

eBook

# The Talent Maker's guide to inclusive hiring

greenhouse



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# Introduction

## Starting your inclusive hiring journey

Why commit to inclusive hiring practices? You can take your pick of reasons. There's the moral case. Our customers and the communities we serve are made up of people from all backgrounds, and the makeup of our companies should reflect that diversity. There's the business case. [McKinsey](#) finds ethnic and gender diversity are linked to stronger financial performance for businesses. And then there's the employee and candidate experience case. [More than half](#) of employees think their company should be doing more to increase the diversity of their internal workforce and [76% of candidates](#) actively seek out companies with diverse employee bases.

No matter which reasons resonate most with you, one thing is clear: Proactively building inclusive hiring practices isn't just the right thing to do – it's the smart thing to do.

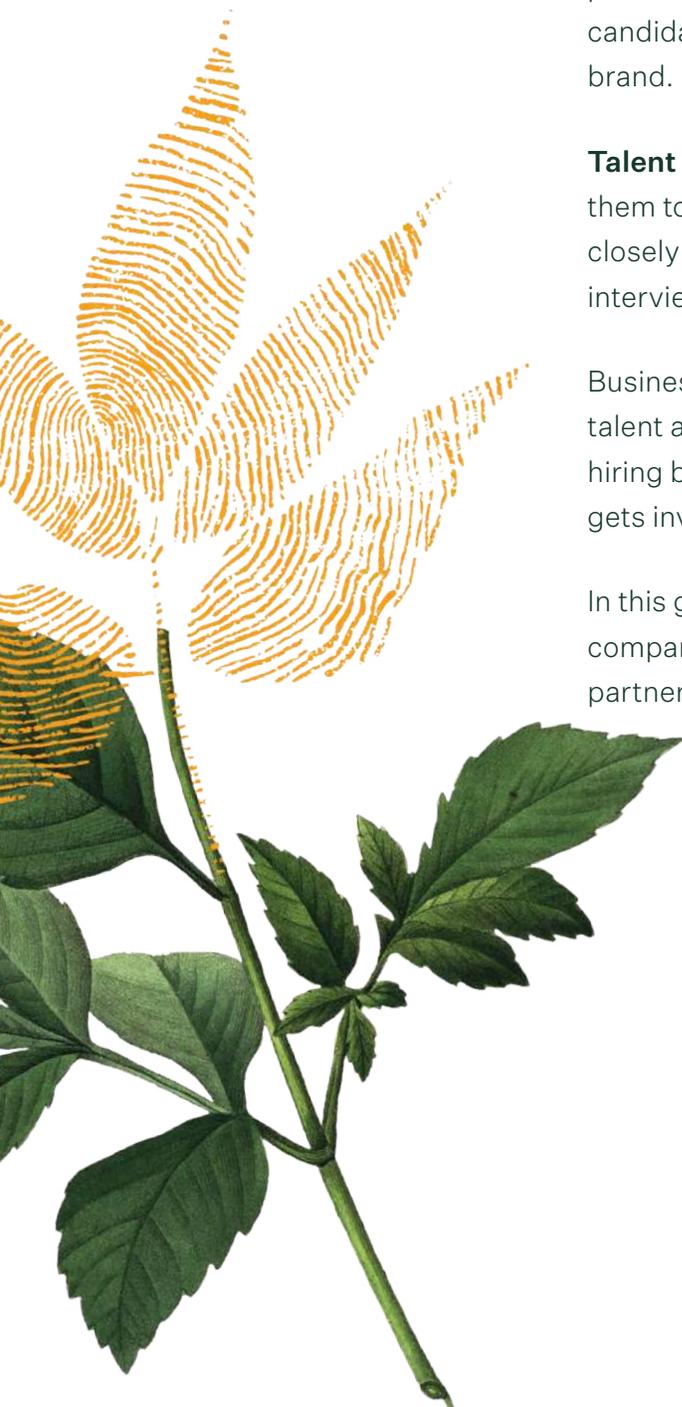
Traditionally, business leaders have looked to recruiting teams to shoulder the work of diversifying the candidates moving through their hiring pipelines. However, great business leaders understand that DE&I is a company-wide commitment, starting from the top – this is part of [the Talent Maker™ mindset](#).

