Inclusive Hiring in Tech:
How to Write More Inclusive Job Descriptions

Jill Bender, Software Engineer

Why should you care?

- Innovation [1]

- Performance [2]

- The bottom-line [3]

- It's the right thing to do

[1] How Diversity Makes Us Smarter (Phillips 2014)
[2] Groups of diverse problem solvers can outperform groups of high-ability problem solvers (Hong, Page, 2004)
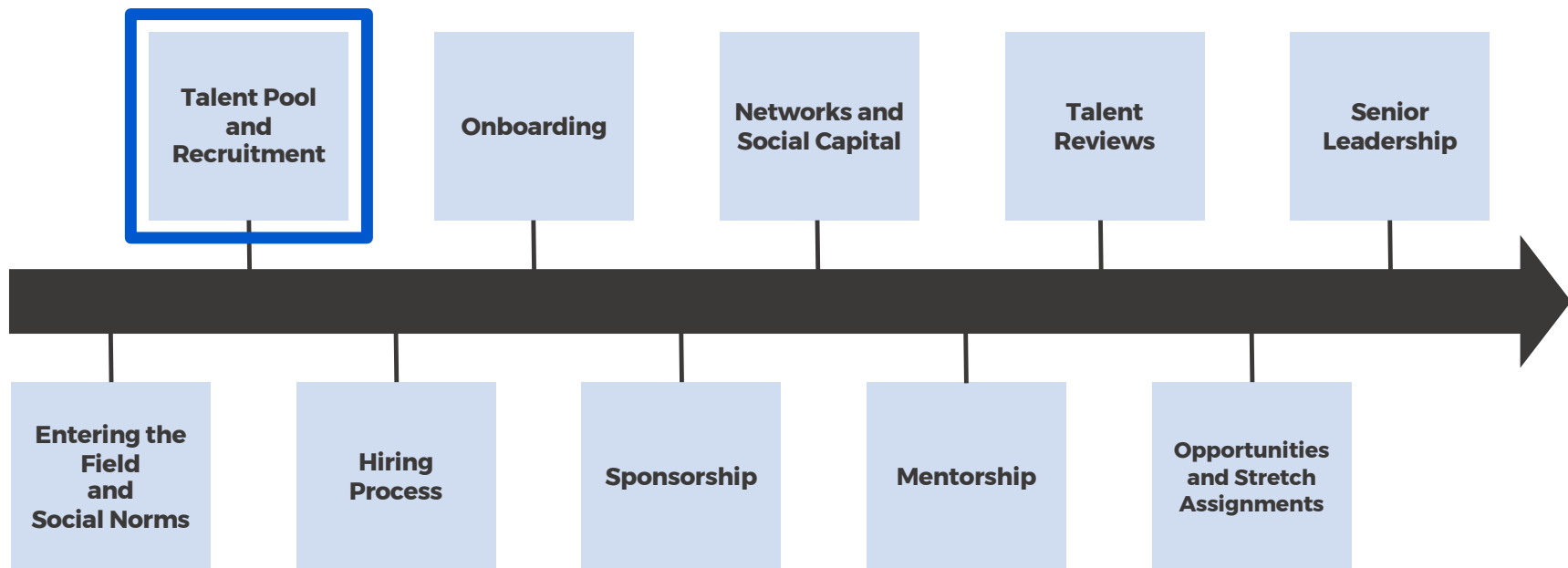[3] Does Diversity Pay?: Race, Gender, and the Business Case for Diversity (Herring, 2009)

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Why am I here?

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Sue ███████ There are no other women in those photos. None. That is freaky. Does ██████ not know women exist?

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The Problem

Talent Pool and Recruitment

Onboarding

Networks and Social Capital

Talent Reviews

Senior Leadership

Entering the Field and Social Norms

Hiring Process

Sponsorship

Mentorship

Opportunities and Stretch Assignments

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Effective Job Descriptions

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What is the purpose of a job description?

- Encourage as many qualified candidates to apply as possible.

- **What can I do to ensure the qualified <u>diverse</u> candidates apply?**

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Maintaining the status quo using language

- **Job advertisements that use masculine wording are less appealing to women.** [1]

[1] Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011)
https://ncwit.org/video/ncwit-2012-summit-workshop-dr-aaron-kay/
https://wpassets.ncwit.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/22204330/a.kay_jobpostingbias_ncwitsummit12_0.pdf

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Deliberately add language that appeals to women & underrepresented groups

Instead of stereotypically masculine words

Before:

- **Aggressive:**
  aggressive, tackle, relentless, ambitious, force, crushing/kicking, drive, whatever it takes, determined, capture

- **Dominating:**
  owning the, a master of, manage, dominant, stand apart, sets the standard, strong, superior, control, outstanding, proven

- **Competitive:**
  track record, expert, world-class, extremely, exceptional, competition, in the eyes of/in the face of

- **Terms that suggest a masculine culture:**
  hacker/guru/ninja/rockstar, foosball, ping-pong, references to alcohol, references to video games, 'work hard, play hard'

After:

- **Teamwork:**
  contribute, collaborate, teamwork, our team, growing team, with other, lasting relationship, effective relationships, partnering, teaching, interpersonal

- **Meaningful:**
  strive, more personal, will impact

- **Emotional awareness:**
  empathy, stories, creating, care, humility, engaging, more personal

- **Welcoming:**
  come join, be a part of, comfortable, welcome, embrace

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Use friendly, welcoming language

Instead of urging, demanding, or challenging language

Before:

- "Change the world or **go home**"

- "There are very few opportunities in your career when you can work on a product that is industry changing. All eyes are on you, and **the odds are stacked against you**. Failure is just **not an option**."

