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Executive Recruiters Upping Their Efforts to Help Organizations Achieve Diversity Goals



Anyone who works in executive search right now has seen, and will continue to see, a push for more lists of diverse candidates for open roles. “We are also seeing organizations start to mandate diversity numbers as a benchmark for DEI success, and seeing an influx of diverse candidates at the executive level as a result,” said Ryna Young, head of the diversity, equity, and inclusion practice at **Odgers Berndtson**.

It’s encouraging that companies are making an effort. “And yet, if you’ve been paying attention over the past couple of years, you know diverse candidates still have a lot stacked against them,” said Ms. Young. “Board representation is still very low when it comes to both gender and equity deserving groups. COVID added extra barriers and stress for women executives, exemplified by the numbers of women dropping out (and staying out) of the workforce. And companies are struggling to retain the diverse talent they are hiring.”

Since the summer of 2020 companies have increasingly recognized the importance of diversity and inclusion within the workforce, according to Letitia Hatton, consultant and head of diversity, equity and inclusion at **Tempting Talent**. “Due to the huge spike in recognition, some companies opted to lay out some ambitious targets for their diversity hiring needs,” she said. “While others focused on an influx of hiring diverse talent to improve their statistics. The problem we have seen with the companies that implemented overly ambitious promises is that they originally had no diversity and did not change their strategy, nor did they consider their level of inclusion. Even if they have ‘lived up’ to their promises the challenge some companies are now facing in result of their hiring plans have resulted in difficulty to retain staff due to not defining their strategy for inclusivity in the workplace ahead of hiring. Improving DEI does not come overnight and their needs to

be measurable actions in place to ensure their strategy is constantly evolving to cater to the challenges minorities face in their day-day work environment.”

Ms. Hatton notes that there have been improvements in firms that have decided to act on diversity and inclusion daily and have implemented a strategy to stay inclusive as a fundamental foundation of their company. “Recruitment and executive search businesses that have implemented inclusive plans and are acting on the them are the firms that have improved the most since the summer of 2020,” she said.

Challenges Facing Recruiters

The challenges are dependent on the type of diversity, according to Ms. Hatton. “We look at a range of diversity including and not limited to ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, socioeconomic status, and background,” she said. “Unfortunately, we don’t always know what people identify as when seeking talent. It has proven difficult to hire find diverse talent at senior levels of an organization; from my perspective many reasons could factor into this. First being if they are already a part of an organization who is doing diversity and inclusion well and they feel respected and valued therefore it is much harder for them to be interested in making a move as salary and career progression is not always the biggest driving factor.”

BY THE NUMBERS

Building a Diverse Workforce

76 percent of job seekers report that a diverse workforce is an important factor when evaluating job offers.

Source: Glassdoor

“There is also a much smaller percentage of executive search and recruitment professionals in the industry, most firms are white male owned and are surrounded by other white males at the C-suite level of an organization, there is often a smaller percentage of women, agender, transgender, non-binary, and all other gender identities at the top of an organization along with less people of color and those who identify as having a disability,” said Ms. Hatton. “Working in a white male dominated industry naturally discourages diverse talent.”

“There are clear signs of progress on the topic of diversity in the private equity space, where most of our clients are operating. However, there is still work
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to be done," said Charlotte Cederwall, partner and co-leader of the consumer practice at **Acertitude**. "We are seeing a significant increase in the number of women in the C-suite at private equity funds and new research supports this observation. McKinsey recently documented that since 2020, women are outpacing men at a promotion rate of six percent for eligible women compared to one percent for eligible men," Ms. Cederwall said. "Some of this momentum can be attributed to LPs demanding that these issues be addressed more aggressively which has led firms to take significant strides, improving on issues of diversity and making a tangible impact in governance. However, we are also seeing positive progress to become more accessible from the industry as a whole."

"Of note, as more heads of human capital and heads of ESG are appointed to private equity operating teams and tasked with embedding DEI as a component of every deal, we are seeing more initiatives driven into portfolio companies and critical hiring decisions," Ms. Cederwall said. "This type of progress should be applauded, but there is more work to be done. Private equity still lags corporates when it comes to C-suite ethnic diversity."

"One of the biggest challenges we – and all executive recruiters – face is the shortage of diverse talent to source from at the leadership levels, particularly within certain sectors like manufacturing and tech," said Ms. Cederwall. "We don't have that today because different groups have historically not been afforded the same opportunities. Addressing diversity at the senior-most levels takes thought, effort, and creativity – but is worthwhile. Teams with diverse thinking, backgrounds, and experiences outperform those that don't."

"Firms must challenge themselves to proactively map out and build relationships with diverse candidates, groups, and affiliations to support progress," Ms. Cederwall said. "Emphasis also needs to be placed on removing bias from hiring processes and tracking and holding consultants accountable when it comes to diversity metrics. Companies, likewise, have to invest in and train people to make sure that long term we have diverse teams operating from the bottom to the top of organizations."

Diversity in the PE/VC Sectors

"There has been a big focus on diversity recruiting in the private equity space," said Ms. Cederwall. "Great progress has been made around elevating females up to the leadership levels, while ethnic diversity is behind. The best private equity firms know that smartly and creatively widening their talent pools can lead to better hiring outcomes and progress on this important topic. We are seeing firms be more open minded around prior private equity experience, first time CEO experience, and academic backgrounds, for example."

