

DIVERSITY-INCLUSION & EXECUTIVE SEARCH 3.0

Bridge Partners is an executive search firm with unique expertise in attracting and retaining senior, diverse executives

When Bridge Partners was founded as a diversity-focused search firm 14 years ago, we anticipated that, by now, diversity-inclusion would have become naturally embedded in executive search at all levels and across all functions. We were wrong. The need for an innovative search firm that operates at the senior level and focuses on inclusivity has never been greater.

Our first edition of *“Diversity Recruitment: Shattering the Myths”* was published in 2007. It went on to be our most popular edition, so we wrote an updated second version in 2014, to celebrate our firm’s tenth anniversary.

This is version 3.0. It is refreshed but the message remains the same.

If you are a human resources or diversity-inclusion professional, like many of our clients, we imagine that you have probably had at least one of the following interactions with hiring managers.

“We don’t need to focus on diversity recruiting – we are already diverse.”

Every growing organization can make a strong business case for focusing on diversity recruitment. You may see diversity in the organization when you “crunch the numbers” but do you have the very best possible talent, with the broadest range of experience, at the senior-most levels of the organization?



“The hiring manager is 100% behind a broad diversity recruitment initiative...but maybe it’s not the best approach for this search.” The

comments range from “It never works – the talent isn’t out there” to “Diversity recruitment means the process always takes longer.” All of these assumptions can be disproved by a solid business case for diversity and a strong diversity-focused recruiting team/partner.

“The talent isn’t out there.” Yes it is. Diversity recruiting requires effort and focus. Obstacles to results include:

- An inadequate diversity outreach effort. Building capability to identify high-caliber minority candidates, and then developing a positive relationship with them, is a process, not a one-off event. It is necessary to build your brand as an employer of choice and invest time in understanding the market.
- A recruiting team/search partner that “hopes to come across” minority candidates, rather than actively pursuing that talent.

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While in-house recruiters and traditional search firms may have the best of intentions, they are often not in a position to prioritize diversity. As with any other area of your business, you are best-served by using the experts.

- A focus on the path of least resistance - recruiting candidates who are already looking for their next career move, rather than those who may be “under the radar.” Reach out and recruit your candidates – if they don’t come to you, you need to pursue them, or use a search firm that can effectively do that on your behalf.

“We hear ‘no’ too often.” This means one of two things: you aren’t selling well enough, or your company/this role isn’t where the candidate wants to be. Both can be fixed.

SUCCESSFUL DIVERSITY RECRUITING

Create a **long-term recruitment strategy** that considers where your organization can see success in attracting and retaining high caliber minority executives, while also maximizing business impact. Develop relationships with organizations and individuals, internally and externally, who will support your goals.

Educate your employee base, especially senior management. Define goals and metrics, emphasize your business case for diversity-inclusion, and ensure genuine buy-in/understanding throughout the organization.

Demonstrate the diversity of your organization and inclusivity of your culture. Not just by advertising but at every event, and in every interview. Integrate diversity into your “brand” and invest in the community, mentoring and volunteerism programs.

Nobody’s perfect. Don’t be uncomfortable if you haven’t yet achieved every stated diversity goal. Honesty and transparency are very appealing to candidates – be direct about where minority candidates might be able to support your future diversity-inclusion initiatives.

Choose your team and partners carefully. Diversity recruitment is a skill, it requires focus and dedication. Act as you would with any other corporate initiative and bring in experts with a track record of commitment and success.

With more and more organizations actively recruiting high caliber minority candidates, the laws of economics dictate that those candidates are fast-becoming “buyers”, with multiple career options.

If you find that you are losing qualified candidates during your recruitment process, either someone else is offering a better opportunity (with regard to a specific role, career development, or company culture), or you are not show-casing the best of what you have. Top candidates – minority or otherwise - want top jobs.

The more competition there is for a candidate, the more effort is required to attract and hire them. You have to sell them during the process and then close the deal. Not only do you need to offer the most appealing compensation package and the most appropriate role, but you should also use the interview process to understand their personal motivations and create opportunities. This is particularly important when recruiting minority candidates as part of a diversity recruitment initiative. Do they want to be the diversity-inclusion “pioneer”? Do they want to act as a mentor? Some executives do, some do not. You need to understand which “buttons to press”.

