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Australian Women in Resources Alliance
Strength through workforce diversity

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THE WAY FORWARD GUIDE TO INNOVATIVE ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Once an organisation understands and communicates its Employee Value Proposition and Employer Brand, the next step is to ensure processes for attracting, recruiting and selecting prospective employees maximise the chances of finding and engaging the best female talent. This is a guide for human resources professionals and small-medium business operators to design fruitful processes for attracting and recruiting talented female employees at all levels in the organisation.

If an organisation has an attractive EVP and has communicated it effectively through its Employer Brand, much work in attracting and recruiting talented women has been done. When the opportunity arises to fill a position or to move on a new venture, the organisation will have an advantage by:

- having a positive profile in the competitive and employer-saturated labour market
- reaching labour markets that competitors may have overlooked (e.g. women or specific groups of women)

Improving the way the organisation recruits employees can lead to increases in the number of women in the organisation as well as the quality and diversity of new hires and internal appointments, both male and female.

Improving recruitment strategies to increase women involves enhanced job descriptions, selection criteria, selection processes and teams.

1. Review job descriptions and selection criteria

The most sought-after candidates are discerning, so employers need to ensure that the position description and selection criteria are both appealing and reflect the reality of the position.

In order to achieve this:

- Take the opportunity to review the job design. Is the work arrangement likely to cause dissatisfaction or alienation?
- Ensure all job profiles or descriptions reflect the real requirements of the position, rather than describing the person who filled that position previously.
- Write position descriptions in language that encourages both women and men to apply.
- Consider whether formal qualifications (i.e. academic or trade) are really required for successful performance of the job. It may be that applicants could demonstrate how their work or life experience will enable them to fulfill the requirements rather than having formal qualifications.
- Enable applicants to demonstrate suitability against the selection criteria by considering demonstrated aptitude rather than just past performance. Organisations may be able to access more talented individuals by 'recruiting for potential' and as a company, should learn how to do this.
- Consider whether criteria such as length of experience are really required for successful performance of the job.

- Regarding past performance and experience, there may be a case for providing training or to get a person exposed to extra on-the-job experience after appointment in the new position.
- If applicable, include possible avenues for career progression and for training and development within the job description.
- Consider, based on the job design, whether flexible work arrangements can be considered. Can the job be redesigned to enable part-time, job-sharing, telecommuting, or other flexible arrangements?
- Refer to the Australian Standard on Gender Inclusive Job Evaluation and Grading (AS 5376—2012), to ensure that the job description includes only skills and competencies relevant to the job,

and that the job is graded and remunerated fairly.

2. Review and prepare the recruitment and selection processes and systems

The next step is to ensure an unbiased and inclusive HR processes is in place, ready to tap into the pool of diverse candidates. Review current processes and recruitment/selection data and ask: *do they disadvantage women (or other groups) in any way?* Refer to the box below for assistance with this review.

It is worthwhile conducting a broad survey of current employees—both men and women—to examine perception of the recruitment processes as they have first-hand experience of the process.

REMOVE BIAS FROM THE SELECTION PROCESS

- Ensure that guidelines for selection practices transparent and explained in full.
- Provide clear, complete and consistent information to all candidates about the process, including how decisions will be made.
- Ensure that candidates' needs are catered for in terms of language, literacy and accessibility.
- Ensure that diverse groups are represented on the interview or selection panel.
- Eliminate exclusive language (e.g. jargon, slang, references or metaphors) from interview questions or task descriptions.
- Make interviewers/task supervisors aware of verbal and non-verbal signals and interpretations, and how these can influence the candidate and/or the interviewer.
- Refer to the Australian Standard on Gender Inclusive Job Evaluation and Grading (AS 5376—2012), to ensure that the job description includes only skills and competencies relevant to the job.
- Clearly base the selection processes on the job description so that interview questions, tests and other selection instruments address only relevant skills and competencies.
- Ensure that a variety of ways of carrying out the job tasks is considered and allowed for in the selection.

INNOVATE YOUR RECRUITMENT REACH

- Focus advertising efforts in markets dominated by targeted female candidates. E.g. For local hires – community areas, newspapers and special interest groups.
- Utilise social networking groups where women are active.
- Participate in job fairs or other events, particularly events targeting women.
- Seek women for work experience, scholarship or other opportunities.
- Create partnerships with schools, universities, TAFEs, youth groups and other areas where the organisational brand and EVP can be advertised to women.
- Establish contacts with professional groups or associations for professional and/or tradeswomen.
- Sensitively enter networks in other industries where experienced candidates may become available (e.g. in the case of industries or operations that are ageing or in decline). Don't limit efforts to the resource or related construction industries, but look to other areas where professional and trades-experienced female workers can be found (e.g. general construction, manufacturing).
- Under a strategic workforce planning approach, select candidates to fill future anticipated requirements, not just current vacancies.