## But what exactly is a Talent Maker?

A Talent Maker is a leader who believes and acts as if hiring great talent is their top priority. It's a fundamental shift away from the traditional belief that talent acquisition is solely the role of recruiters. To attract great, competitive talent that can choose to work anywhere, the Talent Maker puts their personal efforts up front, and gets the force of their entire organization behind them. The catalyst for change can be any leader – of a business unit, department or team.

You can think about a Talent Maker as having three roles for three different constituencies. You are a talent leader to your organization, a talent magnet to the talent that your company wants to hire and





a talent partner to your internal recruiting team. Let's take a look at each role in more detail.

**Talent leaders** build and lead a culture of hiring. Your role as a talent leader stems from your visibility, your actions and the time you spend on hiring.

**Talent magnets** are highly engaged in personally attracting and pursuing top talent. As a talent magnet, you meet with prospects and candidates, help to close them and support your organization's hiring brand.

**Talent partners** are true supporters of the recruiting team, enabling them to do their best work. As a talent partner, you make time to work closely with recruiters, give them the resources they need and prioritize interviews and scorecards.

Business leaders set the tone through their words and actions and talent acquisition professionals create a framework by instituting hiring best practices, but it's only when everyone at the company gets involved that you can create a truly inclusive hiring experience.

In this guide, we'll explore how all the Talent Makers in your company – the talent leaders, talent magnets and talent partners – can help establish and amplify inclusive hiring.

## Part 1

# Building the foundations of inclusive hiring

Getting company leaders to buy into the idea of prioritizing DE&I is a critical first step. But what comes next? How do you build the foundations of inclusive hiring? In this section, we'll examine this topic through the lens of talent leaders, talent magnets and talent partners.

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# How talent leaders can help

As a talent leader, your words and actions set the tone for everyone else at your organization. Here are some steps you can take to show your company your commitment to inclusive hiring.

## Build a safe environment for all

Diversifying your team isn't only about bringing in a new hire who can add a new perspective. It's just as much about creating an environment that allows that new hire to share their perspective and feel heard. Some leaders may skirt conversations around identity – they might claim to be “colorblind” when it comes to race, for example – but great leaders lean into color consciousness and create spaces to celebrate each employee's experience and [unique intersectionalities](#).