“Diversity recruiting is covered by the HR department” The human resources department may be the internal driver of diversity recruiting initiatives and the “face” of diversity staffing...but they should not be considered solely responsible for success. The organization as a whole has to own the initiative.

A diversity-inclusion strategy/imperative should come from the CEO, and hiring managers should be involved in the diversity recruitment process early and often. Every time.

During the recruitment process every interviewer must reflect the entire organization, communicating a clear, concise message to all potential candidates regarding position requirements, culture and expectations. This message needs to be consistent throughout the interview process and supported at all levels.

“We don’t have a problem hiring strong minority executives – we just can’t keep them. We are training them for other organizations.” It is impossible to entirely prevent promising executives from leaving your organization, but it is possible to make it a tough decision for them.

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DIVERSITY & EXECUTIVE SEARCH, REVISITED

Larry Griffin

Co-Founder & Partner, Bridge Partners

In the nearly 14 years since we founded Bridge Partners, we have seen the need to develop a diverse leadership team and inclusive culture that is additive to the bottom line/mission of an organization, shift from primarily consumer-facing organizations to virtually all industries.

Motivations may be different - marketing to diverse customers, reflecting a diverse employee base, or serving diverse constituents - but the challenges of recruiting and retaining the best available talent remain constant from industry to industry.

Sadly, many organizations have struggled because they have not customized their approach to recruiting diverse executives. They utilize jaded internal processes; work with external recruiting partners with whom they have developed a comfort-level but who do not make comprehensive efforts to approach diverse executives and therefore do not deliver high quality diverse candidates; and fail to understand the need to retain, develop and motivate the diverse executives that they invested in bringing into their organizations.

Organizations that are succeeding in diversifying their employee population are not only being innovative and purposeful around recruiting and retaining diverse executives but they are also building their employer brand to reflect a commitment to diversity-inclusion. They're talking about it authentically at the most senior levels of the organization, not just within human resources, and are embedding diversity-inclusion best practices in every function. Diverse executives recognize these efforts and it certainly gives a positive impression when they consider joining an organization, or consider leaving.

The issue of retention is key. Failure to retain senior diverse leaders has a direct and negative impact on all levels of the organization and ultimately hinders all aspects of the recruitment effort.

This edition of Insights discusses these topics in greater detail but it is clear to us from many, many conversations with both clients and candidates that, while some advances have been made over the years, there is still a significant amount of work for organizations to do if they want to better reflect their diverse customers and employee population.

There are many factors involved in retaining any high caliber executive within an organization, be it a new hire or a fast-track executive who has been (or will be) promoted into a key role - one of the most effective is rigorous on-boarding and mentoring.

Research shows that mentoring relationships can be particularly effective for women and people of color, or for people who are considered "different" in any particular environment (think cognitive diversity such as a private sector executive transitioning into a nonprofit). An effective, formal mentoring relationship will identify high-performers, determine what motivates and inspires them and focus energy on retaining them. It will help high-potential executives to exchange critical information, build a strong network, develop an understanding of internal politics/corporate culture, and interact with individuals outside their sphere of influence.

One of the best measurements of retention and/or mentoring initiatives is to see your internal talent, particularly women and minorities, receive promotions, gain responsibility and take on higher profile roles throughout the company.

"Building a diversity recruiting program takes time. We should be patient to see the results." Yes it does – but that doesn't mean the program shouldn't be held to the same standards and metrics that any other corporate initiative would be.

Constructive criticism is good. In some organizations, there is resistance to criticizing diversity programs out of a fear of being labeled as intolerant but no program can evolve without being continually challenged.

Goals and metrics must be clear and there needs to be a transparent calculation of return on investment. If the purpose and goals of a program aren't clear, it is extremely difficult to assess what constitutes the success, which in turns makes it difficult to get buy-in across the organization.



Spotlight on Debbie Tang, Partner

In May 2017, Debbie Tang joined the Bridge Partners team, based in our Washington, DC office.