"It comes as no surprise that some funds are making bigger steps forward than others, with some modernizing at a quicker pace," Ms. Cederwall said. "Overall, there is positive momentum but continuing to move in the right direction requires a long-term outlook and willingness to make decisions that yield benefits down the road, sometimes in contrast to the usual short term demands in the sector."

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INSIGHT

Five Tips to Help Design the Chief Diversity Officer Role



A diverse workforce is essential to the success of an organization. And when it comes to building strong teams, successful organizations focus on developing a more inclusive culture that welcomes and supports diverse leaders and talent. As

the job market becomes more competitive, DEI jobs are in higher demand. With candidates being courted for multiple opportunities at once, companies must be mindful as they consider the framework for positions like chief diversity officer. In a new report, Sally Stetson of **Salveson Stetson Group** offers five key tips to guide you as you prepare to enter the talent market for this important role:

1. **Commitment to DEI**
2. **DEI Job Titles**
3. **Who Does the Chief Diversity Officer Report To?**
4. **Individual Contributor vs. Manager**
5. **DEI Leadership Competencies**

“At Academic Search, we have been much more intentional about our efforts in this space and continue to have organization-wide conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion and the impacts on executive search,” said Dr. Jay Lemons, president of **Academic Search**. “Our consultants are making concerted efforts to remain in-the-know about best practices and to incorporate those methods into the search process with each and every search.”

Diversity on Campuses

“One of the challenges we face in finding diverse talent is simply addressing the market forces and cultural/social factors that may have an influence on attracting a diverse candidate pool to a particular institution,” said Dr. Lemons. “For instance, the institution may not be in a very diverse area geographically, so it may not offer some of the cultural and social aspects of a community that a diverse candidate would seek. Or, the campus itself may not be very diverse in terms of its student, faculty, staff, or administrative makeup. Or, the campus may not be making efforts to imbed diversity, equity, and inclusion into its mission and values, whereas an institution that is actively engaging in those attempts could be more attractive to a candidate representing a marginalized population.”

As consultants, Dr. Lemons says his firm brings a level of expertise that can advise, inform, and facilitate a search process that allows for greater emphasis of best practices in building a diverse candidate pool. “This includes more intentional efforts to educate each search committee on mitigating bias at every stage of the search process and especially in the evaluation of candidates’ initial application materials as well as subsequent interviews and other interactions with the committee and/or larger campus community,” he said. “We discuss unconscious bias at every search committee meeting and as a part of our initial meeting typically have members sign a code of ethics document that commits members to an

inclusive and equitable search process, including the creation of criteria for the position that do not establish undue barriers, a willingness to listen to diverse perspectives from fellow committee members, and a willingness to strive to recognize and put aside personal agendas, biases, or political positions so that each candidate is honestly and fairly evaluated based on relevant skills and experience.”

“In subsequent meetings, we also lead exercises that we believe help committee members to broaden their lenses and be more aware of where their biases may come into play in the review and evaluation of candidates,” he said.

“Within higher education, we believe continuing to make every effort to build an equitable and inclusive process is imperative to a successful search. Recruiting diverse leadership will likely remain at the forefront for higher education institutions in both the short- and long-term. It will be important for institutions to remain steadfast in their commitment to creating an inclusive environment for all and to committing the resources and support needed to move forward initiatives in this space, including the hiring of a more diverse faculty, staff, and administration to better reflect the students being served.

Diversity Within Non-Profits

“Our clients, all of whom are non-profit organizations or foundations, have long been attentive to the power of diversity, and most are quick to leverage that power — they don’t just make promises; they live the promise,” said Sam Pettway, founding director of **BoardWalk Consulting**. “We start with the premise that organizations are acting in good faith, and we meet them wherever they are in their respective journeys. And even though a commitment to diversity has been part of our fabric since our founding in 2002, we know our own learning journey continues as well.”

It takes a diverse effort to uncover diverse talent, according to Mr. Pettway. He says his team works hard to be strategic and creative in its research, sourcing, and preliminary assessments, leveraging who and what the firm knows to obtain the best results in each engagement. “Finding diverse talent may be easier than attracting such talent to the opportunity at hand,” he said. “Not only are the most visible prospects also the ones most inundated by search firm contacts, but the best will want to know the why behind the interest. That presumes clarity with the client and authenticity with the prospect. If either is absent, the bond is unlikely to hold. At its best, our work opens the client’s eyes to new possibilities and new ways of assessing the trade-offs any one candidate might represent against a preconceived ideal.”

Mr. Pettway notes that some of his firm’s best searches have resulted in the hiring of candidates the client would not have considered — or, in a few cases, had actually rejected — early in the engagement. “Every search presents a learning opportunity,” he said.

“We work on our own self-awareness – through candid conversations, shared readings, occasional outside facilitators and regular exposure to new environments,” *(cont’d. to page 4)*

said Mr. Pettway. “In our own way, each of us tests the walls of the (invisible) bubble we may live in. With clients, we watch for what is missing and listen for what’s unsaid. And we ask lots of questions. For all of us, regardless of our roles, ‘If the student is willing, the teacher will appear.’”

