

# Best Practices for Nurturing Underrepresented Talent

**Recruiting for Diversity**



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Our goal in this guide is to offer sourcers and recruiters best practices for messaging for underrepresented talent. This includes job descriptions, careers pages, and outreach content, all of which should be telling a unified story about your company's commitment to, and efforts toward, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Underrepresented talent will be looking in all of these places for cues about your commitment to their belonging. We'll also cover what metrics to keep track of so you can measure success, and offer some example outreach to guide you.

## Introduction

As a recruiter, if you hope to hit your diversity hiring goals, you can't eliminate or alienate underrepresented talent from your pool before you even get to the phone-screen stage. The very top of the hiring funnel—outreach and nurture—is the most crucial stage for recruitment these days, since the quality and caliber of your talent pool is directly correlated with the quality and caliber of your hires. This is perhaps especially true when it comes to diversity. After all, there's no diversifying a pool in the middle of the funnel. So how do you position yourself to see good outcomes from the very beginning?

This is Part 3 of a three-part series on diversity sourcing called *The Ultimate Guide to Sourcing and Nurturing Diverse Talent Pools*. In Part 1, we took a survey of the landscape, laid the stakes, and got you started on your diversity sourcing strategy. In Part 2, we focused on *how* and *where* to find underrepresented talent. Now that you've found them, it's time to reach out to them. And while underrepresented talent has the same skills and competencies as majority talent, their needs, hopes, and expectations about a workplace worth working for may differ from those of their majority counterparts. Which means they may need to hear something different than what you've become accustomed to writing in your emails or your job descriptions, or displaying on your careers page. That's what we'll cover here.

That's not to say that emphasizing diversity in your communications isn't important for *all* candidates. After all, 64% of job seekers (underrepresented *and* majority) say a company's commitment to diversity and inclusion (D&I) is a crucial factor in evaluating job offers—a number that rises to 73% for Millennial and Gen Z employees. But it *is* to suggest that you'll want to be especially intentional with what you choose to discuss when reaching out to underrepresented segments. That's because the stakes are often higher for underrepresented talent when it comes to considering career moves. They're less likely to respond if they don't get the sense that DEI—diversity, equity, *and* inclusion—is a core company commitment, baked into your organization's DNA. (That said, if you're just starting out on your diversity

**Alongside this guide, you'll want to do your own research into what underrepresented talent is looking for in their next role:**

- Attend, network, and listen at local events for underrepresented talent
- Talk with the underrepresented talent currently on your team
- Circulate regular internal surveys to take the pulse on diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Ask the underrepresented talent that's leaving your organization what you could have done better during exit interviews

initiatives, be honest. Let prospects know the steps you're taking internally to make the workplace inclusive and equitable for the new talent you hope to bring in. In these early stages, transparency and candor go a long way.)

As you'll see below, when we talk about "nurturing" underrepresented talent, we're talking about more than what you put in your email outreach. Underrepresented talent will be looking for a whole host of cues that tell them they'll be safe and valued in your organization. They may get a *sense* of that from your outreach, sure. But if they're interested, they'll be looking at your careers page and at your job description. They'll be checking your social feeds for indications about what belonging actually *looks like* at your org. As a talent brand, your messaging needs to be consistent across the board. That's why, in the following, we look at job descriptions and careers pages as well as email outreach. After we discuss the cues underrepresented talent will be looking for, we offer some examples of initial outreach that exemplifies the use of those cues. We also discuss what metrics to keep track of so you can measure success, and pivot and iterate where you need to.

# Creating Inclusive Job Descriptions

As a sourcer or recruiter, you're likely already working with your hiring managers on job descriptions: you know the talent market better than they do and can offer insights into salary information, competitor data, and how realistic your hiring managers' expectations might be. But you *also* need to work with them to ensure your JDs are inclusive. Inclusive job descriptions communicate clear information about what's expected of the applicant and what they can expect from the company. They provide key insights into organizational culture and are free of language that may signal to underrepresented talent that they won't feel safe or welcomed in the workplace.

