

BLIND RECRUITMENT: THE NEW HIRING BUZZ FOR DIVERSITY INCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

Hiring is one of the major and critical functions of Human Resource Management. Any wrong hire may cost to the organization. Moreover, it gains significance as the workforce gets diverse. Fair hiring of diverse people is a challenge to the contemporary organization. Blind hiring is coming up as a new technique to reduce bias during hiring diverse applicants. It is a novel technique and implementation requires a comprehensive understanding. The current paper discusses the need, benefits and challenges of this technique.

KEYWORDS: Blind Hiring, Diversity, Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Hiring involves collection of information relevant to the prospective applicants such that a decision could be made related to potential and success on the job. The information could be gathered from the resume, referees in case the hiring is through referrals and through interview. However the information collected to make decision may not be substantial for such decisions. One of the prime reasons could be the involvement of Human beings in the process. Human beings can be potential source of biases which may lead to seek only that information in which they are interested rather than that of job- interest.

Indeed there are chances that they may intentionally or unintentionally give importance to pieces of information such as names, previous companies worked for, alma maters, which may prevent from making a good decision. Hiring managers may be swayed by their unconscious bias, attitudes or stereotypes and prompt to make unfair decisions.

Growing awareness of unconscious bias, attitudes or stereotypes and want to increase the diversity of their workforce has raised the interest in anonymous hiring.

What is Blind Hiring?

Blind hiring technique is removing specific identifying information like the candidates name and educational background from the application and resumes or eliminating the resume requirement altogether and assessing candidates based on skill testing or sample projects , then inviting top performers in for interview (Maurer, 2016).

Blind hiring aims at developing opinions solely based on their demonstrated work and skills. Such a technique may involve invite job candidates to perform a challenge—writing a software program (Feintzeig, 2016), Conducting anonymous interviews, such as by using chat rooms and voice-masking technology (Maurer, 2016) or by employing something more simple, like a skills assessment, an applicant challenge or a writing test(Huhman, 2016).

Need of Blind Hiring

Although the companies supporting diversity inclusion emphasizes merit for hiring, however their managers showed greater bias against women in their performance evaluations and rewards (Castilla & Benard 2010). Talented candidates may be overlooked if they lack an elite background or because of their gender, race etc because of the unconscious bias of managers. Further, Referrals comprise the single largest source of hires for lots of companies, many of which offer cash or perks for employees who refer friends (Feintzeig, 2016). It is pronounced that they would refer only those who are similar to them.

Williams (2014) in his article in Harvard Business Review writes “When an organization lacks diversity, it’s not the employees who need fixing,” “It’s the business systems.” To change the attitude and behaviour of people, it is essential to change the structures in the organization. This call for the need of new structures which can interrupt bias in the system such as Blind Hiring

Examples of Blind Hiring Practices from Organizations

Companies in the U.S. and U.K. such as IBM, Deloitte, HSBC Bank PLC, KPMG UK LLP and AMD in Asia have incorporated this kind of hiring into their process.

Deloitte LLP’s U.K. arm redacts applicants’ schools for about 1,500 entry-level hires. Instead, applicants take a battery of tests to measure skills like numerical reasoning and critical thinking (Feintzeig, 2016)

San Mateo, Calif.-based cloud-storage firm Compose Inc. asks job applicants to write a short story about data, spend a day working on a mock project and complete an assignment (Maurer, 2016)

Other organizations in the U.K. like HSBC Bank PLC, KPMG UK LLP and the British Broadcasting Corp., will remove candidates’ names from some job applications (Feintzeig, 2016)

A software company, Gap Jumpers conducts challenges for applicants that mimic the job tasks. GapJumpers, with its clients create a list of skills required for the job, and then design a relevant test to be completed online. The hiring company looks into the applicants and selects the candidates for interview (Miller, 2016).

Interviewing.io Inc., a website that pairs interviewers and interviewees in chat rooms where they are encouraged to talk but not share names (Feintzeig, 2016).

Another example is Gild, which has proprietary software that finds candidates based on code they have published online and strips out biographical information before recommending them to employees (Miller, 2016).

The talent acquisition team at AMD takes due care to redact all irrelevant or intrusive personal information like race, sex, caste/ community, language, socio-economic background, educational pedigree and state of domicile, etc. say’s Dr Kiranmai Dutt Pendyala, Corporate Vice President, Human Resources, AMD Greater Asia.

Benefits of Blind Hiring

Blind Hiring would result identifying the talent and make fair decisions as there would be only selective information related to scores than any other past information which may create unconscious bias inevitably during the selection process.

There could be potential candidates who do not hold an elite pedigree to highlight in their resumes; blind hiring through conducting challenges may provide an opportunity to identify the unconventional applicants.

There are a plethora of stereotypes in society and minds of people related to different genders, communities, races leading to development of prejudices. Prejudiced managers may consciously or unconsciously lead to discrimination against an applicant as he/she may belong to such social groups. Blind hiring provides an opportunity to such groups which have been facing social exclusion and could not demonstrate their skills. Blind hiring would open the door for underrepresented and increase the diversity of workplaces.

Challenges of Blind Hiring

Though the benefits of Blind Hiring are laudable, the execution would face challenges. As Blind Hiring process involves challenges / projects similar to the job tasks at the organization, they would lengthen the hiring process and may decrease the motivation of candidates. Maurer (2016) writes that Compose faced such criticism, where some candidates refused to apply once they found about the mock project, saying they won't work for free.

Further, Blind Hiring may dilute the actual objective of interview i.e. it is a process where both interviewer and interviewee exchange information to find their fit. Organizations look for people who can fit in their organization culture. However, conducting an interview with a disguised voice or through chats would not help the HR manager assess the personality of the candidate and their cultural fit. In case, the process of Blind Hiring includes an in-person interview in last rounds for the cultural fit, still there would be a chance for discrimination if the managers are not aware of their unconscious bias and their outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

Blind Hiring by taking the hiring from a room to field is a progressive approach. However, Blind Hiring alone cannot increase diversity at workplace. Diversity inclusion is not limited to increasing the number from diverse background, but to create a climate where diverse groups of people grow together while contributing to the organization. Further, single practice approach has received criticism in diversity literature. Blind Hiring practices need to be complemented with other Human Resource Management practices such as performance appraisal, compensation, training and development. Managers are required to be trained about their unconscious bias such that the aim of Blind Hiring is accomplished.

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