celebrate Respect, Integrity, Ageless Wisdom, providing messages to encourage and empower PHRA members to live a life full of Diversity and Inclusion.

Thanks,

Janet K. Manuel, MS, SHRM-CP and PHR  
PHRA President 2019  
Director, HR & Civil Service and EEO/D&I Officer  
City of Pittsburgh



# THE MONTH OF AUGUST PHRA CELEBRATES

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Companies that are more gender and ethnically diverse are

# 54%

more likely to outperform their competitors!



### CONTENT

**August 5:** Special Diversity & Inclusion Edition of Perspectives Released

**August 8:** "How to Develop a Diversity & Inclusion Initiative"

**August 13:** "Finding My D&I 'Why': A Tale of Two Trainings"

**August 15:** "Practice Makes Proficient: Global & Cultural Effectiveness – a Big Concept"

**August 19:** "Second Chance Employment: Hiring the Formerly Incarcerated"

**August 21:** "Making Employment Accessible to Autistic Adults"

**August 26:** "Dialogue in the Workplace: Generational & Social Cognizance & Awareness"



### EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

**August 7:** (Video) Getting Talent Back to Work - A Second Chance Story #1

**August 12:** (Webinar) Getting Talent Back to Work, Part One: Why Should You Explore Second Chance Employment?

**August 22:** (Video) Getting Talent Back to Work - A Second Chance Story #2

**August 20:** (Workshop) Diversity & Inclusion Strategies & Tactics

**August 28:** (Webinar) Getting Talent Back to Work, Part Two: How to Approach Second Chance Employment



### NETWORKING EVENTS

By celebrating differences and similarities during this month, we hope that our members will get a deeper understanding of each other and deeper connections will be made.

**August 1:** Member Appreciation Breakfast

**August 22:** Member Experience Webinar

Employees who say their company provides equal opportunities are

# 4x

more likely to say they are proud to work for their company!



### COMPANY SPOTLIGHTS ENGAGING PITTSBURGH AWARDS D&I FINALISTS

Argo AI, LLC

FedEx Ground

Meyer, Unkovic & Scott LLP

Pittsburgh Mercy

For more information regarding PHRA's Month of Diversity & Inclusion visit [PittsburghHRA.org](http://PittsburghHRA.org)



# How to Develop a Diversity and Inclusion Initiative

Employers use diversity and inclusion initiatives for both compliance obligations and to increase the overall bottom line with a more diverse workforce. Developing a diversity and inclusion initiative involves four main phases:

1. Data collection and analysis to determine the need for change.
2. Strategy design to match business objectives.
3. Implementation of the initiative.
4. Evaluation and continuing audit of the plan.

The following nine steps break down these main phases into action steps employers can take to develop a diversity and inclusion initiative.

## Step 1: Compile Data

Employers must first know what their workforce looks like compared with the labor market. By capturing data on employee demographics, an employer is better able to understand the diversity of its employees and identify any areas of concern or trends. Historically, these data have included federal and state protected categories; however, recent trends indicate that other factors, such as personality type and thinking/learning style, may also be of value, though perhaps harder to find national comparative data for. If so, an employer may have to track its own data on these categories over time and determine what need for change may exist. Demographic data may include the following:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity/national origin
- Family status
- Gender
- Gender identity or expression
- Generation
- Language
- Life experiences
- Organization function and level
- Personality type
- Physical characteristics
- Race
- Religion, belief and spirituality
- Sexual orientation
- Thinking/learning styles
- Veteran status

Multiple resources are available to capture these data. Some employers may already have much of this information available in their HRIS system from affirmative action plans and EEO reporting obligations. However, most employers will need to survey their workforce through voluntary self-identification to obtain additional data such as religion and sexual orientation. It may be challenging to gather diversity data from employees initially, especially when employees are unsure of how the data will be used or if there is general distrust of leadership in an organization. If this is the case, an employer may want to use a third party or survey technology to capture information that will be reported in aggregate without identifying information.

In addition, it would be useful to gather information about the current company culture regarding diversity and inclusion. Again, surveying employees can help shed light on their perception of the company in relation to encouraging and appreciating diversity in the workplace. See Diversity Survey.

## How to Develop a Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (Cont.)

Nontraditional differences such as personality traits or life experiences can also be measured. Employers can conduct personality testing of the workforce or include open-ended questions on employee surveys to collect information regarding life experiences or other information employees may want to share about themselves.

### Step 2: Identify Needs and/or Areas of Concern

Once data are collected, underrepresented areas can be identified. To do so, employers should begin with a high-level review of demographics such as age, sex and race representation, and then continue to drill down by location, department, position, etc. Identification of underrepresented areas can include questions such as:

- Is management full of older white males?
- Does the accounting department tend to hire only females?
- Are employees at the West Coast branch more ethnically diverse than their East Coast counterparts?

Additional information gained from employee surveys can help identify other areas of concern. Employee attitudes on culture may or may not match the demographic survey results. If they do match, then the employer has a clearer path to what change is needed; if not, the organization may wish to conduct employee focus groups to better understand the disconnect. In addition, if results indicate little to no diversity in sexual orientation or religion, for example, it is possible that individuals don't have trust in the organization to divulge such personal information. As suggested in the previous step, employers may need to outsource the data collection or use other means to collect data anonymously.