## Write job descriptions and posts through an inclusive lens

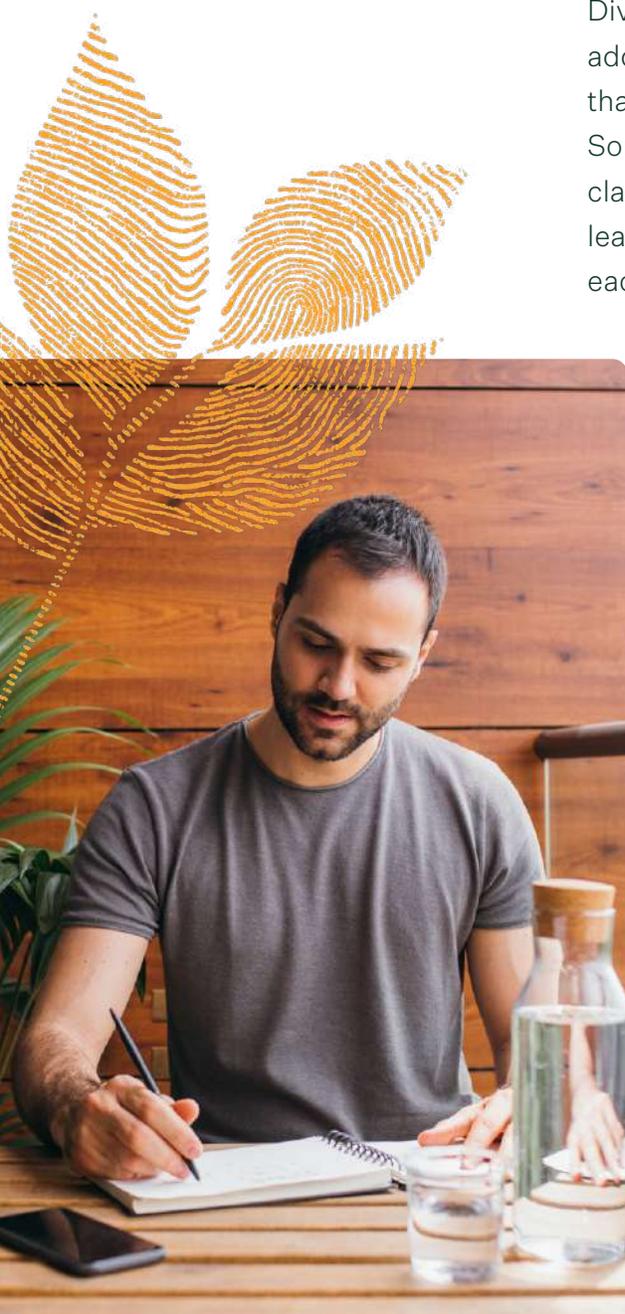
One of the most important pieces of content you'll author as a leader is the job description for a role on your team. It's the first touchpoint candidates have with an opportunity to join your team, and it directly impacts who does – and doesn't – engage in your interview process.

Here are some ways you can make your job descriptions more inclusive – and better attract the candidates you're targeting:

### Identify and rework inherently biased language

It may surprise you that countless job descriptions contain language that is gendered, which can skew your talent pool before you even get a chance to interact with candidates. Platforms like [Textio](#) leverage artificial intelligence to help remove gender bias, business jargon and other phrases that reinforce stereotypes in written content.

According to [Textio](#), “A language pattern is considered gendered



if it statistically changes the proportion of men and women who respond to a job post containing it.” Their research reveals that in jobs where a man is hired, the original job post averages almost twice as many masculine-tone phrases as feminine. In jobs where a woman is hired, Textio finds the opposite: there are twice as many feminine-tone phrases as masculine in the job post. Here are a few common phrases that exert this type of bias effect:

Masculine tone	Feminine tone
Exhaustive	Transparent
Enforcement	Catalyst
Fearless	In touch with

“Job descriptions are the first touchpoint candidates have with the application process, so **it’s important to think about the inclusiveness of the language and the number of requirements you have listed.**”

**Anna Chalon**  
Sr. Director of Talent and DE&I at Frame.io





## **Describe goals and growth opportunities**

Focus on describing the exciting goals and clear objectives of the job rather than listing day-to-day responsibilities that aren't tied to outcomes. This will not only inspire candidates, it will also help them determine whether what they'll own and learn in your job is aligned with their career goals.

To bring this to life, if you're hiring for a role in sales for example, focus on the goals and outcomes you'd want this person to achieve. What are the success metrics being tracked and the desired outcomes? What does growth look like on your team for someone who delivers quarter over quarter? Also share who this person would be actively collaborating with to provide insight into cross-functional opportunities.

## **Focus on abilities over requirements**

Carefully consider each requirement you're adding to your job description. Can you shift the focus away from a specific number of years of work experience or required degrees, and more toward a candidate's abilities? Could you take it a step further and include verbiage that encourages candidates to apply even if they might not think they have all the necessary qualifications?

## **Use structured hiring to mitigate bias**

Now that you've communicated your focus on diversity and published an inclusive job description, you might think most of your work is behind you. After all, isn't the process mostly in your recruiter's hands from here on? Not just yet. Once you have candidates entering your hiring pipeline, your commitment to equitable and inclusive hiring practices will really be put to the test.