All of this may mean giving yourself and your hiring manager permission to reexamine what a job description "looks like." The *full* job description isn't likely to go out with your initial outreach (your goal with first outreach should only be to conjure enough interest to schedule a call); but the care you take to ensure an inclusive JD will carry over into the care you take to ensure an inclusive email campaign. Think of this as brain-training for baking DEI into *all* your communications. What's more, if your organization is posting job descriptions on its career site, the JD is now a public-facing document indicating how thoughtful your organization is about living its values of diversity and inclusion.

From the point of view of diversity, "mature" job descriptions share the following characteristics:

- They use gender-neutral language
- They use *inclusive* language
- They reduce requirements to "must-haves," OR
- They replace requirements with results
- They indicate a salary range
- They emphasize the company's commitment to DEI

Here's what we mean by all that:

“They/their” and “you/your” are the most inclusive pronouns to use in your job descriptions, and in your messaging in general. (At Gem, we prefer “you” because it gives our prospective candidates the impression that they’re being spoken to directly.) These pronouns alienate neither women nor nonbinary talent.

## Use Gender-Neutral Language

Let’s start with the obvious. When female-identified talent reads job descriptions that say of the ideal candidate: “He will design, code, and test across our distributed, open source database,” there’s a strong indicator in the language that this position isn’t for her. “*S/he* will design, code, and test” is just as excluding: talent that doesn’t identify with the gender binary will understand this as a subtle signal that your organization isn’t looking to employ *them*, either. When you describe your ideal candidate, dispense with gendered pronouns altogether. “*You* will design, code, and test”; “*you* will be accountable for”; “*you* will help us disrupt”; and so on. “They”/“them” and “you” are your most inclusive available pronouns; but “you” gives talent the impression that they’re being spoken to directly. Choose one of these options and commit to it.

## Use Inclusive Language

Pronouns aren’t the only words that send subtle messages to prospects about your ideal hire, influencing whether or not they decide to respond. Study after study has found that certain language “skews” male or female, subconsciously appealing to or deterring talent that identifies with a certain gender. You’ve probably heard the obvious ones. “Rockstar,” “ninja,” and “guru” tend to signal a male-dominated culture and repel female-identified talent: each of these words is historically associated with men. The same is true of language such as “kickass,” “crushing it,” “dominate,” and the Silicon Valley-favorite “work hard, play hard.” Not only do these words and phrases imply that the organization won’t be welcoming—or worse, that it will be hostile—to women; they also imply that the culture isn’t inclusive of older talent.

Even less “aggressive” language—“fast-paced,” “ambitious,” “competitive”—has implications. These modifiers have historically been understood as positive attributes for men and negative attributes for women. What’s the female-coded language, you wonder? It includes “collaboration,” “cooperation,” “understanding,” “loyalty,” “passion,” “support,” and “dedication.” You might assume, then, that a best practice would be to *balance* “masculine” and “feminine” language in your job description; but research actually shows that altering the vocabulary to be more receptive to women does nothing to deter men from applying. On the other hand, you risk driving away female-identified talent *any* time you use masculine-coded language. Our suggestion? Lean toward “feminine” language. Male talent won’t

Studies have shown that talent finds jobs more attractive when there's a match between their gender and the gendered wording used in the job description—*regardless of whether the role is traditionally more male- or female-dominated. Yet while job descriptions that are “skewed” male deter women from applying, the same is not true for men, who will apply in equal numbers to female-skewed JDs. The takeaway? Lean toward “feminine” language in your JDs. Everyone on the gender spectrum who is interested will respond.*

self-select out; so replacing “determined” with “dedicated,” “managing” with “developing,” *and* “drives results” with “creates meaningful change” will alter the responses to your outreach and the makeup of your talent pool when it comes to gender diversity.