### Step 3: Address Policies or Practices Affecting Diversity

Employers must determine if there are barriers impeding the employment of individuals from different demographic groups. Organizations should consider if any policies or practices need to be eliminated or adjusted. Some examples to start with include:

- **Employee referral programs:** Studies show that although employee referral programs can be an excellent sourcing solution, they often result in "like me" referrals, where employees refer candidates of the same race, religion, national origin or other class. This can lead to adverse impact and claims of illegal discrimination; it can also thwart diversity initiatives. Employers may need to limit the use of employee referrals or consider other sourcing options to supplement the referral program.
- **Unconscious biases:** Are there certain departments that are underrepresented in relation to the labor market? Is it possible that the hiring manager is selecting individuals based on biases against certain groups? If a particular manager's department is significantly less diverse than other departments, a review of the selection procedures of that particular manager may be warranted.
- **Company culture:** Apparent preferences toward pro-life, traditional marriage and other aspects often associated with religious beliefs can repel candidates of differing beliefs or lifestyles. An annual Christmas party and recognizing only Christian holidays in a workplace can unintentionally send a message that only Christian employees are welcome. Employers must consider holding a holiday party instead and provide floating holidays that employees may use for the multitude of religious observances.

## How to Develop a Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (Cont.)

- **Political preferences:** An employer with political signs and/or messages on its property may discourage individuals with different viewpoints from applying. A bumper sticker on an employee's car supporting a candidate who differs from a manager's choice can affect the manager's perception of the employee, as well as the manager's decisions regarding pay, performance and promotion. An employer must consider how political preferences may be creating a disadvantage for applicants as well as current employees and remove those barriers by physically removing political messages in the workplace and/or training the workforce about respecting differing opinions. The organization must take appropriate disciplinary action when employees, including supervisors or managers, are intolerant of differences.

### Step 4: Identify Business Objectives

Identifying how a diverse and inclusive workforce can aid in achieving business objectives aligned with the company's strategy is the next step in the process. The organization must set specific goals related to diversity and inclusion based on the company's strategic objectives. For example, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a goal as part of the overall strategic plan to "Make VA a Place People Want to Serve."<sup>1</sup> As part of this goal, increasing diversity index scores is one of the agency's performance indicators. Because its clients are becoming more diverse, the agency is responding by embracing a more diverse and inclusive workforce to better serve the population. Specific diversity goals were created to recruit more white and Hispanic males as well as Hispanic females after a comparison with the available labor market.

Another example might be around a business goal to create more innovative products an employer can introduce quickly to surpass the competition. To do so, the employer wishes to increase innovation in the research and development (R&D) teams. One way to accomplish this goal could be to build cultural competence and inclusive decision-making within the team through training, which could more effectively harness existing team diversity and capitalize on diverse ideas.

### Step 5: Procure Buy-in and Support

For the diversity initiative to succeed, senior level buy-in and support are vital. Senior management must understand the business case for diversity and inclusion initiatives, with direct links to the company's strategic goals. It is helpful to identify a senior-level champion who can be tasked with visible support of the initiative and ultimately responsible for keeping the program "alive."

Another task is to identify how management will be held accountable for supporting and engaging in the diversity and inclusion initiatives. Examples of manager expectations include ongoing dialogue with staff regarding diversity and inclusion, training for team members, and holding direct reports accountable for their individual actions related to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace.

An optional but recommended step is to create a diverse committee of employees from all levels with visible leadership presence and support. The committee is tasked with implementing the goals defined in the previous step and promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The employer should provide the committee with a clear mission, defined budget and expectations/performance indicators. Diversity committees meet regularly and are typically tasked with the following:

## How to Develop a Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (Cont.)

- Promoting training and events to bring awareness to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- Engaging co-workers in diversity and inclusion conversation and training.
- Reviewing and developing policies and procedures that will promote workplace diversity and inclusion.

In the absence of a diversity and inclusion committee, an employer can designate responsibility for the above tasks to management or consider hiring a diversity and inclusion specialist to run the program.

### Step 6: Implement Initiatives

Examples of diversity and inclusion initiatives are changes in policies and practices, staff training, targeted recruiting, and employer-sponsored diversity and inclusion awareness events for employees. The employer must develop an action plan to implement these initiatives by setting realistic goals and starting with the elements that have the greatest business value or that are readily achievable to build momentum for the initiative.

#### Below is an example of an action plan:

**Initiative:** Build R&D team cultural competence and inclusive decision-making to ensure the team can more effectively harness existing team diversity and capitalize on diverse ideas.

**Responsibly:** SVP R&D, Director R&D

**Action items:** Cultural awareness and competency training, team-building exercises, ongoing dialogue regarding diversity and inclusion with R&D team one on one as well as during team meetings.

**Timeframes:** Culture awareness and competency training: within 6 months; team-building exercises: annual staff retreat and monthly meetings; ongoing dialogue: as needed and ongoing during staff interactions and meetings.

### Step 7: Communicate the Initiatives

Employers must identify different stakeholders and design messages for each stakeholder to inform, educate, engage or empower as appropriate. People vary in how they understand messages, and it is important for each person to receive an ongoing stream of communications about the initiatives. The communication plan should incorporate executive presentations and all available media, including social media. Newsletters, intranet and e-mail can also be successful communication tools. The organization should use metrics and success stories to connect the diversity and inclusion efforts to its own goals and strategic plan.