Historically, some fields (such as the environment) have been less attractive or inviting to leaders of color, and others (such as finance) have not been part of the routine development track available to many CEOs-in-the-making, according to Mr. Pettway. “It can take years to develop new pipelines, but the willingness to take new risks and try new avenues can be decided today,” he said. “Applying old practices to new markets, whether for services or talent, is self-limiting. An easy question: If we hope to achieve X result five or 10 years from now, what do we need to change today to ensure we’re successful? That’s hardly a new approach, but it has new consequences.”

Multinational Diversity

“Most of the larger multinational clients we work with have diversity hiring on top of their talent acquisition agenda,” said Jens Friedrich, CEO of **SpenglerFox**. “This is however more prominent amongst companies in the U.S. and Western Europe where diversity hiring has been the norm for many years now. Each search longlist and shortlist is scrutinized from day one to ensure we as a service provider offer a slate of candidates that meet their specific targets. As we move east into Central and Eastern Europe however, the emphasis is there, but not always that strong. Those that do consider this a priority, have most certainly ramped up their diversity mix.”

Diversity is an issue that depends almost entirely on the function, industry sector, and geography, with the latter being the least of an issue out of the three, according to Mr. Friedrich. “Some functional areas such as human resources have traditionally been dominated by females,” he said. “Finance, sales, scientific research, and the likes have traditionally had a good diversity mix and we are able to source candidates across the diversity spectrum. When it comes to engineering and technology related roles, these were and continue to be dominated by males, making it a challenge to provide a fully diverse slate of candidates in those domains. This by implication affects certain industries. Production and manufacturing, technology, mining and agriculture, and even to an extent banking and finance, are all still heavily male gender biased because there are simply not enough female candidates to choose from. This problem is specifically acute in geographies such as Eastern and Southern Europe due to historic societal norms.”

“Based on feedback received from some of our clients in PE/VC sector, the approach varies quite considerably,” Mr. Friedrich said. “Bearing in mind that the size and maturity of portfolio companies vary quite dramatically, the approach to diversity hiring, and DEI in general, is more practical, hands-on, and fit for purpose, rather than governed by formal policies. Consider too the fact fund managers must deal with portfolio company management teams in different parts of the world and across multiple cultures, with varying degrees of DEI.”

“Regardless, diversity hiring is taken seriously, and investment firms monitor progress continuously,” he said. “Bigger, more mature

portfolio companies, as well as some of the bigger fund managers, may have a DEI officer, but this is not always practical within early-stage growth companies. We have also heard of cases where senior leaders are sponsored to attend executive training programs at prestigious business schools, and it is commendable to see that DEI is taking its rightful place, starting in the board room.”

At **theBoardlist**, COO Megan Wang says they are seeing some progress in diversifying public boards. **Spencer Stuart** recently published their [2022 S&P 500 Snapshot](#) report, and most notably, said Ms. Wang, “72 percent of this year’s new directors are from historically underrepresented groups (i.e. women, underrepresented racial/ethnic groups and the LGBTQ+ community).”

“Since the events of summer 2020, where many companies pledged to improve and make good on their commitments to diverse hiring, we have noticed a lot more intent from organizations around hiring and developing black talent.”

Board Representation

“While there is some progress, it is not equitably across all intersections of demographic diversity — the report shows that directors from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups remain the same as last year, at 22 percent, while women directors rose from 30 percent to 32 percent,” she said. “For private companies, reporting is not as consistent. However, we’re seeing some of our venture capital partners begin to request data from their portfolio companies and organizations like **Crunchbase** have [published reports](#) that outline progress for funded late-stage private companies.”

“Women hold 14 percent of board seats among the companies studied, up from 11 percent in 2020 and seven percent in 2019. Nearly 40 percent of companies don’t have any women on their board, an improvement from roughly half of the companies in our 2020 study and 60 percent in 2019,” said Ms. Wang. “However, a similar story emerges that progress is not equitable across intersections — only three percent of all directors are women of color, reflecting no significant change, and 78 percent do not include a single woman of color. Lastly, women are most likely to occupy an independent director seat (56 percent) compared with an investor director (31 percent) or executive director (13 percent) — signaling and validating challenges in diversity in the overall startup ecosystem and the road ahead for private companies to achieve parity.”

The pool of diverse talent is already vast, across many industries and functional areas of expertise. Ms. Wang says theBoardlist partners with leadership organizations that are consistently uncovering new talent that is already well qualified for board service. “It is clear to us that there is not a pipeline problem. Instead, our biggest opportunity is to work with organizations to discover rising talent — these candidates have exceptional operating experience and/or relevant thought leadership, may

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have some governance exposure in their operating roles or while sitting on non-profit or advisory boards, but have not had their first opportunity on a for-profit board,” she said. “Diverse candidates have been historically underrepresented, and therefore organizations being open to candidates that don’t yet have board experience is a critical element to diversifying boardrooms.”