3. Effective advertising

If you are serious about implementing a diversity/culture change initiative, you must create a diverse pool of candidates. If you always recruit from the same places, with the same methods, you will always get the same people. There is still the complaint "We looked all over and just can't find any...." In today's competitive market you need to be creative. You have to go where the candidates are and have a long enough lead-time to get a good selection of candidates¹.

To attract a diverse range of quality applicants, recruitment and advertising campaigns need to be well considered, planned and resourced.

Any advertisement of a new position or expression of interest for internal promotion/transfer should be widely advertised across the organisation and in diverse networks outside the organisation. (See the box in this guide about *Recruiting Internally*.)

- Advertise positions and campaigns on jobs boards and websites that are exposed to diverse candidates.
- Consider approaching spouses/partners of existing (and prospective) employees, particularly for jobs in rural and remote areas.
- Recruitment and advertising campaigns should be developed to specifically appeal to diverse groups. For example, consider the placement and images that are used in advertisements and

highlight women in both traditional and non-traditional roles.

- Widen the reach of your campaign to attract quality candidates with diverse experience from outside the resource industry.
- Ensure that your advertisements dispel preconceptions or assumptions about the types of people who will be considered for the job, and what the job and working conditions will be like.

Actively encourage women to apply, in a carefully worded statement. When applicable:

- highlight that the organisation encourages and facilitates work/life balance
- state that both women and men are encouraged to apply for a position
- Place the advertisement in a variety of media.
- Ensure that any contact person named in the advertisement has been briefed on diversity in recruitment.
- Offer flexible opportunities whenever possible and state if you will consider job share.

Investigate what drew existing female employees to the industry/occupation being advertised, and what they enjoy about their work. Capitalise on these features in your advertising.

To enhance the advertising impact, emphasise opportunities in the EVP such as:

- to address challenging problems or issues
- to learn and progress

- to earn comparatively high wages
- to work in positions of authority, leadership, prestige and respect
- to undertake technically challenging work
- to use particular skills and qualifications
- to travel and work internationally or remotely
- to live in remote/regional areas
- to work in a non-office work environment
- to contribute to society
- to create community benefits
- to improve safety and well-being of others in the workplace

4. The selection process and the selection team

Best practice organisations recognise the need to set targets at all stages of the recruitment process, including shortlisting, interview and selection. Targets

do not imply that selection is not based on merit, but they are necessary to ensure that female candidates are sought-out and included in the process, and that there is a broader pool from which to select.

An organisation that fails to seek out and consider female candidates for a role, where female candidates exist, is denying itself the opportunity to find the best person for the job, now and in the future.

Leading organisations explain the process and rationale for establishing targets with all employees, both men and women, to address any perception that targets unfairly advantage or disadvantage women.

The organisation will then adhere to a documented, transparent and standard recruitment process focused on merit, from the resume screening phase through to final offers.

COMMUNICATING RECRUITMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Publicise recruitment and selection policy widely within the organisation.
- Train managers on recruitment and selection policy and procedures.
- Hold managers accountable for providing equal opportunity in recruitment and selection by including this requirement in their workplace and performance agreements, and in their key performance objectives.
- Encourage managers to lead by example by sourcing and selecting top female candidates.

People involved in the recruitment process are the face of the organisation and potential employees will look to them to determine whether the organisation is one that they want to work for. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the positive traits of the organisation. Therefore both recruitment teams and recruitment providers need to be briefed on what is expected of them.

Important considerations, specifically for an inclusive recruitment process include:

- All selection panel members must be made aware of possible unconscious discrimination or bias in their thinking and trained how to consciously manage and mitigate their influence. The panel members must be aware of the company's diversity policies and/or targets.
- The selection panel must contain at least one member trained in reducing gender bias and at least one woman.
- Guidelines for selection practices should be transparent and explained in full.
- Eliminate exclusive language (e.g. jargon, slang, references or metaphors) from interview questions or task descriptions.
- Ensure a variety of means of performing the job tasks are considered in the selection process and that panel members have a good understanding of the job requirements.
- Ensure all interviewers are provided with sensitivity and awareness training related to diversity and gender issues.
- Ensure a human resources staff member with expertise in diversity and selection is either a member of the panel or an adviser to the panel.
- Ensure there is representation on the panel from areas outside of which the appointment is being made.
- Provide all applicants with the opportunity to demonstrate what they can bring to the organisation.
- Document all aspects of the process, including applicants' responses to all questions in interviews.