Here are several important things to keep in mind to stay accountable to your commitment to DE&I:

### **Screen in rather than screen out**

When reviewing resumes, use the framework of [screening in rather](#)

[than screening out](#). While certain roles have hard requirements – an engineer might need fluency in a certain coding language – many employers are placing less emphasis on a strict set of resume qualifications when determining who to move to the next stage and thinking about how they can invest in training people who have potential but don't have specific qualifications.

“A misconception in the space has been that it's a pipeline problem and these people don't exist. That's just not true – the people are there. You just don't have an efficient way of finding them. The homogeneous culture we often find in tech companies is often a result of poor process.”

**Ariel Lopez**  
CEO and Co-founder at Knac

When conducting interviews, some hiring managers can get uncomfortable when considering candidates with profiles they haven't hired for in the past. However, that behavior could be grounded in similar-to-me bias and perpetuate homogeneity. Pay close attention to how you and your interviewers react to historically underrepresented candidates, and actively exercise open-mindedness. Your best hire may be the person who is different from anyone else your team has hired in the past.

### **Use the same criteria**

To create an even playing field, assess all candidates against the same hiring criteria that you've determined is necessary for the role, which is the core of [structured hiring](#). Similarly, make sure each candidate is answering the same interview questions from your interviewers. This will allow your interviewers not only to focus on relevant areas to assess, but also to compare candidates in a data-driven and fair way in the event you're choosing between several finalists.



“Structured interviewing is just good interviewing. It’s creating the consistent and equitable conditions to allow all our candidates – particularly folks from non-traditional or underrepresented backgrounds – to present their strengths, skills and experiences and allow our interviewers to move from gut instincts to data-backed decisions so we can predict success and performance in a role.”

**Michael Kyle**  
Head of Talent & Belonging at Planet

# How talent magnets can help

The tactics we covered in the previous section are relevant for all leaders, but if you recognize that growing your team is important both today and in the future, you'll want to keep reading. There are actions you can take as a talent magnet to attract and retain candidates from diverse backgrounds and build a sense of belonging on your team.



## Clearly articulate career progression for your direct reports

Just like adding structure to your hiring process creates a consistent experience and reduces bias, you can take the same approach to promotion and growth on your team. Map out the next few stages for your current team members and outline clear benchmarks and milestones they can strive for. One of the best ways to be an inclusive leader and promote engagement is to set your direct reports on a clear path to career progression. Candidates will also appreciate hearing about this during the interview process.

## Define your values as a leader

What do you stand for? What motivates you? How does that align with your company's values? Taking time to answer these questions is an important step in becoming a talent magnet. Not only can you discuss these values with candidates during interviews, but you can also share them with the wider community in your industry at conferences, meetups and in blog posts and interviews.

## Create an employer value proposition and hiring guide for your team

Don't just assume this can be unspoken or implicit – work with your

team members and recruiting partners to define what's special about your team and answer common questions about your roles. This will create a smoother experience for recruiters and candidates while also helping you look beyond skills and qualifications and consider the values that matter most.

## How talent partners can help

You may see a lot of overlap with the previous sections, and that's okay. As a talent partner, though, your focus is on how you can best support your recruiting team. The activities presented here will help you accomplish that.

### Assess where you are today

“Before you can take action, you need to start with awareness,” says Stacey Gordon, Executive Advisor & Diversity Strategist at Rework Work. Begin by auditing your current hiring process. Where are people falling through the cracks? Who owns those processes? Gathering this information is the first step.

Let's start with a hypothetical scenario focused on inclusion. Imagine you are the hiring manager tasked with hiring a head of diversity for your company. A finalist candidate asks you the following questions. How would you answer? And how would you rate yourself and your process based on those answers?

Remember, the point of this exercise is to be honest with yourself and accurately describe where you are today.



