

Battling Misconceptions about Recruiting Diverse Senior-Level Talent

Why your search firm should be focused on supporting your efforts to attract diverse talent.

If you are a human resources or diversity and inclusion professional, we imagine that you have probably had at least one of the following recruiting interactions with hiring managers:

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

There is no growing organization today that cannot 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 at the senior-most levels?

“The hiring manager is 100% behind the 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.” 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 desired results include:

- *An inadequate diversity outreach effort.* Building the capability to identify high-caliber minority candidates and 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.* While in-house recruiters and traditional search firms may have the best intentions, they are often not in a position to prioritize diversity. As with any other area of your business, you will be best served by 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 “below the radar.” Reach out and recruit your candidates—if they don’t come to you, you need to go after them, or use a search firm that can effectively do it on your behalf.

Clients across all sectors are requesting that their traditional search partners include high-caliber, diverse candidates in search shortlists; unfortunately, in many cases, their requests are being met with limited or no success.

There is a reason for this—many search firms view driving diversity into a shortlist as something that is done “upon request,” not as a matter of course. When we founded Bridge Partners LLC as a diversity-focused search firm a decade ago, we struggled with the idea that we may not be needed in five years—certainly not in ten—as diversity became 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.

Critical to our success is our development of a distinct search practice and methodology that can identify, approach, and attract diverse executives. We are a diverse team committed to the advancement of diverse professionals in senior roles; and we have years of experience building relationships with these coveted, high-caliber executives and addressing the specific concerns they have when contemplating a move.

By leveraging a proven, research-driven methodology, a robust and continually updated database of senior executives, and a strong and actively cultivated network that we constantly develop and access, we have a significant edge in attracting the most qualified executives and building an inclusive candidate shortlist. **PDJ**

Tory Clark and Larry Griffin are co-founders of and partners in Bridge Partners LLC, a retained executive search firm that specializes in leadership and senior-level recruitment, both in the US and internationally. Learn more at www.bridgepartnersllc.com.



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