

8 simple and effective steps to ensure fair hiring practices within your organisation

Issued by [Simplify](#)

20 Apr 2022

'Fair hiring' or 'fair employment' focuses on ensuring the "employment of workers on a basis of equality without discrimination or segregation especially because of race, colour, or creed¹."

We all have tales of the dire cost to an organisation of recruiting the 'wrong' or 'unsuitable' candidate. Fair hiring not only ensures that the right and most suitable person is employed, based entirely on merit, but also enables the organisation to comply with employment laws and regulations.

With significant portions of HR and employment budgets dedicated to finding the 'best hire', fair hiring is fast gaining ground and momentum and should be a key focus of your hiring practice, both to eliminate risk and to build a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Below are some simple, but effective, steps to ensure fair hiring practices within your organisation and to help you avoid the pitfalls that many companies unconsciously fall into, with the unintended consequence of excluding candidates due to unconscious bias.

Inclusive job advertisements

Fair hiring begins at the very start of the process with the formulation and drafting of inclusive job advertisements. Avoid using terms or phrases that can be seen as discriminatory. For example, did you know that words such as 'competitive' or 'strong' are often perceived as more male-specific, whilst words such as 'support' and 'assist' are often more appealing to a female audience²? Likewise, be mindful that terminology such as 'recent graduate' could inadvertently discriminate against an older (and more experienced) candidate.

Get it out there

It is important to have as wide a reach as possible to ensure that your recent recruitment advertisement reaches a broad and diverse audience. This helps to facilitate a comprehensive potential candidate list. Spread the news on as wide a list of job portals and employment platforms as possible. The wider your reach, the greater the opportunity and results.

Clear selection criteria

Know what you want and need and be clear upfront. Establish clear selection criteria, for example, education (level completed, relevance), number of years' experience, defined organisational skills, etc. Important criteria to keep in mind include capabilities and skills (as above), value (what value can/will this individual bring to the organisation) and culture (will this candidate fit into the culture of the organisation).

Blind hiring practices

A clever and popular way of ensuring zero discrimination is the practice of blind hiring. This method anonymises any non-related candidate information. Why? To remove any potential for bias to prevent the team from forming, even inadvertently, a preference for certain candidates above others that is completely unrelated to actual skills and abilities. Simply put, it 'blocks' out any of the candidate's personal information that could influence a hiring decision. Examples of such data include gender, race, age, location, et al.

Candidate assessment and evaluation

It is important to evaluate candidates based on pre-defined interview guides that can be set up in your recruitment management platform. These guides can include the use of questionnaires to filter and rank candidate applications. The recruitment management platform is then able to provide actionable feedback from the hiring team on potential hires at any point of the hiring process. This feedback is automatically shared with the hiring team for complete transparency. This helps to ensure a standardised, and therefore fair, interview and evaluation process.

Fair and equitable background checks

You think you have found the 'right' and most suitable candidate. Now for the background checks – such an essential part of the recruitment process. Make sure you are exercising fair and equitable background checks with the use of trusted and reputable background check providers. Some suggestions on what to focus on with regards to this process include ensuring you have a consistent policy, obtaining legal advice, providing candidates with the opportunity to clear up any mistakes or misunderstandings and using providers who are compliant with employment rules and regulations or standards, et al³. Be sure to screen questions asked during reference checks from previous employers to help weed out any questions that might be considered discriminatory or 'unfair'.

It starts with your tools!

An Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is a software application that allows for the electronic management of your recruitment process. It is a fit for businesses of all sizes – ranging from large scale corporates through to SMEs, depending on the needs of the specific organisation. An ATS helps to automate and streamline the recruitment process, thereby 'removing any headache' and can go a long way to ensuring smooth and seamless fair hiring practices. A good ATS can help you blind assess candidates through scoring questionnaires, will have built-in interview and evaluation guides, allow you to do background checks and assessments from within the platform, ensures that all data is validated and assessed and that each candidate decision is auditable. It also allows for the quick, and fair, identification of those candidates who stand out from the rest of the crowd – allowing you to respond before they are employed somewhere else, and offers the ability for a broad (and diverse) group of people be part of the hiring decision.

Expanding your team starts with your team!

Assemble as diverse a recruitment team and interview panel as possible. We all see and experience life and people through different lenses. Give your organisation the best chance of obtaining as comprehensive a view of each candidate as possible by assembling a team that is varied and multifaceted. And train! Such a vital step. Make sure that your recruitment teams and interview panels are fully trained and skilled in all the finer nuances of their role and the processes involved – including, most essentially, fair hiring practices and the management of selection and/or confirmation bias.

References:

¹ *Fair employment Definition & Meaning – Merriam-Webster*

² *Fair Hiring Practices: 6 Steps To A Fair Process | Vervoe*

³ *How to Do Employee Background Checks (betterteam.com)*

^{*} **8 simple and effective steps to ensure fair hiring practices within your organisation** 20 Apr 2022

^{*} **Simplify.hr Job Trends Report indicates strong growth in key industries** 23 Nov 2021

^{*} **Simplify.hr launches free hiring e-book** 31 Mar 2020

^{*} **The candidate experience playbook - Part 3** 27 Aug 2019

^{*} **The candidate experience playbook - Part 2** 6 Aug 2019

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