“Since the events of summer 2020, where many companies pledged to improve and make good on their commitments to diverse hiring, we have noticed a lot more intent from organizations around hiring and developing black talent,” said Helen Tudor, managing director at **Sheffield Haworth**. “Organizations are being more intentional about where to recruit in terms of gaps within their organization, and also around implementing development programs specifically targeted at black talent for retention. Although organizations are more committed, it is still too early to measure however what the impact has been so far.”

Diverse talent is out there. But Ms. Tudor says she has found that a degree of flexibility from clients and an open-minded approach on the exact skills, background, level and career trajectory of potential candidates is needed to ensure a diverse range of candidates can be put forward and considered for senior opportunities. “Some potential candidates are operating at a level below the client’s hiring level, so it is important that a candidate’s full potential and transferable skills are considered in the round,” she said. “There should be commitment to provide additional support during onboarding and in the first 12 months to enable integration.” For example, leadership coaching, inclusion in networking, and access to key decision makers, would all be useful add-ons. “The challenge is often in convincing someone to put themselves forward for a role in the first place,” says Ms. Tudor. “If they don’t think they tick every box required in the job description, then they will not want to put themselves through a time consuming process. Therefore, it is essential to demonstrate real support around candidates and to help them land successfully.”

There are many initiatives organizations can put in place to better retain women and people of color. Sheffield Haworth often advises clients of some of the programs they can adopt which have been successful at keeping retention levels high in these underrepresented groups. “These initiatives and programs could include targeted mentoring with other people in the business or externally, targeted development plans and frequent check-ins to ensure the person feels supported and is receiving the development or training they require,” said Ms. Tudor. “Increasingly companies seek to bake-in this approach through linking inclusion rates to overall performance of leaders and impacting annual financial reward and promotional opportunities. It is also imperative for organizations to demonstrate a genuine commitment to helping and supporting these underrepresented groups, rather than it being purely lip service.”

Diversity Starts from the Top

Ms. Tudor sees it as highly important to have top leadership driving the diversity and inclusion agenda within organizations. “Genuine senior-level commitment and involvement is essential in helping the business understand why it’s

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IN THE NEWS

Hanold Associated Places Chief DEI Officer at Red Hat

**Hanold Associates HR & Diversity Executive**

Search has placed Shuchi Sharma as chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officer for Red Hat, a provider of enterprise open-source software solutions. Ms. Sharma previously served as global vice president,

diversity, and inclusion at SAR, a software development company. Val Lopez, Sandra Peña and Ivy Arlia led the assignment for the search firm. Ms. Sharma is charged with expanding Red Hat's DEI function on a global level, emphasizing DEI as a core attribute of the company's business strategy. She will be a part of the company's corporate leadership team as a business leader, change-agent and advisor to Red Hat's executives, associates, and communities.

important to build an inclusive culture and organization to ensure hearts and minds are fully engaged at all levels," she said. "If the senior leadership is only seen to give lip service then the culture won't move on and staff will become disillusioned. As younger generations come into the business, senior leaders are becoming more accountable for ensuring their workforce supports everyone across the organization. It is incumbent on them to understand the moral and business case for inclusion and lead from the front."

"Many of our alternative investment clients have been actively looking to hire diversity candidates," said Dawn Magnotta, head of infrastructure: accounting, operations and compliance practice at **Hudson Gate Partners**. "In fact, many funds are specifically looking to hire a Head of D&I. This is usually a newly created role. The head of D&I role tends to be very strategic and sometimes includes campus recruiting as well. In addition, some of our alternative clients are also hiring diversity talent sourcers. These roles are usually filled by experienced lateral recruiters who specifically target diversity candidates and are focused on achieving hiring targets. As a sign of how far many funds have come over the past few years, some of our clients now have over 50 percent of their employee base broadly defined as being diverse (including both women and unrepresented communities)."

Ms. Magnotta notes that there are challenges in finding talent for every role, gender, and ethnicity. "But recently, we have been faced with a particular challenge in finding POC diversity talent to fill crucial roles within the broader human capital function," she said. "Within the world of HR and recruiting, we have found that there has been heavy candidate movement as of late, as firms poach diversity talent from each other. Given the focus on D&I is still a relatively recent one, the candidate pool is still developing. The large majority of available candidates only have one or two years of experience in D&I, and are spoilt for choice in terms of job opportunities. Thus, we have encouraged our clients to be open to hiring mid-level and junior candidates for HR and recruiting positions where diversity is desired. We have had good luck finding outstanding diversity talent in the functions of marketing, investor relations, finance, and legal."

"We really push our clients to interview as diverse a slate as possible. It is our job to present them with diverse talent — which we do," said according to Dana Feller, founder of Hudson Gate

Partners. "But it is also our job to politely insist that they interview candidates whose backgrounds may not be perfectly cookie-cutter. As you might imagine, it is often a candidate whose background is slightly different who brings the most to the table in terms of experiences, creativity and perspectives. We have found our clients much more sophisticated about evaluating diverse talent versus even a few years ago."

Ms. Feller also notes that both private equity and venture capital funds are fully embracing diversity hiring. "It is simply an automatic part of any search and assessment process," she said. "The funds have been aggressively adding diversity talent within their infrastructure and operations teams, as well on the investment side and in their portfolio companies. It is exciting and fun for us to help our clients hire the best-in-class employees, many of whom are diverse. So far in 2022, It is also exciting for us to help these amazing candidates find outstanding new job opportunities at some of the world's leading investment funds."