- Records of decisions must be made, retained and independently monitored. Evidence of any form of discrimination must be addressed in a timely manner.
- When arranging interviews, particularly interviews

in regional areas, organisations should be mindful of the availability and commitments of applicants. For example advance notice might be given for the interview and interview options could include Skype or telephone.

RECRUITING INTERNALLY

Organisations may find suitable female candidates that can be recruited internally. This may require some small changes to the recruitment process.

- Advertise the position widely within the organisation to attract a diverse applicant pool. For example, advertise to employees on parental leave.
- Ensure that the position is communicated in all areas of the workplace including the Intranet, noticeboards, organisational newsletter and team meetings. Include communication to those on leave.
- Design internal job advertisements in keeping with external job advertisements. For example, use inclusive language and images that speak to all candidates.
- Ensure that both female and male quality candidates within all age ranges and from all backgrounds are given equal opportunity to be short-listed.
- Consider offering the position as a development assignment. For example, allowing a number of employees to rotate through the position (for instance, for three months each when it is a fixed-term vacancy).
- Consider filling a vacancy with high-potential female and male staff eager to broaden their experience.

It is important to prepare employees to apply for internal positions by:

- implementing and monitoring succession planning for both female and male employees
- providing opportunities for both female and male employees to work in different departments to gain a broader range of work experience
- providing unsuccessful applicants with feedback on the recruitment and selection process, and offering them development opportunities to position them well for the next internal opportunity

The innovative recruitment practices outlined in this guide are an important way to attract women to your organisation. However, retaining these women and developing them ensures that you have a pipeline of talented internal candidates for senior and leadership positions in the future.

5. Measure the effectiveness of your attraction and recruitment strategies, and plan forward

The process and the outcomes both need to be evaluated and assessed for improvement. It is important to establish systems for measuring and monitoring the diversity of those attracted, selected, interviewed and recruited.

Interview new recruits about the process; include questions on recruiting in employee satisfaction surveys and revisit current practices to ensure they are inclusive.

Ask for feedback on the process from unsuccessful candidates.

Keep statistics about recruitment activities. For example, the number of women and men who applied for roles, the success rate, and the point in the process women were unsuccessful.

Track traditional metrics for each target group - cost per hire, number of applicants, number of interviews, time to hire. These can reveal hidden biases in the process.

Make sure systems are in place to learn from experience. Conduct thorough exit interviews with

staff, particularly those who leave the organisation soon after hiring, to understand what drives the attrition of employees in the early stages. Use this information to improve attraction and recruitment processes.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Once a female employee has been selected, remember that the best person was chosen for the role; the person who will best bring value to the organisation. Provide them with the support and appropriate information to ensure they feel valued in their new role and want to stay long-term. The following are strategies that may be considered:

- Be as open and flexible as possible when dealing with their needs regarding family/personal issues when negotiating employment terms and conditions.
- Document any flexible work options in the employment contract so that there can be no future disagreements or ambiguity.
- Consider how new employees can be assisted to adapt to the workplace culture. For example, female graduates might be exposed to a male-dominated and physically demanding workplace for the first time, and need some assistance acclimatising. Useful techniques may include a 'buddy' system or pairing them with a mentor.
- Provide information about policies and values of the organisation at the commencement of the employment process.
- Encourage new employees to ask questions.
- Ensure new employees are made aware of what process to follow for assistance with any issue or complaint.
- Ensure all employees understand the appropriate behaviour and communication that is expected of them.

OTHER RESOURCES ON THIS TOPIC

- <http://www.amma.org.au/awra/awra-knowledge-centre#Attraction>
- Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies, The Human Rights Commission: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/women-male-dominated-industries-toolkit-strategies>

REFERENCES

1. Simma Lieberman Associates, *Moving Beyond the Numbers: How to Recruit and Retain a Diverse Workforce*, retrieved 15 July 2013, < <http://www.simmalieberman.com/articles/diverseworkforce.html> >.

The Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA) is an industry-led initiative dedicated to helping employers attract, retain and reap the rewards of women in resources workplaces.

AWRA is driven by Australia's resource industry peak body, the Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA), and supported by the Australian Government through the National Resource Sector Workforce Strategy.



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