### Step 8: Measure and Disseminate Outcomes

It is imperative to measure the results of the diversity initiatives that have been implemented. Outcomes such as increased representation of identified groups and improved employee survey scores should be captured. Other measurements, such as improved employee retention, and public recognition, such as employer awards or social media accolades, can also indicate how an employer is performing in its diversity and inclusion initiatives. Although some efforts may seem intangible, there are measures that can indicate the success levels of such action items. If diversity

## How to Develop a Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (Cont.)

training is implemented to increase retention, participant retention can be tracked over time, and participants can be surveyed to determine if training was a factor, and how much so, in their continued employment.

The results of the initiatives should be communicated at all levels to demonstrate the return on investment and value-add to the organization. Communication tools can include infographics for senior leadership meetings and public affairs, memos to staff, and company website videos for potential candidates.

### **Step 9: Review and Adjust**

Diversity and inclusion initiatives are not static, and an ongoing review of the workforce and a response to changing needs are necessary. The employer must establish procedures for periodic review of the diversity and inclusion initiatives and goals. After a diversity initiative has been implemented for a period of time, the employer should resurvey employees regarding their perceptions of the company's efforts. Periodically, an organization may need to start at step 1 again and collect data to refocus its diversity and inclusion program.

Source: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/how-to-guides/pages/how-to-develop-a-diversity-and-inclusion-initiative.aspx>

Endnote: 1Department of Veterans Affairs. (n.d.). FY 2014-2020 strategic plan. Retrieved from <https://www.va.gov/op3/docs/StrategicPlanning/VA2014-2020strategicPlan.pdf>

AUGUST 2019

# TEN THINGS YOU WILL LEARN DURING PHRA'S DIVERSITY CELEBRATION



There is a tangible impact of diversity on a company's bottom line. According to the Center for American Progress, here are the top 10 ways diversity in the workplace influences a company.

- 
- 1 A diverse workforce drives economic growth.
  - 2 A diverse workforce can capture a greater share of the consumer market.
  - 3 Recruiting from a diverse pool of candidates means a more qualified workforce.
  - 4 A diverse and inclusive workforce helps businesses avoid employee turnover costs.
  - 5 Diversity fosters a more creative and innovative workforce.
  - 6 Businesses need to adapt to our changing nation to be competitive in the economic market.
  - 7 Diversity is a key aspect of entrepreneurialism.



- 8 Diversity in business ownership, particularly among women of color, is key to moving our economy forward.
- 9 Diversity in the workplace is necessary to create a competitive economy in a globalized world.
- 10 Diversity in the boardroom is needed to leverage a company's full potential.

## FEATURED COMPANY:

Meyer, Unkovic & Scott, LLP

2019 Engaging Pittsburgh Diversity & Inclusion Finalist



In the fall of 2018, Meyer, Unkovic & Scott launched The Kindness Card Project - an initiative developed by the firm's Wellness and Diversity Committees to encourage the spread of kindness and appreciation during the holiday season. Led by attorney Beth Slagle, 40 staff members (over 90% of staff) volunteered to create unique, hand-painted greeting cards that were available for purchase by attorneys, staff, family, and friends. The firm's initial goal was to sell 800 cards and raise \$1,600. But, in only one month, more than 1400 cards were sold, and a total of \$3,800 was raised. 100% of the proceeds collected for the cards benefited 412 Food Rescue and its vitally important food distribution and food waste mitigation initiatives throughout the Pittsburgh region.

To learn more about the Kindness Project [click here!](#)

# Hiring and Dialog in the Workplace: Generational and Social Cognizance and Awareness

Danielle Mundekis, Office Manager, Eckert Seamans Cherin and Mellott  
dmundekis@eckertseamans.com

A recent article I read contained the following quote, **“Good leadership requires you to surround yourself with people of diverse perspectives who can disagree with you without fear of retaliation.”**<sup>1</sup> What was most striking about this, is that so often in the workplace when looking for new hires we use buzz words like the following:

- Dynamic thinker
- Innovative
- Creative
- Problem Solver
- Independent
- Problem Solver

When it comes down to it though, how often do we allow the people who have self-defined as those buzz words we told them we were looking for, to flex those muscles and challenge systems that we've had in place for years and could often use an update? When those folks do share their ideas and thoughts? what's the reaction? Do we judge them for being new and having too many opinions too soon, do we hear them out and let their queries fall on deaf ears, or do we actively challenge ourselves to listen to them and find the best ways to support initiatives that make good business and people sense, because we are committed to the type of employee we posted for?

Culture is at the root of all aspects of HR. It can be far too tempting to attempt a major culture transition by focusing on the things that are easy to change like the wording of job postings, employee engagement activities, and incentives without focusing on the big picture of the day-to-day behavior of the actual people working and continually creating and maintaining the environment. Cultural change and transition is the onus of all levels of leadership and this is especially true if you are a historically established employee responsible for the hiring and the success of new hires.