"Premier executive search firms, have been doing what we do best — proactive networking," Ms. Magnotta said. "We are constantly reaching out to and connecting with all types of diverse candidates and making sure that they are aware of not only the searches we are working on, but the general state of the hiring market. In addition, we are always counseling young, recently graduated, diversity candidates who are looking to make their very first job change."

"While none will declare victory in solving some of the most pressing problems around access and inclusion, I can confidently say that we see progress and prioritization," said Chris Bingley, SVP at **Bryant Group**. "Our partners are communicating and living their values around diversity and respect for all in their hiring and talent development efforts. And we are engaging in meaningful dialogue with search teams, hiring authorities, and HR leaders as they pursue their goals and live their values."

"In our industry focused on search for philanthropy leaders in higher education and healthcare, we are finding that more deliberate focus on engaging diverse early career professionals is needed," Mr. Bingley said. "Philanthropic work isn't only about asking for gifts and opportunities exist for IT, HR, business analytics, and communications, to name a few."

When addressing concerns about unconscious bias, Mr. Bingley notes that it is first, vitally important to communicate and recognize what bias looks like and how we are all impacted through training and education. "Sharing definitions, examples, and educating leads to healthy decision making and change," he said. "And the very close second is slowing down. Slowing down in the process will create space for communication about types of bias and creates the healthy environment necessary for dialogue and change."

Bryant Group continues to actively identify candidates from underrepresented groups and this has been an integral part of our recruitment process since our founder began this work in the late 1980s, according to Mr. Bingley. "It is this commitment to the client's best interests and respect of every candidate as a professional and as a human being that ensures the best outcome for all involved and where executive search firms must prioritize," he said.

Hunt Scanlon HR/Diversity Recruiting Power 65

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SPOTLIGHT

Presenting a Diverse Slate of Candidates



Blue Rock Search is a 100 percent minority/female-owned executive search firm. As a member of the SRA Network, the firm is also a Hunt Scanlon HR/Diversity Recruiting Power 65 recruiter. After a 25-year career in corporate human resources and HR executive search, Ruben Moreno and his two partners co-founded

Blue Rock Search based on a simple but ambitious vision of creating a firm that would “change lives and organizations one relationship at a time.”

*Mr. Moreno leads the Blue Rock HR executive search practice specializing in the identification, assessment, recruitment, and onboarding of chief HR officers and chief diversity officers and their respective teams — inclusive of leaders in talent acquisition, total rewards, HRBP's, learning & OD, HR technology, HR operations, and HR analytics. Mr. Moreno has helped place hundreds of HR executives and built deep relationships within the CHRO community across multiple industry verticals. Mr. Moreno recently sat down with **Hunt Scanlon Media** to discuss how he works with his clients to provide a diverse slate of candidates and why this is so important.*

What are some benefits of having a diverse leadership team? Why is it essential today?

From any angle you look at it, diversity — especially at the top levels of an organization — is a win. Positive movement on DEI has a positive impact on business outcomes, from recruiting top talent to increasing profits. Besides all of the financial and practical motivations, having a diverse leadership team is simply the right thing to do. And without that kind of diversity modeled at the highest levels, top-tier candidates at any level may look at the company and feel that there is no room for them to advance, or that the organization isn't interested in making room for them at the top. It is absolutely essential for any company looking to grow and succeed in today's world to walk the walk when it comes to DEI, and that means ensuring that those values are reflected all the way up to senior leadership.

Have companies been living up to their DEI promises?

I have found that with the majority of our clients, there's definitely been an increase in focus on ensuring diverse candidate slates and hiring diverse talent. My short answer would be yes; I think the focus has been there, we have definitely seen the increase in the number of diverse leaders that we've placed. It's given us a great opportunity to increase the number of senior leaders in large, well-known organizations. The other piece that I would tell you is I think we're going through an adjustment period right now. And if you think about what has happened since 2020, there have been quite a few chief diversity officers hired. There is a recent article that was published that said the role has the highest turnover in the executive ranks. Part of the challenge there is, while we're increasing the numbers, and folks are getting hired into the right job, then it really becomes a matter of the appropriate resourcing that we have the right culture.

Do people feel like they belong in these new environments? Do you work with clients in that regard?

We are an executive search firm, but I have several clients where we've actually gone in to talk about how do you create a culture and environment from a belonging perspective? Probably one of the quickest and most effective ways to ensure that we go from candidate hire to driving retention is having a very well thought out and deliberate onboarding plan. And we have a very well thought out and highly prescriptive 60-day onboarding plan for all leaders.

“It is absolutely essential for any company looking to grow and succeed in today's world to walk the walk when it comes to DEI, and that means ensuring that those values are reflected all the way up to senior leadership.”

What are some top skills for today's leadership teams?

