

Three Tips for Preventing “Microaggressions” in the Hiring Process



Microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults to marginalized individuals and groups.” Unfortunately, they’re relatively common in the hiring process - even without intentionally trying. Here’s how your organization can prevent microaggressions in the hiring process.



Use Inclusive Language in Your Job Descriptions

The language and phrasing in your job descriptions can significantly impact who applies to the job. Your hiring team should avoid using gender or ethnic geared phrases or buzzwords such as “rockstar,” “dominate,” or “ninja.” These “coded words” can significantly decrease the quantity of applicants to a job.

Instead, use straightforward language as it relates to the position directly. For example, if you’re hiring a Sales Representative, call it a Sales Representative and not something like “All-Star Sales Rep.” Using straightforward language levels the playing field for applicants, which increases the number of applicants, meaning you have greater access to more talent.

If you’re unsure how your job descriptions are inclusive, there are online resources to help you. You can use Textio Hire, a tool that analyzes your job descriptions and makes suggestions for improvements to make them more inclusive. There’s also a similar tool called Gender Decoder, which alerts you right away if your language skews too masculine or feminine.

Take Any Complaints Seriously

If a candidate or an employee calls out discriminatory behavior or complains about experiencing microaggressions, your organization should take it seriously. Your HR team should investigate the issue — and any deeper problems surrounding it and take the appropriate action needed to correct the problem. Your organization should be a safe and inclusive workplace for every member of the team. If it’s not, you run the risk of losing diversity and top talent, which ultimately hurts your organization’s bottom line.



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Train Your Hiring Team on Implicit Bias

How attentive is your hiring team when it comes to presenting a job to candidates? Most of the time, employers spend more time considering how candidates present themselves rather than how their jobs are being presented to candidates. The implicit bias that sneaks its way into your job descriptions or interview process can mean you lose out on great talent. While some candidates may not feel targeted or excluded based on the job description, others like women, minorities, or members of the LGBTQ+ community might.

To avoid losing top talent — or losing your star employees later on, it’s a good practice to have your hiring and leadership teams complete implicit bias training. This training helps people understand the unconscious biases they may not even know they had — and we all do have them. Your team will also be provided with tools and techniques to adjust patterns of thinking that reinforce stereotypes and ultimately eliminate discriminatory actions, thoughts, or behaviors.

Call out microaggressions when you see them, even when you know it’s not intentional — it’s the only way your organization can learn, grow, and improve. There should be no room for microaggressions in the hiring process, workplace — or anywhere for that matter. Having a hiring process that promotes DE&I will lead to more quality candidates to bring better talent into your organization. And maintaining a safe and inclusive work environment for all your employees will keep that talent at your organization.

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