Today's workforce presents a new challenge for many employers due to the fact that its youngest group, the millennials are on track to be the most educated generation the workforce has ever seen, and gen-z is on pace to surpass the benchmark being set by their predecessors. Millennials and Gen-Z'ers are the first groups to have been exposed to the internet during their formative years. Millennials also stand out because they are the most diverse and educated generation to date: 42 percent identify with a race or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white, around twice the share of the Baby Boomer generation when they were the same age.<sup>2</sup>

## Hiring and Dialog in the Workplace: Generational and Social Cognizance and Awareness (Cont.)

Anecdotally, this group tends to be more open-minded than their predecessors, both socially and in terms of how they approach the workplace and their definition of success within it. Money remains a motivating factor, but social responsibility and culture have become more important than ever. This group favors protections of differences that go beyond those defined by protected classes and they approach work differently. Bridging the gap between effective work methods that are already proven to be successful and innovation to these ideas that favor the new changes in cultural values, are what will lead to a thriving workplace and workforce.

In a piece on LinkedIn, Oleg Vishnepolsky suggested that it's incumbent upon all of us, no matter what level in our careers we're at, to realize that despite how brilliant any one particular leader may be, "they may not have all the facts, all the experiences, and all of the backgrounds in their own heads. I never understand why so many companies try to hire smart people and then treat them like they are stupid ? by micromanaging them, by not listening to them, by not respecting their opinions."<sup>3</sup> It's dangerous to surround yourself only with people who think like you do. Proven efficiencies and successes become that way by being tested and challenged; give and take is healthy.

I've seen situations where Boomers disregard the opinions and suggestions of Millennials and Xennials because of their lack of experience. I've also seen situations where Millennials and Xennials disregard the opinions and suggestions of Boomers because of their lack of technical know-how or social cognizance in the current climate. Both situations, if prolonged, are doomed. Despite the major gap between these two groups in so many ways, there is so much each can gain from the other. As Mr. Vishnepolsky noted though, that implies treating the purpose for hiring as a mutually beneficial relationship, rather than as a box tick.

Millennials, Xennials and gen Z are mobile. Student loan debt and cost of living expenses are inordinately higher and \$100 in 1975, considering time and inflation, is worth about \$476.104 in today's dollars. As a result, people are waiting longer to start families and put down roots; they are no longer landlocked by jobs and tend to be geographically bound only by perceived family duty or relationships: they will move where jobs and careers that interest them are, and/or where the money is. In a world where everything from groceries to degrees can be obtained remotely, the argument for a mandatory, static work environment is a tough sell.

We've got to begin to have open and honest dialog in order to begin to bridge these gaps and build a workforce that is reliable and where investment in employees breeds loyalty. The continuous cycle of training new hires once they realize the buzzwords they were hired for was a farce (even if unintentional) is going to become outrageous, let alone for those organizations who haven't embraced and change at all.

## Hiring and Dialog in the Workplace: Generational and Social Cognizance and Awareness (Cont.)

This kind of dialog will be uncomfortable and at some point, may even offend some of the participants. Offense is not the goal and disrespect is unacceptable ? it is imperative that leadership establish and maintain those boundaries throughout. The key is in appropriately structuring the dialog and the way that the concepts are explored. People have to be made to understand that their ignorance isn't the issue, a continued embrace of it is. It's the employer's responsibility to guide the discussion in a way that let's participants know you don't have to ascribe to the beliefs of your employees, but you must understand and respect them in order to successfully navigate them in the work place.

The hiring process is one of the first indications of workplace culture. In order to get a place that's truly indicative of where we as employers want to be, we've got to have open dialog and safe spaces to ask difficult questions. If you want to embrace the best talent, that requires inclusion in order to reach the broadest spectrum. When we include those qualities that we're looking for in candidates in job postings, we have to make sure we value them when the new hire exhibits them. Those traits should be something we nurture and cherish in our employees, even when it's difficult and especially when it's uncomfortable ? that's when real growth happens in and for all of us.

1 Doris Kearns Goodwin via Mike Kaeding

2 15 Economic Facts about Millennials, The Council of Economic Advisers, October 2014/Decennial Census and American Community Survey. Data for Millennials are for those 15 to 34 years old in 2012. Baby Boomers comparisons are for when they were 15 to 34 as surveyed in 1980.

3 Oleg Vishnepolsky, Global CTO at DailyMail Online and Metro.Co.Uk

4 U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics

**FEATURED COMPANY:**

Argo AI, LLC

2019 Engaging Pittsburgh Diversity & Inclusion Finalist



Diversity and inclusion are perpetual, ongoing, and proactive at Argo AI. It is an essential part of their culture, ingrained in their values and reflected in their trainings, benefits, and experience programs.

A central facet of Argo’s business is a focus on safety, which can only be achieved by employing a truly engaged workforce that cares about the details and is invested in their outcomes. Argo accomplishes this through its outreach, ERG activity, mentorship program, ongoing trainings, employee-first policies and culture of transparency.

From the top down Argo recognizes that a diverse and inclusive workforce is essential to achieving its business goals by engaging employees and ensuring that everyone who works at Argo has a home in the company.

Interested in learning more about Argo AI, LLC visit <https://www.argo.ai>

# Finding my Diversity & Inclusion “Why”: A Tale of Two Trainings

Lauren Reed, Director of Talent, Schell Games, [lreed@schellgames.com](mailto:lreed@schellgames.com)

I recently attended a live local unconscious bias training, which I try to do frequently -- it's a topic I've done a lot of (eye-opening) research on over the last several years. During the drive there, the song “**The Way It Is**” by Bruce Hornsby was playing on the radio. I enjoyed listening to it (big fan of piano in pop songs), but hadn't ever thought deeply about the context or the content of it before. It still didn't fully register with me until later that day, after the training.

