



## **Redefine “Qualified” Candidates to Supercharge Your Team**

**Cultural Competence**

**Employment and Labor**



Countless studies have shown diversity is a key [driver of innovation](#), and diverse teams are more adaptable and [better at problem solving](#). In addition, companies with diverse leadership have [higher profits](#), [more customers](#), and [higher employee engagement](#). These outcomes are true whether the diversity is inherent like race and gender or acquired through experience or cultural background.

The benefits of diverse teams are widely known; however, how do you attract and select candidates to create these super-powered teams? Start by redefining what a “qualified” candidate looks like and what they bring to the table.

You can assemble a super-powered diverse team with a few tweaks in the recruitment process. Here are three suggestions to get you started.

## 1. Revamp your job postings

Fact: job postings and descriptions are often outdated or otherwise do not reflect what the employer truly needs. Often, the job description is just an endless list of requirements and nice-to-haves but fails to accurately reflect what skills are truly necessary. This leads to the creation of a sub-par candidate pool.

Consider including only the skills you *really* need and be creative with those traits. Delete the nice-to-haves and add in the skills that will help make the candidate and your company successful.

Most importantly, remember who you’re trying to attract. These days, job candidates are looking for companies where they can start contributing right away, grow, be challenged, and be accepted and valued for their whole selves. The job posting is a window to both the job and your organization’s values and culture. So, be intentional with how the job posting describes the workplace and the

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organization.

## 2. Anonymize candidate screening

Consider implementing anonymized hiring and removing key identifiers, such as names or photos, when reviewing candidate applications.

[Unconscious bias](#) can show up in any aspect of the employment journey, and candidate screening is no exception. Studies have shown resumés from [male candidates](#) and candidates with less [“ethnic sounding names”](#) receive more callbacks, regardless of industry or occupation.

If your organization isn't ready for anonymized screening, a good first step would be to educate and train your talent acquisition team on potential unconscious bias in their search and screening behaviors. This awareness and education can make a big difference.

Another possible solution is to make sure your hiring team is diverse to help mitigate any unconscious bias and help illuminate any blind spots.

## 3. Ask open-ended questions

During the recruitment process, consider asking candidates open-ended questions that can draw out experiences that may demonstrate desirable traits. For example:

- Share a life experience that shaped your values and helps you succeed professionally.
- Beyond your education, training, and past professional experience, how have you learned critical life lessons that have prepared you for this opportunity?
- Describe a time when you had to navigate a cross-cultural experience and what you learned from it.

These types of questions can help spotlight the personal characteristics or interesting skills of a candidate. Responses can help round out your understanding of the whole candidate — what they can offer and how they can add value to your team — rather than just “culturally fitting” in your organization. So, get creative!

Increased diversity and inclusion are quintessential to bringing out the superpowers in all of your people and helping your organization reach new heights.

[DEI. Esq.](#) is comprised of in-house counsel who share a deep passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion. While the members, Jane Howard-Martin, Connie Almond, Olesja Cormney, Jennifer N. Jones, and Meyling Ly Ortiz, work as employment counsel at Toyota Motor North America, Inc., their views and the thought-leadership expressed are their own and not necessarily the views of their employer.

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Jane Howard-Martin is vice president and assistant general counsel for Toyota Motor North America, Inc. (TMNA) and manages the Labor, Employment, Immigration, Benefits and Trade Secrets practice. Howard-Martin leads the labor and employment practice group that is responsible for providing legal advice and counsel and managing litigation and labor matters for a workforce of 33,993 based in our North America affiliates, including the nine North American Manufacturing Centers (NAMCs), R&D, Finance, and Headquarters functions.

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Prior to joining Toyota in 2003, Howard-Martin was a partner with Morgan, Lewis and Bockius, LLP in their Los Angeles and Pittsburgh offices, and previously was a partner at Kirkpatrick & Lockhart in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Howard-Martin has been featured in a number of publications and symposiums. She authored a column on employment issues for USA Today.com, a treatise on Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act and served on the Editorial Review Board of the Pennsylvania Labor Letter. Howard-Martin also appeared as a panelist on MSNBC's "Today in America" on the issue of harassment. She is a frequent speaker on employment law topics at various conferences including those held by the ABA, the National Employment Law Council, and the American Employment Law Council. In November 2020, Howard-Martin received the ABA Honorable Bernice B. Donald Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Legal Profession Award. She is the past President (2009) and currently serves on the board of directors of the California Employment Law Council and is also a board member of the American Employment Law Council. She is also a fellow with the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers.

Howard-Martin earned a BA from Harvard University in 1979 and received her juris doctorate degree from Harvard Law School in 1982.

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Jennifer Jones is managing counsel in the labor and employment group at Toyota Motor North America, Inc. She has over a decade of experience counseling employers on a broad range of labor and employment law issues. As one of the founding members of DEI, Esq., she has a deep passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and has authored many articles and participated in many panels on the subject. She also sits on the board of two nonprofit organizations, both with a mission of ensuring that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to quality secondary and post-secondary education. In her free time, Jones strives to be a “fun mom” for her two small children

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Meyling "Mey" Ly Ortiz is managing counsel of employment at Toyota Motor North America, Inc. Her passions include mentoring, championing diversity and inclusion and a personal blog: [TheMeybe.com](https://www.themeybe.com). At home, you can find her doing her best to be a "fun" mom to a toddler and a preschooler and chasing her best self on her Peloton. You can follow her on [LinkedIn](#). And you knew this was coming: her opinions are hers alone.