Today's leadership teams face a number of challenges, from organizational culture to a tight labor market to economic challenges and more. The best leaders to take the reins in moments like these are leaders who are flexible, creative, and attentive to the shifting needs of the organization and its people. Leading with compassion, clarity, and level-headedness is crucial, as is the ability to adapt as the situation warrants. There can be a temptation, especially during challenging times, to look for leaders who offer sprawling, transformative visions of the future. Transformative thinking isn't a bad thing at all — it's necessary for continued improvement and growth. But that kind of big-picture thinking alone does not make for a truly excellent leader. Today's leadership teams need to be skilled in balancing the immediate demands with a long-term plan, all while being excellent communicators to ensure that everyone in the organization, at every level, understands what's happening and is able to stick together. Holding a team together is crucial, especially in a world where the majority of workers admit they're open to leaving their current organizations.

What types of backgrounds are recruiters looking for in candidates today?

Right now, recruiters are looking for candidates who have the skills and experience necessary to lead through challenges while also looking to the future. It's not necessarily a question so much of how many years do they have or what titles have they held, but more about what they uniquely bring to the table and what their leadership would look like, in context of what organizations are looking for today. That means that resilience, flexibility, and creativity are critical in leadership searches today. We're seeing recruiters and organizations look for thinkers who can help find new paths forward but who are also make it happen people, not just big dreamers. It's not just about finding people with leadership experience — it's about finding candidates with experience leading in ways that really make a difference.

SPOTLIGHT

The Importance of Having a Diverse Workforce



Founded in 1998 by Tom and Paula Christopher (former HR executives with GE, Pepsi, Progressive Insurance, and Citigroup), **The Christopher Group** is a leading boutique HR executive search and staffing solutions firms. The firm is staffed by former HR professionals and trained search practitioners who use proprietary, scientific, and industry-leading systems, tools, and processes. The firm has offices in Willoughby, OH; Sarasota, FL; and Kansas City, MO.

Ms. Noble is president of the HR consulting services division unit as well as practice leader for the firm's expanding diversity, equity, inclusion, and engagement practice. She joined The Christopher Group leadership team as chief human resources officer and managing partner last year. She has over 25 years of comprehensive human resources leadership to the firm. "I have had the privilege of knowing Pam for over 20 years," said Mr. Christopher. "She is one of the finest and most capable HR executives nationwide. Additionally, her expertise in the areas of culture, change management, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and executive coaching is truly outstanding. Finally, she is a true servant leader."

Ms. Noble recently sat down with Hunt Scanlon Media to discuss how companies can go about diversifying their staffs and how search consultants can help.

Have companies been living up to their promises about diversity hiring from the summer of 2020?

I would have to say both yes and no. The companies living up to their promises are intentionally focused on building a talent acquisition pipeline that is strategic and intentional. By intentional, I mean they look for candidates where they are. By broadening the pool they fish from, they are purposefully looking beyond where they typically find candidates. Further, companies that do this will ensure their culture is inclusive and intentional about diverse employee development.

What kind of challenges do you face in finding diverse talent?

I wouldn't call it a challenge. It is about broadening our lens to find candidates outside our current recruiting channels. It means being intentional with building relationships and understanding the diverse needs as people grow in their careers. The companies that identify diverse talent, develop, and provide them with broader opportunities, by extension, decrease their recruitment challenges. Everyone wants to belong when you see others that look like you – it reassures candidates.

What can businesses do to better retain women and people of color?

Businesses that retain women and people of color listen to them once they enter their doors. They create a welcoming environment, listen to their needs, and meet them where they are, not where the company is.

How important is top leadership in driving diversity and inclusion?

It is essential. Leadership needs to model the behavior and be comfortable with being uncomfortable. They need to talk about differences and be culturally and interculturally agile. Senior leaders also need to be strong allies, making space to allow people to thrive and be inclusive of other thoughts, ideas, and ways of doing things.

Is AI a help – some say it can be a hindrance – in diversity hiring?

AI could be helpful if appropriately designed and targeted. For example, as AI develops, they emphasize an individual's similar experience and competencies, not job titles.

Any final thoughts on the importance of diversity?

"We believe companies are recognizing the importance of HR and the thought leadership that HR brings in dealing with complex issues around safety, engaging in a remote workplace, and creating an environment where diversity can thrive. Creating a sense of belonging and engagement is becoming more challenging in a distributed work environment."

"The companies that identify diverse talent, develop, and provide them with broader opportunities, by extension, decrease their recruitment challenges."

Are there any searches you are currently involved with that you would like to share?

We are at the end stages of the director of talent and inclusion for SRAM, one of the world's largest suppliers of components to the bike industry. This is the perfect opportunity to work for a rapidly growing, privately held company that is working to round out their human resource leadership team. SRAM is not only very employee focused, but they are concerned about the environment and are also striving to broaden the biking industry to people from all spectrums of life.

Any completed ones that you would like to share?

Earlier this year, I assisted in the recruitment of Don Carter as the new executive vice president of people and places at Kiva, an online lending platform. They wanted their stakeholders to really play a leading role in the selection of their next EVP of people and places, and they placed a meaningful premium on DE&I capabilities, global experience and empathy. Given their highly global composition empathy was at the forefront of their needs, they wanted someone who truly connected with the Kiva mission and values.