Debbie leads global executive searches in both the private and public sector, from Fortune 100 companies to universities and government agencies. She recruits

diverse senior executives across all functions, including General Counsels, Chief Legal Officers and regulatory leaders, in a wide variety of industries. Debbie is fluent in Mandarin Chinese and often partners with U.S. clients on overseas hiring needs.

Before joining Bridge Partners, Debbie spent over 6 years as a Managing Director in Major, Lindsey & Africa's in-house practice group. Prior to her career in executive search, she gained corporate experience as in-house

counsel for Marriott International and also served as General Counsel of an international restaurant chain. She began her career as an attorney at Troutman Sanders and Reed Smith.

Debbie currently serves as co-chair of the Women's Bar Association of Washington, DC's In-House Counsel Forum and is active in the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Economics from McGill University and received a Juris Doctor degree from Washington & Lee School of Law, where she served on the Editorial Board of The Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice.

She is a frequent panelist on diversity and inclusion in executive recruiting.

About Bridge Partners

Bridge Partners is a retained executive search firm with unique expertise in attracting and retaining senior, diverse executives.

Clients include major corporations, nonprofits, public sector, and entrepreneurial organizations across the US and around the world. What they have in common is a desire to adapt to a changing global market and diversify their leadership teams in order to reflect their employee base, as well as the constituents they serve.

They retain Bridge Partners to leverage our innovative search approach and our track-record of presenting the highest caliber executives.

Diversity-Inclusion

Diversity-inclusion is not an “initiative” for us. It is what we do.

As a minority-owned business, our team reflects a commitment to diversity in all its forms, embedding this core value in every aspect of our own culture and practice.

We have grown our business based on the knowledge that a diverse leadership team is critical to our clients – not just to reflect employee base, clients and constituents served, but also to encourage innovation and progressive decision-making.

We have a proven track record of building effective leadership teams by:

- Providing a higher level of service, embedding diversity and inclusion into every aspect of our client work
- Raising the degree of expectation regarding inclusion in our candidate slates
- Partnering with clients to ensure they gain access to the very best executives in the marketplace, remaining focused on ability as the top priority, regardless of race, gender, or any other defining characteristics

CLIENT LIST

Case studies and details of specific searches can be found on our website at www.bridgepartnersllc.com

Select For Profit Client List

Alcatel-Lucen
 Alliance Bernstein
 American Eagle Outfitters
 Barnes & Noble
 Campbell Soup Company
 Charter Communications
 Choice Hotels
 Colgate-Palmolive
 CVS Caremark
 Edward Jones
 Foot Locker
 Fossil
 General Electric Company
 GNC Corporation
 Grant Thornton International
 Kaiser Permanente
 Macys
 McKesson
 Michael Kors
 Microsoft
 Northwestern Mutual
 Novartis Pharmaceuticals
 Owens Corning
 Prudential Financial
 Sodexo
 Starbucks
 Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide
 Sullivan & Cromwell
 TJX Companies
 Tommy Hilfiger
 Travelers
 USAA
 Walt Disney Company
 Wendy's International
 White & Case

Select Nonprofit Client List

Acumen
 Benwood Foundation
 Blue Cross Blue Shield
 Boston Children's Hospital
 BRAC
 Bridgewater State University
 Cape Abilities
 City Harvest
 Cleveland Foundation
 Communities in Schools
 Consumer Financial Protection
 Bureau
 Cradles to Crayons
 Digital Green
 Education for Employment
 Federal Home Loan Bank
 Gallaudet University
 Global Health Corps
 Global Resilience Partnership
 Habitat for Humanity
 Innovations for Poverty Action
 Jackie Robinson Foundation
 JCCA
 Kripalu
 Lutheran World Relief
 NAMIC
 Network for Teaching
 Entrepreneurship
 PACT
 Robins Foundation
 Simons Foundation
 South Asian Youth Action
 Starbucks Foundation
 TIAA-CREF
 Turnaround For Children
 Union of Concerned Scientists
 Vermont Foodbank
 Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute
 YMCA
 YWCA

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