Questions	Scorecard rating
<p>Do you actively evaluate your hiring process to compare your inbound (direct applicants) and outbound (sourced passive candidates, referrals, etc.) talent?</p>	
<p>Give a 1–2 sentence definition of “culture add” and examples of how it shows up at your company. If your company indexes hiring decisions against this definition, do you educate hiring teams (with examples) so everyone is aligned on when this criteria (or not)? If so, how often? If not, why not?</p>	
<p>How well does the team assess the predictive validity (how candidates perform once they join your company) of your interview process? How does your team incorporate data or feedback from people managers to test how interview methods (questions, assessments, etc.) correlate with performance and how do you use that data to refine the process?</p>	
<p>How much of a premium do recruiters at your company place on recruiting talent from your industry? How might the lack of diversity in your industry reduce the chances of building a diverse pool?</p>	
<p>What does interviewer education look like at your company right now? Which components are included? What criteria must employees meet to become eligible to interview?</p>	
<p>How does your company define and measure interviewer effectiveness? If an employee is not meeting expectations, what remediation or learning opportunities does your team offer to improve their skills in hiring?</p>	

Questions	Scorecard rating
Which hiring source (referrals, your career page, LinkedIn, etc.) has the highest yield/conversion of candidates you hire? With that source, how does your recruiting team integrate targeted marketing to communities that are underrepresented in your company?	
How does your recruiting team engage with employee attrition/ first-year churn data? How have you used it to refine your hiring (and onboarding, if your team owns it) process? Do you segment that data by demographic (race, gender, etc.) and if so, how does that impact your recruitment marketing or sourcing strategy?	
How does your recruiting team determine, articulate and differentiate minimum and preferred qualifications in your job posts?	

What did you learn from going through this exercise? Does anything jump out as a particular strength or area for improvement? Use your answers to launch conversations with others in your company who are committed to DE&I.

## Implement structured hiring

We've mentioned structured hiring a few times now, but let's take a moment to explicitly define what we mean when we use this term. Structured hiring involves defining the skills and qualities a candidate will need to be successful in a role, clearly outlining how you'll assess all candidates and applying a consistent and repeatable interview process where all candidates are measured against the same criteria.

If you're committed to creating an inclusive hiring process, structured hiring should be one of the first things you implement. Not only does it help reduce some of the bias that can impact hiring decisions, but it also places the emphasis on what a candidate can do rather than where they've worked before or which school they attended.

Here's a simple template you can use when opening up a new role.

Ask	Answer
<p><b>Who are you trying to hire?</b></p> <p>Role name, department, who will this person report to?            What business objectives are you trying to meet with this role?            What does success look like in 30 days? 60 days? 90 days?</p>	
<p><b>How will you evaluate the candidate?</b></p> <p>Skills, personality traits, qualifications.</p>	
<p><b>What will the interview process look like?</b></p> <p>What are the interview stages (application, review, phone screen, hiring manager, interview, etc.)? Which qualities will be assessed in each stage? Which questions will you ask or assessments will you use for each quality?</p>	

As a talent partner, you can work with your recruiting team to answer all these questions and set the expectation that all interviewers should closely follow the interview plan for each interview they conduct. If you're new to the topic of structured hiring and want to explore it in more detail, be sure to check out our comprehensive guide, [Structured hiring 101](#).

## Beware of these common barriers to inclusive hiring

- ❑ Jargon and superficial language in job posts can discourage women from applying and perpetuate inequality
- ❑ Resumes with more “white-sounding” names are more likely to be advanced in the hiring process
- ❑ Over-indexing on referrals from a homogenous workforce (typically with less diverse networks) can close the door for people of color and women
- ❑ Candidates are often evaluated on their perceived ease in assimilating or fitting into the culture, rather than their capacity to perform in the role and add to the company's culture
- ❑ Measuring talent through academic or employer history (both have low predictive validity on job performance) limits access for candidates excluded from those networks
- ❑ Traditional, unstructured interviews are highly vulnerable to bias – without consistent criteria or rubrics, poorly trained interviewers make impulse-driven decisions when evaluating candidates
- ❑ People of color and women are more likely to receive offers if another finalist shares their identity
- ❑ Interview notes are often scant, high-inference or based on likability, rather than objective with examples that validate advancement or rejection
- ❑ Low-diversity interview teams may signal larger issues for candidates from underrepresented groups
- ❑ Gender pay gaps persist in part because women fear reprisal for initiating salary negotiation (from other women and men) and compensation disparities are even wider for women of color