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The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion In the Workplace

*Having a culture that supports DEI programs is integral to successful teams and better business performance, says a new report from **Hanold Associates HR & Diversity Executive**. We sat down with Val Lopez and Pamela Culpepper, who are key leaders in the firm's DEI efforts, to discuss diversity and inclusion. Here is an excerpt.*

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) programs have been vital to smart companies that want to attract and retain the best talent. However, it's the lack of such efforts at some organizations that have been making headlines lately in the business press, according to a recent report from Hanold Associates HR & Diversity Executive.

D&I programs are largely ineffective without a culture that drives and supports them. Hanold Associates has been watching business after business come under fire for mistakes that highlight a lack of understanding, sensitivity, or strong ethics. Consider, for example, some of the recent media coverage about Uber and its culture-related issues.

Inspire and Motivating Innovation and Creativity

"Aside from just being the right thing to do, having a company culture that's accepting, supportive, diverse, and inclusive results in better business performance," the Hanold Associates report said. "Diverse teams inspire and motivate innovation and creativity. This in turn helps organizations attract, engage, and inspire the best talent. To drive these programs, organizations need strong leaders to ensure the company culture supports D&I goals day in and day out."

When hiring heads of D&I, Hanold Associates notes that they expect these individuals to have the traits of most other key HR and operational executives: strong business acumen, grit, willingness to be vulnerable, effective communication skills, and so on.

According to Hanold Associates, the most distinctive D&I leaders have the wherewithal and the energy to lead programs that make a noticeable impact. They're excited and that passion is infectious to others in the organization.

"Few are career-long D&I practitioners but have led other aspects of the business driving transformation and change," the report said. "This gives them a deeper understanding of how to build programs that will connect with employees across the business."

Hanold Associates also says that these leaders are always learning. "They are voracious readers outside of work and fuse their vocation with avocation, becoming smarter in the space," the report said. "The workplace and the world continue to change rapidly. D&I leaders must be at the forefront, making sure their organization stays up to par with a culture that supports its vision and mission."

Top D&I leaders are also strong relationship people. "They have exceptional influencing capabilities, enabling them to inspire others," the report said. "They know that company culture doesn't exist in a vacuum and use their influence to make a positive impact."

Seeking Gender and Racial Equity

The past two years have seen significant progress in raising awareness and opening a national dialogue around racism and diversity, equity, and inclusion. In a recent study, executive recruitment firm **Jensen Partners** sought to better understand where DEI stands within the search industry, tracking 207 black front office distribution professional hires from Jan. 1, 2019 to June 2022. The findings offered both a sense of hope combined with sound guidance for moving forward. “While there has been progressing in diverse hires, there remains a long way to go to achieve true gender and racial equity in the workspace for women and people of color,” said Sasha Jensen, the firm’s founder and CEO. “And in working towards this goal, it is crucial to recognize that racial and gender discrimination and inequity are the context within which much economic activity exists.”

“Focusing only on percentages of women or minorities in the workforce only captures a portion of the DEI landscape and fails at addressing the root causes of the issue at hand,” said Ms. Jensen. “Therefore, firms must think broadly about the impacts of systemic racism and sexism on women and communities of color and ensure that their DEI conversations focus on questions around racial and gender justice.”

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In its analysis, Jensen Partners looked at data of front office distribution professionals before and after May 25, 2020, the day George Floyd was murdered, to measure progress from the outcries of racial justice. “We found that there has been notable progress in the overall number of black front office distribution professional hires in terms of year over year hiring activity,” said Ms. Jensen.

More Action Needed

More specifically, the study found that between 2019 and 2020, black distribution professional hires increased by 50 percent (36 in 2019 vs. 54 in 2020), and black distribution male hires rose by 76 percent (21 in 2019 vs. 37 in 2020). On the other hand, black distribution female hires only saw a 13 percent increase (15 in 2019 vs. 17 in 2020).

Between 2020 and 2021, however, Jensen Partners noted a reverse trend, with a 76 percent increase (30 hires in 2021) in black distribution female hires compared to a 38 percent increase (51 hires in 2021) in black distribution male hires.

Said Ms. Jensen: “While this progress is commendable and validates numerous firms’ commitments to improving DEI by signing on to industry initiatives, (cont’d. to page 12)

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such as the Institutional Limited Partners Association's (ILPA) Diversity in Action initiative and, most recently, the CFA Institute's diversity, equity, and inclusion code, our analysis suggests that more action is needed to deliver on these commitments truly."

A Need to Nurture DEI

"However, an increased number of black female front office distribution professionals are being promoted to senior positions," said the study. "Although we noted that black male distribution professionals are more likely to hold senior positions, our data shows that the number of black female distribution professionals hired into senior roles has increased over the years."

"In 2021, there was an uptick of 17 percent, with women representing nearly 40 percent of all hires, and so far, in 2022, this number has only nudged up one percent."

For instance, the hiring of black distribution females into senior positions increased from six hires in 2020 to 10 in 2021, suggesting an upsurge of 67 percent. When analyzing black front office distribution professional hires between 2019 and June 2022, the search firm also looked at Caucasian front office distribution professional hires during the same period. Of the 5,598 Caucasian and black professional hires, the majority (5,391, or 96 percent) were Caucasian professionals, whereas only the remaining four percent (or 207) were black professionals.