The training content was a mix of information I've read, heard, and done similar trainings on: [horn/halo effect](#), [idiosyncratic rater effect](#), ingroup and confirmation bias; and some new things I hadn't heard: introduction to the [cognitive bias codex](#), which organizes the so-far-identified 175 (!!!) different psychological shortcuts our brains make to process myriad information. While the majority of the content was helpful and a good introduction to professionals who are newer to the conversation, the problem came during the Q&A portion.

At one point, the presenter's suggestion for how to familiarize oneself with the problem of unconscious bias (in this case race-based bias) was to go to marginalized groups and ask a lot of questions to become more educated. I sat and processed this advice while the conversation moved on, thinking that it sounded right and logical, but felt wrong, not being able to put my finger on why. As someone who welcomes, encourages, and initiates these kinds of conversations regularly, I wanted to agree with her but couldn't. Afterwards, the individual next to me articulated the crux of the issue: she voiced her frustration to once again feel like the people suffering from bias were responsible for the solution to the problem.

Diversity and inclusion work is difficult, exhausting, and often traumatizing for individuals who are confronted with numerous (and often systemic) barriers to achieving even a semblance of equality and belonging. It's also work they have to do on top of their day jobs. This leads to [burnout and fatigue](#) on multiple levels.

I left the training with this conversation replaying in my head. When I started my car, “[Changes](#)” by Tupac was playing. “Changes” samples Hornsby's “The Way It Is” with a slight ([but important](#)) lyrical alteration to the chorus. At first, I was amused by the bookending, but then I really started listening to the lyrics. “The Way It Is” came out in 1986. Hornsby references the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in this stanza:

*Well they passed a law in '64  
To give those who ain't got a little more  
But it only goes so far*

*Because the law don't change another's mind  
When all it sees at the hiring time  
Is the line on the color bar, no, no, no*

*That's just the way it is  
Some things will never change  
That's just the way it is*

## Finding my Diversity & Inclusion “Why”: A Tale of Two Trainings (Cont.)

Tupac’s “Changes” was released posthumously in 1998 (Shakur recorded it in 1992 and was fatally shot during a drive by in 1996), and his [lyrics](#) paint a bleaker picture:

*I see no changes all I see is racist faces  
Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races  
We under I wonder what it takes to make this  
One better place, let's erase the wasted  
Take the evil out the people they'll be acting right  
'Cause both black and white is smokin' crack tonight  
And only time we chill is when we kill each other  
It takes skill to be real, time to heal each other  
And although it seems heaven sent  
We ain't ready, to see a black President, uhh  
It ain't a secret don't conceal the fact  
The penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks  
But some things will never change*

And later:

*That's just the way it is  
Things will never be the same  
That's just the way it is  
Aww yeah  
We gotta make a change  
It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes.  
Let's change the way we eat, let's change the way we live  
And let's change the way we treat each other.  
You see the old way wasn't working so it's on us to do  
What we gotta do, to survive.*

As I listened, my own frustration and sadness over how little had changed from 1986 to 1998 between versions of the songs washed over me, along with the tragic facts that Tupac never heard his song released, and that his death occurred under the very conditions he denounced. I saw clear parallels with how far we still had to go with D&I training and achieving equality in 2019, more than fifty years after the Civil Rights Act was passed!

Then, I remembered one of my all-time favorite D&I trainings: Covestro’s Dina Clark’s keynote at the Pittsburgh Business Times’ recent “Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Workspace” event. Not only was her talk practical: “Be prepared for bumps”, but its foundation was wildly inspirational for me: “Find your ‘why’”. This was a novel concept. I have been investing in D&I work for a long time and only now was I truly understanding my internal motivation. For me, I believe

## Finding my Diversity & Inclusion “Why”: A Tale of Two Trainings (Cont.)

that every individual is created in the image of a gracious, merciful, and just God. Therefore, every single human being has value and worth and deserves dignity and respect, equally.

Our human, world-wide history of ethnic, racial, economic, and gender-based discrimination (and brutality) reflects gross injustices and societal power imbalances. My motivation for identifying, speaking out against, and working to correct these injustices is rooted in [love for my fellow humans](#), which is a [gift from God](#). I want every person to feel included and that they belong -- because they do! The way to do that is to treat them equitably and with respect, setting aside my own feelings, [considering others more important than myself](#), and learning as I go. It also requires [pointing out injustices](#) to others graciously and with empathy, and being open to others revealing my own blind spots.

If this is all new to you, and you're not sure where you fit in, I encourage you to start reflecting on the systems you are exposed to and participate in on a daily basis, evaluating who benefits from whatever defaults are in place. HR professionals in particular have both the opportunity and the motivation to effect real change in regards to hiring, performance management, training, and compensation.

If you are excited to begin investing in diversity and inclusion work, welcome! Your help as a real ally is sorely needed. I encourage you to dig in and do your own research, identify your own biases. Truly figure out your “why”. Start with yourself and don't expect anyone else to do the hard work for you. If you're not sure how, I've shared some resources I've found to be effective. Once you've become more familiar with the issues, start looking for ways you can address the inequalities that exist in the workplace around you. We have a long way to go!