Beyond gender, there are other demographics to consider. Aubrey Blanche, currently Global Head of Equitable Design & Impact at Culture Amp, notes that “using highly corporate language is often a signal to people of color that they won’t thrive [in that workplace culture], because that language was developed in predominantly White, male spaces.” The word “stakeholder,” for example “serves as a signal to people of color that their contributions may not be valued.” Blanche is right; but the impact is even broader than people of color: highly corporate language suggests that *any* talent needs some insider knowledge if they’re going to be successful at the organization. So try “partners” or “collaborators.” Indeed, wherever you can drop the jargon and the acronyms (“KPIs,” “SLAs,” “P&L”), do so. You won’t alienate talent that’s self-taught, or that isn’t already in your industry and doesn’t know the jargon.

The same goes for language that might alienate disabled talent. We just typed “25 pounds” into the search feature at Indeed.com, and nearly 14,000 jobs came up. *One-third* of the first page-results were for marketing jobs—all of which said that the right candidate would have to lift 25 or more pounds on occasion. Imagine how many great marketers who happen to be disabled decide not to apply for these jobs, for which the *actual* hire probably never has to lift more than their laptop. So don’t add it to your JD if it’s actually not a physical requirement—or if a disability hire could have accommodations if 25 pounds ever *did* have to be lifted.

While it’s important to learn to be more thoughtful about word choices in your writing and speech, there’s technology out there that can help you screen for language that might suggest bias in your JDs. Augmented writing tools will analyze your job descriptions (you can use them for email outreach as well), identify potentially biased language, highlight those words, and recommend alternatives for a more demographically-inclusive posting. And if you transfer this inclusive language practice into your email outreach, it will mean higher response rates for your efforts.

## Reduce Requirements to “Must-Haves”...

Before you even start crafting the job description with your hiring manager, we recommend a serious analysis of the role’s requirements—including the skills and competencies needed to excel in it. We understand your hiring

**Examples of “requirements” that may reveal unconscious bias and suggest an unwelcoming environment for underrepresented groups:**

- Advanced degrees from high-profile universities
- Certifications that, because of their cost, may not be available to all talent
- Programming jobs that require candidates to have a history of contributing to open source software
- Seniority requirements

manager’s impulse to describe the unicorn candidate of their dreams in the job description (and *your* impulse to look for that unicorn as you source); but take “The R Word” seriously here. Are the requirements your hiring manager wants to list *actually* indispensable to getting the job done? If not, we suggest listing them in a separate category as “nice-to-haves”—and possibly doing away with them altogether.

Why so? Because with every new requirement, you eliminate one more reason qualified, underrepresented talent would self-select out. You’ve probably heard of the Hewlett Packard study which found that women typically only apply for jobs where they meet 100% of the requirements for the role; men, on the other hand, will typically apply if they only meet 60% of them. Behavioral data from LinkedIn’s recent Gender Insights Report confirms this. While they’re as interested in new career opportunities as men are—and while they view open jobs in virtually equal numbers—women are 16% less likely than men to apply to a job after viewing it. When the Harvard Business Review followed up on this report, they discovered that the reason women didn’t apply had nothing to do with a “confidence gap.” Indeed, female talent *knew* they could do those jobs as well as men could. They simply believed that applying for the job was a waste of their time and energy, since they didn’t meet all the qualifications set forth in the JD.

In other words, the more requirements you list, the fewer female applicants or female responses to your outreach you’re likely to get. What’s more, data suggests that underrepresented talent is more likely to underestimate their skills, while majority talent is more likely to overestimate their skills, making a skills-abilities approach to the job description unintentionally biased. So challenge your hiring managers to consider which screening qualifications really matter, which skills are flexible, and which can be learned on the job. (While we’re at it, it’s also worth remembering that data shows majority group members tend to be judged based on their potential, while underrepresented folks tend to be judged by their proven record. This is an unconscious bias that’s worth talking through with your hiring manager: how will you both ensure this doesn’t happen for your open roles?)

Here are some ways qualifications can reveal unconscious bias:

**Socioeconomic bias** is often unintentionally at play in job descriptions that emphasize the need for advanced degrees from a set of high-profile universities or having studied a certain curriculum—neither of which may have been available to underrepresented talent. Qualified individuals who possess the relevant skills and professional experience but couldn’t afford a college education simply won’t apply—and you’ll be missing out on a much more vital pipeline.