Gender Disparity

The study found that overall, black front office distribution professionals were less likely to hold a senior seat when compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Of the 207 black front office distribution professionals, only 90 (or two percent) held senior positions, whereas this number was 49 percent (or 2,736 professionals) for their Caucasian peers.

Furthermore, of the 90 senior positions black front office distribution professionals held, only 26 (or 13 percent) belonged to female professionals, while this number was 16 percent (or 889 professionals) for their Caucasian counterparts. Similarly, this number was 31 percent (or 64) for black male professionals, compared to 34 percent (or 1,809) for Caucasian male professionals. "These findings suggest that in both racial groups, women are less likely to hold senior positions than men," said Jensen Partners.

Since 2019, there has never been a gender parity in firms' hiring activities, with women consistently representing less than 50 percent of all hires, said the report. "Another area of concern is gender balance and the representation of women overall," said Jensen Partners. "According to our data, front office distribution women represented 41 percent of all hires in 2019, which decreased to 35 percent in 2020. In 2021, there was an uptick of 17 percent, with women representing nearly 40 percent of all hires, and so far, in 2022, this number has only nudged up one percent."

Diversity Searches in the News...

WittKieffer Places Chief Diversity Officer at Gettysburg College



After a national search, Oak Brook, IL-based **WittKieffer** has placed Eloísa Gordon-Mora as chief diversity officer of Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania.

Christine Pendleton, senior associate,

and Randi Miller, associate, led the assignment. Dr. Gordon-Mora serves as a member of Gettysburg's president's council and is charged with advancing the school's diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities into the future. "I am delighted by Dr. Eloísa Gordon-Mora's decision to join the Gettysburg community," said Gettysburg college president Bob Iuliano. "She is the ideal person to partner with the campus to build off the foundational work established by Dr. Jeanne Arnold, the college's inaugural chief diversity officer."

Diversified Search Group Seeks Chief Diversity Officer for SUNY

Diversified Search Group, a leading search firm backed by private equity firm ShoreView Industries, has been retained by the State University of New York (SUNY) to spearhead its search for a vice chancellor for diversity, equity, and inclusion and chief diversity officer. Eurus Belle, managing director and Nancy Helfman, senior associate, are leading the assignment. The firm seeks a strategic, visionary, and collaborative leader to serve as vice chancellor for diversity, equity, and inclusion and chief diversity officer for the largest comprehensive system of higher education in the U.S. Reporting directly to the chancellor and serving on the chancellor's leadership team, the VC/CDO will oversee the operation and management of the office of diversity, equity, and inclusion.



E.A. Hughes & Co. Places Head of Inclusion and Diversity for JCPenney



E.A. Hughes & Co., a division of **Solomon Page** specializing in retail and consumer-focused executive search, partnered with JCPenney in identifying and placing Shenece Johns as the department

store chain's head of inclusion and diversity. Managing directors Ann MacCarthy and Bob Marchant led the search and took a unique and personalized approach to the assignment. The search firm's team was able to assess the technical and cultural fit of candidates evaluated for the role as a result of behavioral interviewing, in-depth screening, and a competency-based framework, which accurately defined the skills that JCPenney required. As a result of her extensive experience and reputation within the industry, Ms. Johns was identified for this role.

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...More Diversity Searches in the News

TurnkeyZRG Assists Pac-12 Conference with Chief People and Inclusion Officer



TurnkeyZRG recently assisted the Pac-12 Conference in the recruitment of Quashan Lockett as chief people and inclusion officer. "The Pac-12 is committed to building a best-in-class organization and culture, and we are thrilled to have found a leader who brings a track record of success and deep experience in both human capital management and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB)," said Pac-12 commissioner George Kliavkoff. "Our Pac-12 universities and the conference have been at the forefront of DEIB efforts, and with Quashan's appointment we will be in a position to extend our leadership and best support our valued employees and members." Mr. Lockett has a 17-year track record of building high performance and culturally strong organizations.

JDG Associates Recruits Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer for the American Veterinary Medical Association

Rockville, MD-based executive search firm **JDG Associates** has assisted in the recruitment of Latonia Craig as the first chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer for the American Veterinary



Medical Association (AVMA). "As one of the largest and most influential veterinary associations in the world, the AVMA has a unique opportunity to increase DEI across our profession, and that is a role and responsibility that our organization has embraced," said Jose Arce, president. "We need a chief DEI officer who can lead, inspire and work collaboratively with key stakeholders, and Dr. Craig's breadth of experience and extensive work with veterinary medical education make her the perfect choice."

Mogul Forms Diversity Recruiting Alliance with Brimstone



Recruitment platform and executive search firm **Mogul** has signed a deal with Oakland, CA-based Brimstone, a venture-backed climate technology company that created the world's first carbon-negative Portland

cement. "As we scale our operations and grow, we are dedicated to continuing to build the strong, diverse team we need to decarbonize cement production, one of the world's most carbon-intensive industries," said Akshai Baskaran, senior director of strategy, finance, and business development at Brimstone. "We engaged Mogul to help us source diverse candidates with the technical skills and know-how to propel us to the next level." According to the agreement, Brimstone will use Mogul's innovative talent acquisition platform to attract, source, and hire top, diverse talent.