Guide to Blind Application Screening

What is blind application screening, and why consider it?

Blind application screening is the practice of removing personally identifiable information from application materials in order to reduce bias in the recruitment process. This may include, but is not limited to, **name, gender, age, education, address, dates (such as graduation dates), photos, references, links to personal webpages, supervisor names, and/or citizenship**. Blind application screening can be a method to increase diversity in hiring by reducing the effect that unconscious biases have on assessing applicants. Many studies have shown the positive effect that blind application screening can have on increasing diversity.

- The National Bureau of Economic Research found that resumes with "white-sounding" names are 50% more likely to receive a callback than resumes with "black-sounding" names.

- The Toronto Symphony Orchestra grew from 5% female to 25% female after instituting blind auditions.

How to blind applications:

Applicant tracking systems, such as TREMS, are not built with the capability to blind application materials. This means that HR departments must establish their own system for supplying blinded application materials for review. Here are some suggestions for blinding application materials:

- Manually redact personally identifiable information electronically and upload the redacted application materials to a secure location, such as Box, where only those designated to review materials can access them.

    o This can be done in a PDF by highlighting the text of the information to be redacted, right clicking, and selecting "redact."

- Manually redact personal information by using a black marker to hide personally identifiable information and supplying physical copies of the materials.

- Assign each applicant a number, which will be used as the only identifiable characteristic of the applicant until it is decided which candidates will be brought in for an interview.

Tips for blind application screening:

- Decide what personally identifiable information to redact for all candidates before the selection process begins.

- Be aware of other "identity cues" that could appear on an application. Things like hobbies and interests could reveal religion, age, or if the candidate has children, while something like volunteer work could signal religion, race, or political affiliation.

- Create a goal and establish metrics. This can help determine how successful the blind application screening has been and can help identify potential oversights in the blinding process.

- Look beyond the resume. Unconscious biases affect almost every stage of the hiring process. Consider restructuring other parts of the hiring process to promote more equitable treatment.

Resources:

https://wiseli.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/662/2018/11/SearchBook_Wisc.pdf
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