**Gender bias** is at play in programming jobs that require candidates to have spent time contributing to open source



Within corporations in 2017 there was a distinct drop-off in women of color moving up the ranks: from entry-level employees (17%), to managers (12%), to senior managers or directors (8%), to vice presidents (6%) and C-Suite execs (4%). The takeaway? JDs that list seniority requirements become a barrier to entry for women of color.

software. If you know anything about open source programming, you know that female-identified engineers have often experienced hostility in these spaces; so many simply don't engage. A 2017 GitHub survey of talent on its own repositories discovered that "the gender imbalance in open source remains profound: 95% of respondents are men; just 3% are women and 1% are non-binary." That same year, respondents to Stack Overflow's survey found that 88.6% of users identified as male. And the reality is that, while having contributed to open source development is a "nice-to-have," it's not a critical requirement for your role. So don't list it as one. You'll miss out on a lot of great female engineers if you do.

**Gender and racial bias** is unintentionally at play in job postings that list seniority requirements. That's because female representation drops steadily as you move from entry-level positions up to the C-suite. (In 2017, it fell by more than 50%). What's more, in corporations in 2017 there was a distinct drop-off in women of color when moving up the ranks: from entry-level employees (17%), to managers (12%), to senior managers or directors (8%), to vice presidents (6%) and C-Suite execs (4%). So requiring past experience in seniority positions becomes a barrier to entry for qualified female candidates—especially women of color.

You can see how the requirement-effect can be chilling. What's more, studies suggest that employers will tailor their notion of "what it takes" to do a job well to the credentials of the person they already *want* to hire—in other words, they're willing to shift their standards if a (typically male) candidate fits their desired profile. If there's room for this kind of flexibility on certain credentials, they *should not* be listed as requirements. If you say you need someone with ten years of experience, be *100%* certain you can't hire someone with eight years; because the people you're mostly likely to turn away are women and URMs.

### ... Or Replace Requirements with Results

What can you put in place of those requirement-lists that are filtering out quality candidates and homogenizing your pipeline? One option is to separate *minimum* requirements from *preferred* requirements. "Nice-to-haves," "bonus points for," and "familiarity with" are ways of softening the language and making the JD feel more inclusive and inviting for all talent. You might even consider getting rid of those "nice-to-haves" altogether. What skills or technologies can be learned on the job if the candidate is otherwise stellar? What do they absolutely *have* to know coming in, and what could they pick up quickly or learn along the way? (We probably don't have to remind you that your organization's willingness to "grow" your talent will translate into stronger loyalty and higher retention numbers.)

A results-based JD—sometimes called an “impact statement”—focuses on what the role actually *does* rather than on what the ideal candidate *looks like*. It lays out what the new employee would be expected to achieve at certain milestones after being hired, dispensing with requirements altogether. (“Required” skills are implicit in the tasks new hires would be expected to complete and the impact they’d be expected to have.) Because they focus on purpose—one of the biggest drivers of employee happiness—they’re likely to be more compelling to *all* prospects... but particularly to underrepresented ones.

Another option is to let go of the *requirements*-based JD and embrace the results-based JD. These focus on what the employee would be expected to achieve—one month, three months, six months, a year into the role. What will they own and be responsible for? What will success *look like* at these milestones? Rather than applying because they “meet the requirements,” candidates will apply because they *know* they can achieve the goals and objectives your JD—and your outreach—lays out.

Since they focus on tasks and impact (what the role actually *does*) rather than on what the ideal candidate looks like, these descriptions prevent confusion and better help talent self-select. They help hiring managers craft onboarding processes and give them more clarity in assessing success when it comes time for performance reviews—making unconscious bias less likely to creep into those reviews as well. And they allow talent to visualize both what a growth trajectory would look like for them and how their role would fit into the company’s larger narrative and vision, making it all the more compelling to apply.

Best of all? The *right* people will apply; because they’ll be concerned with what they can offer the role, rather than with what requirements they don’t fulfill.