## Part 2

# Committing to continuous improvement

After you've taken the steps outlined above and built the foundations of inclusive hiring, what's next? In this section, you'll discover tips to help you continue to enhance and refine your inclusive hiring practices.

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# How talent leaders can help

Talent leaders continue to have a critical role in inclusive hiring after they've established foundational best practices. Here are a few ideas to consider.



## Diversify your panel

Consider your interview panel. Which demographic groups are represented and which are not? Do you have a panel of all men? Of all the same ethnicity/race? Of all millennials? If the answer is yes to any of these scenarios, how are you planning to address this elephant in the room with any candidate who identifies differently? Put yourself in their shoes and be prepared to clearly explain why creating a more diverse team is a priority for you and how you're going to do it.

## Own your influence

As a leader, remember your ability to influence others through your words and actions. Here are some ways you can own your influence when it comes to inclusive hiring.

- Sponsor an employee resource group and commit to helping them achieve their goals
- Attend diversity sourcing events and invite coworkers to join you
- Refer candidates from overlooked/underrepresented groups to open roles throughout your organization
- Look for local organizations you can partner with – perhaps you can sponsor a hackathon, offer an internship or otherwise support their mission
- Ask for feedback and suggestions – your team might already have some great ideas about how to prioritize DE&I

## Foster inclusive conversations

Many companies feel compelled to speak out against systemic racism and other social issues in response to current events. While candidates and employees might appreciate these messages, they can easily fall flat. “Don’t just offer empty statements of support. It’s one thing to put out a tweet and another to foster conversations and show empathy,” says [Liz Hall](#), CPO of Splash. [Ariel Lopez](#), CEO and Co-founder at Knac, says leaders need to commit to engaging in these conversations on an ongoing basis. “You can’t just say you care in the midst of a crisis. That care has to be consistent. Employees are looking for companies that are going to support them no matter what’s happening – not just when it’s cool to care.” For more on how to foster inclusive conversations, check out [How to host meaningful DE&I conversations at your company](#).

“If companies want to be great places to work and attract exceptional talent, they need to systematically address their own biases, open up a transparent dialogue and commit to rigorous anti-racism institutionalization.”

**Wayne Lorenzo Titus**

Enterprise Practice Lead for Professional Services and  
Co-chair of DE&I Council at Greenhouse

## Measure wins by progress and improvements

While your commitment may not produce immediate results – company demographics don’t change overnight – in the long run, your efforts will drive meaningful and positive change in who you hire and advocate for in your company. Work with your recruiting and people teams to decide which metrics you will use to measure your progress. You might begin with metrics looking at your recruiting pipeline, and you may even want to dig into retention and promotion rates across different demographics.



## Elevate the interviewing culture

Interviewing should not be viewed as a chore – it’s one of the most valuable activities people at your organization will do. Make sure your team members understand this and regularly reinforce the idea that interviewing is a privilege. Not only are interviewers the ambassadors of your company and team culture, they’re also shaping the future of your company through their hiring decisions. If you don’t already have interviewer training, work with your recruiting team to create it.

## Diversify referrals

To make sure referrals are not making your company more homogenous – and to increase referral volume and engagement – use a rotating variety of prompts when asking for referrals. Make it a point to solicit referrals from colleagues, particularly from those outside of your department. In standing meetings, have an item to review open roles and share candidates who could be a good fit. People often find jobs through “loose networks” like second-degree connections and people who have different roles but work in the same industry.