- "If you require constant, rigid process **this is not the job for you**."

After:

- "**Help us** change the world"

- "**Join us** in working on a product that is **industry changing**. We are excited to create next generation of IoT applications that will **change the world for the better**."

- "Our team values a **friendly atmosphere** with passion for improving engineering practices along with building excellent products"

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Research by HP shows women applied to a job posting only if they met **90-100%** of the requirements.

"A business case for women" The McKinsey Quarterly by Georges Desvaux, Sandrine Devillard-Hoellinger and Mary C. Meany.

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Is that *REALLY* a requirement?

- Minimize Bullet Points – Seen as a "checklist"
- "Would I really not hire them if they didn't have this?"

Remember...
90-100%

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Use measurable criteria

Instead of hyperbolic language

Before:

- "**Must** demonstrate an **exceptional** understanding of a scalable systems, with **confident** foundation of services."
- "**Mega-strong** communications, data synthesis, presentation, and leadership skills."

After:

- **remove bullet point, use paragraph form** "**You will** work on scalable systems and services."
- **If it's a requirement, make it measurable – Think checklist ✓** "Experience writing specs and presenting."

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What about the "Nice-to-haves"?

- "Nice-to-haves" are also perceived as requirements.
- If you want them, keep them privately, not published.
- If you just *HAVE* to leave them in the JD, put them in paragraph form.

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Checklist

- ❑ Role description has clear, measurable requirements. Only non-negotiables are listed.

- ❑ (if they have to be present) nice-to-haves are limited and in paragraph form.

- ❑ Bullet points are limited to less than 30% of the document.

- ❑ Uses friendly welcoming language. Avoids aggressive and forceful language.

- ❑ Includes lots of "We" and "You" statements.

- ❑ Includes lots of verbs.

- ❑ Free of corporate clichés

- ❑ Includes positive phrases.

- ❑ Language includes deliberate terms that appeal to women and underrepresented groups

- ❑ Avoids describing the candidate in hyperbolic language, e.g. 'expert' or 'master'

- ❑ Draft is shared with a broad audience for feedback before publishing.

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Helpful tools

- [Textio](#)
- [Hemingway App Visual Editor](#)
- [Watson Natural Language Understanding](#)
- [Gender Decoder for Job Ads](#)

Summary

(use the checklist)

1. Minimize bullets.

2. Language matters.
   Avoid stereotypically masculine words.

3. Circulate your JD <u>broadly</u> for review

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Thank you

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Questions? Comments?
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To learn more:
National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT)
Women in Tech: The Facts
https://www.ncwit.org/sites/default/files/resources/womenintech_facts_fullreport_05132016.pdf

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Additional Resources

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Resources

- National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT)
Women in Tech: The Facts
    - https://www.ncwit.org/sites/default/files/resources/womenintech_facts_full report_05132016.pdf

- Anita Borg Institute
Solutions to Recruit Technical Women https://anitab.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/AnitaBorgInstitute_SolutionsToRecruitTechnicalWomen_2012.pdf

- University of Michigan
Advance Program Research and Guidelines:
    - http://advance.umich.edu/researchreports.php
    - http://advance.umich.edu/resources/GSE-FacRecruitment-2004.pdf

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Research:

- Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality
http://www.fortefoundation.org/site/DocServer/gendered_wording_JPSP.pdf?docID=16121

- Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action and Diversity Policies
Alexandra Kalev, Frank Dobbin, Erin Kelly
https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240607100404

- Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women.
Valian (1998) Cambridge: MIT Press,p. 280;

- University of Michigan Study of groups:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287234332_The_influence_of_gender_stereotypes_on_role_adoption_in_student_teams

- The influence of gender stereotypes on role adoption in student teams (PDF Download Available). Available from:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287234332_The_influence_of_gender_stereotypes_on_role_adoption_in_student_teams

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Research:

- Scott Page, The difference: how the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools, societies, Princeton 2007

- Page SE. The difference: How the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools, and societies: Princeton University Press, 2008.

- Galinsky AD, Todd AR, Homan AC, Phillips KW, Apfelbaum EP, Sasaki SJ, Richeson JA, Olayon JB, Maddux WW. Maximizing the Gains and Minimizing the Pains of Diversity A Policy Perspective. Perspectives on Psychological Science 2015;10(6):742-8.

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