## Consider Indicating a Salary Range

We know; this may not *seem* like a best practice. In fact, it may feel completely counterintuitive... but hear us out. We know from the Equality and Human Rights Commission that nearly two-thirds of women (61%) would take a company’s gender pay gap into consideration when applying for a job there. And according to LinkedIn, salary range and benefits are the most important information to see in a job description for 68% of women. (We’ll discuss benefits shortly.) Add to this the fact that, in 2019, White women were earning, on average, 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. Asian women were earning 85 cents, Black women 61 cents, Native American women 58 cents, and Latina women 53 cents for every dollar earned by their White, male counterparts. And on average, Black women in the United States are paid 21% less than their White, female counterparts.

Those are some dismal gaps. Including a salary range in your JD builds trust for prospective talent early on. It lets female and underrepresented prospects know that you’re committed to equity and fair pay. After all, the salary you disclose will be the salary *regardless* of the candidate’s gender, race, or other demographic characteristics.

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Want to take it further? Consider a “no-negotiation” compensation policy. The logic behind this is that men negotiate more often than women do (46% to 30%); and when those women *do* negotiate, they're less likely to get what they ask for. Thus the gender pay gap broadens—which is precisely what you're trying to avoid. So experiment with adding a salary (whether a range or a strict number) to your JDs, and observe what shifts for you in terms of interested outreach responses and job applications.

## Emphasize Your Company's Commitment to D&I

As far as your job description goes, if you've already employed the best practices we've discussed here, talent may intuit the care you're taking to build an inclusive workforce—whether or not they're consciously aware of it. But it also doesn't hurt to just say it. Instead of claiming you'll *accept* applications from all demographics, specifically *encourage* talent from underrepresented demographics to apply. “We strongly encourage people from underrepresented groups to apply” is one of the more common ways of phrasing this inclusive strategy.

Why “strongly encourage” rather than its tolerating counterpart, “accept”? Recent data suggests that including the bare-minimum Equal Employment Opportunity statement which might be required by law in your job description may not be enough: Textio found that using a bare-minimum, boilerplate EEO statement in job ads (“We are an equal opportunity employer”) led to worse hiring results than JDs that *didn't* include one. That's because the statement is ultimately only meaningful if your JD is calling out the value in more subtle ways—and if talent discovers that you're not just paying lip service when they click into your careers site and your website as a whole.

Textio's data shows that job descriptions with inclusive and equal opportunity language *beyond the boilerplate statement* fill, on average, 10% faster across all demographic groups than descriptions that don't include such language. Which means a statement about your company's commitment to DEI has to be customized, genuine, and human, not cut-and-paste and superficial. Prospective candidates will believe it *only* if it aligns with the other language cues in your JD—all of which we discussed above. If such a statement doesn't exist for your company yet, we recommend reaching out to upper management to get a plan moving for crafting one. This should be part of the organization's broader diversity strategy, and reflective of the reality of the organization's values. As such, it will improve both the diversity of your pipeline and the quality of your candidates.

Take a look at the JDs of the companies you know are doing good work in the D&I space. Our customer Slack appends this note to all their job descriptions: “Ensuring a diverse and inclusive workplace where we learn from each other is core to Slack’s values. We welcome people of different backgrounds, experiences, abilities and perspectives. We are an equal opportunity employer and a pleasant and supportive place to work. Come do the best work of your life here at Slack.” Our customer Pinterest, on the other hand, links to a page called “Building an Inclusive Company” from every job description. Prospective candidates can click in and read Pinterest’s publicly-available diversity hiring goals, as well as their current representation numbers.

## Always Be Willing to Revise Your Job Description

The job description is a living genre, and you should be collecting feedback and revising where necessary. While you likely won’t include the JD in your outreach, it will certainly *inform* your outreach. So survey underrepresented candidates to find out what aspects of the description—and of your outreach—ultimately prompted them to respond. Send drafts of your JD to underrepresented talent on the teams you’re hiring for and ask if they’d be willing to offer suggestions. Would the JD, as it stands, give them the impression that they’d be welcome on their own team? With those responses in hand, keep iterating.