“Create the end-to-end experience that allows someone to bring their true self to the interview process and find them the right job for them within the organization.”

**Anna Chalon**  
Sr. Director of Talent and DE&I at Frame.io

Prompt people to think more broadly when giving referrals by asking questions like:

- We're looking to diversify our engineering team – who are the best women you've worked with in technical roles?
- Who is a military veteran you know doing amazing work in our industry?



## How talent magnets can help

As a talent magnet, you can continue to reinforce your personal values and brand in order to attract candidates from a broad range of backgrounds. Here are a few tactics to try out.

### **Create content that showcases the work your team is doing**

Look for opportunities to showcase the exciting work your team is doing. This can include writing posts for your company blog or industry publications, participating in podcasts or webinars and speaking at meetups and conferences. Be sure to include voices from all the members of your team. You can also keep an eye out for events and publications that prioritize diversity or speak to specific audiences you'd like to reach.

### **Host inclusive social events**

If it's possible to meet in person, consider how you can host events that are welcoming and inclusive. For example, evening happy hours can be fun, but you may unintentionally be excluding young parents or people who don't drink alcohol. Look for ways to switch it up and appeal to



people from different groups. If you're not sure what to do, ask your team members for suggestions. Keep in mind that one-off events are not likely to lead immediately to making hires, but committing to a regular cadence can help you build your employer brand over time.

## Stay in touch with and build your network

An important part of being a talent magnet is cultivating a broad network. Don't limit yourself to your own industry or discipline. Being open to new connections will put you in a good position to make referrals and introductions and give you greater chances of finding someone great when you share job openings from other teams and departments. In addition to using professional networking sites like LinkedIn, look for ways to get involved with organizations that support underrepresented people in your industry such as [Women Who Code](#), [Lesbians in Tech](#), [TransTech Social](#) and the [National Society of Black Engineers](#).

## How talent partners can help

Talent partners can show their commitment to inclusive hiring by continuing to support the talent acquisition team. Here are a few ways to do this.

### Forge strong partnerships with your talent acquisition team

Support your talent acquisition partners by offering them time and resources. Meet with recruiters who would like to learn more about your role and team. Invite them to participate in team meetings when it makes sense to do so. Help them write take-home assessments or interview questions. And don't forget to celebrate when all your hard work pays off with offer acceptances and new hires.

## Set a good example

You already know that structured hiring relies on asking candidates the same questions and assessing them consistently. Make sure you model this behavior for all new team members and interviewers you're working with. You can also streamline the hiring process by submitting your feedback on time (preferably the same day you conducted an interview) and encouraging your teammates to do the same. During debrief conversations, help limit bias by asking for clarification when someone uses language that's vague or potentially problematic like "unprofessional" or "not a culture fit." For more on this topic, take a look at [Implementing diversity hiring practices in a remote working world](#).

## Make feedback your friend

If you're really committed to making your hiring process more inclusive, you need to get comfortable giving and receiving feedback. If something in the interview process feels awkward or isn't working, let your recruiting team know. If candidates mention a problem or issue, don't be afraid to dig in to learn more. One of the best ways to be a talent partner is to hold yourself and your coworkers accountable to making improvements whenever you can.



# Conclusion

Committing to inclusive hiring involves the entire company. In order to be successful, it can't just involve the talent acquisition team. Executives, hiring managers and employees throughout the organization can – and should – participate.

In this guide, we've provided you with plenty of ideas, offered through the lens of Talent Makers – the talent leaders, talent magnets and talent partners who make up this group. Ultimately, what matters more than the labels is the commitment to inclusion. We hope this guide has given you a starting point and the inspiration you need to help your company commit to inclusive hiring.

And if you need any help along the way, Greenhouse is here for you. Be sure to reach out and let us know of any questions, concerns or challenges you're facing when it comes to inclusive hiring.



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