Finally, for those of you worn out from doing the hard work of breaking down your own biases, lifting others up and amplifying their voices, I see you. As I told my fellow training attendee after she helped me understand my own feelings better: remember to put on your own oxygen mask first. Remind yourself why you think this work is important, and that it's okay to rest and reset in order to be effective. Also realize that as tired as you are, if you are a person of any kind (or multiple kinds) of privilege, you have the option to rest when many others don't, so re-engage!

It takes patience and perseverance; grit and grace -- with others as well as yourself. Even as I participate in and facilitate them, I'm excited for the day that unconscious bias trainings are a thing of the past and we are universally celebrating the strength and beauty human diversity brings to the workplace.

# Finding my Diversity & Inclusion “Why”: A Tale of Two Trainings (Cont.)

## RESOURCE LIST

### To build self-awareness:

[Background on Project Implicit Association Tests](#)

[Project Implicit Tests](#)

NYT’s Point of View Series: “Who, me? Biased?”

[Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism](#) (2 min)

[Check Our Bias to Wreck Our Bias](#) (3 min)

[The Life-Changing Magic of Hanging Out](#) (2 min)

[Why We’re Awkward](#) (3 min)

[Snacks and Punishment](#) (2 min)

[High Heels, Violins and a Warning](#) (1 min)

[Nice White Ladies](#)

### To build social awareness:

[A Conversation With White People on Race](#) (7 min)

[A Conversation With Asian-Americans on Race](#) (8 min)

[A Conversation With Black Women on Race](#) (6 min)

[A Conversation About Growing Up Black](#) (5 min)

[A Conversation With Latinos on Race](#) (7 min)

[“Talk About Bias”](#)

### To help others build awareness:

[Anything by Verna Myers](#)

NASP’s [Facilitating Discussions About Privilege and Self-Reflection Questions](#)

### Podcasts:

[Latino USA](#)

[The Nod](#)

[Codeswitch](#)

[Tech-ish](#)

[Nancy](#)

[Unladylike](#)

[See Something Say Something](#)

**FEATURED COMPANY:**

FedEx Ground

2019 Engaging Pittsburgh Diversity & Inclusion Finalist



FedEx Ground believes their diverse workforce and inclusive culture aligns with the richness of the global marketplace. Their people are their most valuable assets and the fabric of their culture. They maximize their differences, strengthening their response to customers' challenges and commitment to make every FedEx experience outstanding.

The retention and engagement strategy for diverse employees is delivered through Employee Networks. This company-supported and employee-empowerment initiative drives networking, mentorship, and development programs and enhances D&I efforts throughout the company; fostering cross-cultural awareness and understanding and promotes courageous conversations.

These efforts are returned by increasing diverse leadership pipelines at all levels of organization. FedEx Ground has 11 employee networks that support cultural, tradition, ethnicity, and shared characteristics. At FedEx they believe that inclusion makes them better.

Interested in learning more about FedEx Ground [Click Here](#)

## Practice Makes Proficient: Global and Cultural Effectiveness – a big concept

HR pros today get that all organizations are connected in some way across the world. That's a big concept – the world is a big place and includes many cultural differences that may cause workplace problems.

At a client site recently I observed a manager standing over an employee yelling. This was an open office, where most worked on developing software. Everyone was disrupted.

Investigation revealed the manager, from China, was berating the employee, because she had been copied on a complimentary e-mail from a US client.

The manager, based on her culturally biased view of the organization, believed that the individual never deserves praise, even if he had done the work. She told him the "team" should get any and all credit.

My client company's situation is not all that different from cultural differences we experience in a workplace that doesn't include international workers. Most of us have diverse ages, races, social backgrounds, etc. These differences if not respected and understood can lead to bottom line and employee failures.

So where to start in developing this competency? What is your immediate situation? Is your organization an international business, does it include employees from different countries? If your work is more domestically focused, maybe start with diversity related to race, age, etc.

### **On the job**

- Ask for feedback on your work from people you do not work with directly, particularly people who think differently from you.
- Participate in a cross-functional group that reviews the organization's policies and practices related to diversity and inclusiveness.
- When making decisions about hiring, promotion, and termination, examines the data to ensure an unbiased approach.
- Research organizations that can provide resources/networks with diverse communities in your organization's field, like the National Society of Black Engineers [www.nsbe.org/home.aspx](http://www.nsbe.org/home.aspx) or the Association of Latino Professionals for America [www.alpfa.org](http://www.alpfa.org)
- Check out the Diversity Best Practices website for a list of organizations serving women , [www.diversitybestpractices.com/news-articles/20-womens-organizations-you-need-know](http://www.diversitybestpractices.com/news-articles/20-womens-organizations-you-need-know)
- Consider using crowd-sourced solutions for issues that arise related to diversity at work via HR professional networks like SHRM's Member2Member Solutions [www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/member2member/pages/default.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/member2member/pages/default.aspx)

# Practice Makes Proficient: Global and Cultural Effectiveness – a big concept (Cont.)

## Classes, Conferences

- Explore programs of the Society for Diversity, [www.societyfordiversity.org](http://www.societyfordiversity.org)
- Seek a diversity certification Institute for Diversity Certification, [www.diversitycertification.org](http://www.diversitycertification.org)
- Learn another language focusing on current or future business or on employee opportunities using programs like Rosetta Stone, [www.rosettastone.com](http://www.rosettastone.com).
- SHRM conferences, workshops, virtual events, and online programs

## Self-initiated Activities

- Use the Internet to research other cultures by reading news from different parts of the world.
- Establish a social media connection with someone in another country where your organization does (or might do) business.
- Participate in Harvard's Project Implicit to determine your own unconscious biases, <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/aboutus.html>
- Check out sites like the Curiosity Group LLC for resources on other cultures: [www.culturocity.com/index.html](http://www.culturocity.com/index.html)
- SHRM resources and tools, including:  
Diversity Tools, [www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/pages/diversity-and-inclusion.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/pages/diversity-and-inclusion.aspx)

## Community

- Join a social organization focused on an ethnic group you do not know much about.
- Volunteer for a nonprofit organization that assists immigrants.
- Get involved with organizations that focus on inclusion and diversity, like the National Diversity Council, [www.nationaldiversitycouncil.org](http://www.nationaldiversitycouncil.org)
- Join the board of a nonprofit that assists racial, social, ethnic, or gender groups you do not know a lot about but that can benefit from your HR knowledge.

## Coaching/Mentoring

- Find a coach or mentor who has a different background from you.
- Mentor or coach someone from a different age group.
- Work with a business professional who is of a different gender to gain perspectives on how to deal with employees of that gender.

## Practice Makes Proficient: Global and Cultural Effectiveness – a big concept (Cont.)

- Join an organization dedicated to mentoring, like the National Mentoring Partnership, [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)
- Participate in the Harvard Mentoring Project, <https://sites.sph.harvard.edu/wmy>.

To be effective in a global community we need the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs) to value and consider the perspectives and backgrounds of all parties, to interact with others in a global context, and to promote a diverse and inclusive workplace. By doing the hard work of growing our competency in this area we can do better HR.

*Phyllis Hartman, SHRM-SCP, is an HR consultant in Freedom, Pa. She is the author of several books for the profession, including A Manager's Guide to Developing Competencies in HR Staff (SHRM, 2017).*

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**FEATURED COMPANY:**

Pittsburgh Mercy

2019 Engaging Pittsburgh Diversity & Inclusion Finalist



PITTSBURGH   
MERCY  
A HERITAGE OF HOPE

Pittsburgh Mercy fosters an environment that promotes diversity, inclusion, equity, and creativity, and inspires innovations that advance care for the persons and communities we serve. Creating a more diverse and inclusive environment is essential to the success of their people-centered strategy and fulfilling their mission to be a healing presence within their communities. The newly created role of Director of Inclusion and Collaboration was developed in part to establish measures of inclusion, diversity, and lack of bias in all recruitment, promotion, pay, and other talent/leadership development practices.

In addition, Pittsburgh Mercy's Inclusion Committee will provide feedback and guidance of goals, priorities, strategic opportunities, and operational challenges pertaining to Diversity and Inclusion. This committee will have a fundamental role in framing and implementing Pittsburgh Mercy's D&I Strategic Plan.

# Neurodiversity: Making Employment Accessible to Autistic Adults

Corey Hollemeyer, [chollemeyer17@gmail.com](mailto:chollemeyer17@gmail.com)

Graduate Student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania

What is neurodiversity? Neurodiversity is a newer term. It is more than just a word, though—it is a concept. Neurodiversity applies to autistic people, people with attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder, highly sensitive persons (HSPs), people with dyslexia, and other neurological conditions. The concept behind the term “neurodiversity” is that these differences are part of the natural variation found in humanity. This piece focuses on employment and autistic people.

According to the CDC, 1 in 59 children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). While it remains controversial whether the numbers are increasing or better rates of identification are at play, we do know that many autistic people are exceptionally talented. One example is Susan Boyle, a Scottish singer who tried out for Britain’s Got Talent in 2009. To see something beautiful, unexpected, and awesomely inspiring, I highly recommend going to YouTube.com and searching “Susan Boyle audition.” This was an unemployed 47-year-old woman who seemed to have little concern for her appearance and was perhaps viewed as a little eccentric. She stunned the audience with her angelic rendition of Les Misérables’, “I Dreamed a Dream.” At that time, it was believed that she had suffered mild brain damage during her birth, but in 2013, she revealed a newfound Asperger’s syndrome diagnosis. Asperger’s syndrome is now called high-functioning autism spectrum disorder, according to diagnostic criteria used by medical professionals in the U.S. Susan went on to produce several hit albums.

I have a personal interest in the topic of employment and autistic people. I have a very bright four-year-old daughter with high-functioning autism spectrum disorder. At home, she chatters non-stop and loves to act silly. At pre-school, she is a quiet, shy, and serious. Social anxiety frequently occurs with autism. As a parent, I worry about her prospects for employment as an adult in spite of her superior cognitive abilities. There is good reason for this concern. According to several sources, the unemployment rate of autistic adults is around 85 percent.

If some autistic people are capable of earning a college degree, then some of them are capable of doing paid work. However there are certain problems that autistic people face in seeking employment. While getting an interview is a victory for anyone, this is where many autistic people typically get passed over. One of the diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorder is impairment in social interactions. Another is social communication deficits. In addition, many people with autism have sensory processing differences, which can lead to behavior that is not understood by neurotypical people. An example of this is a high sensitivity to sounds well tolerated by neurotypical individuals which could lead to covering the ears. This behavior may not be understood by the uninformed.

Considering the diagnostic criteria of autism spectrum disorder along with typical interviewer expectations, autistic people are at a significant disadvantage. Many interviewers probably do not know how to interpret some of these potential occurrences: lack of eye contact, repetitive movements like opening and closing the hands (which can increase under stressful conditions), not answering questions in the expected manner, going off on a seemingly unrelated tangent, and wearing unusual interview attire among other possibilities. Reduced

## Neurodiversity: Making Employment Accessible to Autistic Adults (Cont.)

affect may also be judged negatively. It is not that autistic people do not feel; they simply express their feelings differently.

Given the value of diversity, what can be done to improve this situation? Part of the solution would be employer interest in diverse hiring practices with an emphasis on including autistic adults. Another important piece is to rethink the purpose of an interview. Are the behaviors that might be considered undesirable during the interview necessarily an obstacle to performing the job? This is the key question. In American culture, extroversion is celebrated as exemplary, and introversion is generally viewed as undesirable. Autistic people may be perceived as introverted. Interviewer bias can also be introduced by negatively judging an applicant's traits that are unrelated to job performance. Perhaps interviewers are looking to stay within their own comfort zones; however, if it is not necessary to do the job, then it should not matter during the interview process.

There are some other ways to increase participation of autistic people in the workforce. Many individuals are capable of doing great work when given the right accommodations. One idea, which would likely increase participation in the workforce by all disabled people, is to offer more part-time positions. Rather than having one full-time position available, have two part-time positions. Many disabled individuals have medical appointments or transportation issues that can make it difficult to work 40 hours a week, but they may be able to work 20 hours each week without getting overwhelmed. For autistic people specifically, reduced hours could be important due to the intense overstimulation that may occur for autistic individuals when they are out in the world. This leads to another solution, which is to offer remote work as an accommodation for people with disabilities including those with autism spectrum disorder. This removes a significant barrier for people who struggle with physically getting to work and for those who struggle with tolerating bright lighting or noisy open office floorplans.

The most important thing is to have an open mind. Job applicants are not required to disclose disabilities; therefore, it is necessary to be aware that there might be good reasons for behaviors that are not understood. Keep evaluative judgements narrowly focused on what is necessary to do the job. Autistic people naturally think differently, and this is a key component to innovation. People who experience life differently will think and act differently. Employers and their representing interviewers must evaluate their biases and decide what attributes are truly necessary for successful job performance. All people are unique whether disabled or not. And that's a good thing. But let's not just tolerate these differences. That does not lead to an inclusive environment. Let's celebrate and appreciate human diversity in all of its forms everywhere—including at work.

If you are interested in information to help make your organization more inclusive of autistic adults, please email or reach out to me on LinkedIn. Thank you!

# Second Chance Employment: Hiring the Formerly Incarcerated

Kori Amos, SHRM-CP, PHR

Director of Human Resources at Zero Model

Today, one in three adults have a criminal record, and more than 650,000 people are released from prisons each year. These individuals experience significant barriers to employment because of the stigma associated with a criminal record, because of overreaching company policies banning hiring individuals with backgrounds, because of lack of access to training opportunities or jobs that require professional licenses, etc. The list goes on, but the end result is a job applicant with a criminal record is less likely to receive an offer of employment than an individual without a record, despite the fact that research shows that employees with a criminal record perform as well or better than those without a record in some jobs.

Given these facts, I still would not advocate that any and all organizations immediately dive into the talent acquisition strategy of hiring the formerly incarcerated or those with a background. As with any strategic HR initiative, it has to begin with analyzing your organization's needs and aligning your findings with your TA strategy to produce sustainable value.

At Zero Model, we create companies and employment opportunities for those with a background. One of the ways in which we do that is through our staffing company, Jobrise. We often hear feedback from companies that they tried to hire someone with a background before, and it didn't work out. This then becomes their objection to hiring those with a criminal record. Once we dig a little deeper, the story is always the same; the company hired the individual out of a bleeding heart instead of focusing on qualifications and how the individual has demonstrated their job-readiness. Any HR pro knows hiring someone who is not qualified and who has not demonstrated their fitness for the role, often ends badly, and it has nothing to do with a criminal record – there's the first strike. The second strike is that the company has then taken the actions of that individual and applied it to all job applicants with a record to justify their exclusion.

If you're considering Second Chance Employment as a part of your TA strategy, here are 2 things to ponder:

1. Your company's selection process. 2. The opportunity to access un-tapped talent.

**1. Selection Process.** When it comes to vetting a candidate with a criminal background, don't throw out tried and true HR best practices. Look at the job description; does it truly describe the qualifications necessary to succeed in the job, or is it an unnecessary wish list of education and credentials? Assess the candidate's qualifications; are they qualified? This sounds rudimentary, but it will do your company and the candidate a disservice to hire someone who is not qualified. Look at what the candidate has done since their last conviction; have they sought out training opportunities, have they had consistent employment, do they have professional and personal references?

**2. Opportunity.** As stated previously nearly 1/3 of working-age adults have a criminal record. In recent years, many organizations have changed their perspective on second chance employment and changed hiring practices and policies, but only 3% of HR professionals report that they proactively source and recruit from this talent pool. This creates an opportunity to source individuals and have first-access to these candidates.

With low unemployment numbers and month after month of more job openings than job seekers, second chance employment can open up a new source of candidates. When considering this talent acquisition strategy, the best approach is to consider it just that – business strategy and not charity.



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