# Incorporating Inclusive Cues into Your Email Outreach and Careers Page

We dove into your job descriptions *first* for a couple of reasons. One is that it's a collaborative document. In poring over the JD with your hiring manager, the two of you *together* can start thinking about (or *continue* to think about) not only how you're presenting your organization to underrepresented talent, but also what structures or elements currently in place in the org could use some more conscientious thought. Which means you've got *two* stakeholders, rather than one, who can give voice to changes that might improve your company's inclusiveness as you uncover them. The other is that—as we mentioned above—the care you take to ensure an inclusive job description will carry over to the care you take to ensure inclusive outreach. And your JD will sit on your careers page, which you'll link to from your outreach. In that sense, the JD will inform both your careers page and your outreach campaigns.

These three elements—your job description, your careers page, and your email outreach—are all part of a broader message your organization is sending that should feel unified and coherent. If talent is interested in a role with you, they'll be looking in a lot of different places to decide if yours is the organization they want to come to. This is true of *all* talent, but perhaps particularly true of underrepresented talent: how will they know your company is a safe place to land? So rather than breaking up careers pages and outreach into separate sections, we decided to think about them together as sites at which underrepresented talent will be looking for cues that they'll be welcome at your company. There are a whole host of cues that will signal your commitment to inclusion, belonging, psychological safety, equity, and retention of folks from a variety of backgrounds. Below, we discuss how you might signal those cues in both places. But first, a note on the importance of nurture:

## Why is Nurture Especially Important for Underrepresented Talent?

Let's start with something you probably already know. The best recruiting teams are thinking beyond current open roles; they're not just hiring for today's—or even for this quarter's—immediate needs. Instead, top talent teams have adjusted their strategies and are proactively building out talent pipelines for future hiring needs. They're initiating conversations and developing long-term relationships with the recognition that it may take months—or even years—

By building and nurturing relationships with prospects over the long haul, you'll have a bigger pool to choose from when a position opens. And because you won't be rushing to fill those newly-open roles, you'll be less pressed to turn to the first-best prospect—the “quick hire” often made through referrals and former colleagues— and replicate the homogeneity in your organization. That's how the nurture mindset supports diversity initiatives.

before talent is ready to apply. What happens in the space between is called *nurture*: consistent messaging through gentle touchpoints that sells prospective candidates on your company, its mission and vision, its team and its culture, over time. Studies have shown that it can take anywhere between 12 and 20 touchpoints to influence a career decision. That string of touchpoints ensures you're top-of-mind for prospects when it is time to consider a career move. It's also where your employer brand is built, and—if done well—where some of the best candidate experiences can happen.

The reason nurture campaigns are so important in diversity hiring is that they actually improve diversity numbers in your pipeline. This makes sense: by building relationships with prospects *before* you need them, you've got a bigger pool to choose from when a position *does* open. And because you're not rushing to fill roles that have just opened, you're less pressed to turn to the first-best prospect—the “quick hire” often made through referrals and former colleagues—and replicate the homogeneity in your organization.

What's more, underrepresented talent may need to be nurtured more than majority talent does. They have the same skills, qualifications, and competencies as other talent, but their needs and expectations may differ. The concerns that keep them up at night aren't necessarily the same concerns that keep the average applicant up at night. Maybe they've stayed at unfulfilling jobs because at least they've felt a sense of safety there. Maybe they're desperate to move to an organization that will support their gender transition. Maybe they're frustrated at the dearth of female leadership at their current company and would gladly move to an organization whose leadership makeup suggested career advancement is possible for them. They may value family and stability over risk-taking and adventure—the “work hard, play hard” mentality you may be used to pointing to in your outreach. And so on.

*Any* job change involves taking a leap into a new culture; but the stakes may feel higher for underrepresented talent. They want to be clear about what—if any—challenges they'd encounter were they to take on a new role. Nurture campaigns give you time to demonstrate to them that your initial outreach wasn't just about finding token talent to pad your team's diversity stats. Rather, you can prove that *inclusion* is as important to your org as diversity is—that it's baked into your company's DNA at all levels. It may take time for your prospects to see the whole, genuine picture, and let go of their wariness.

If you recently met a group of prospects at an LGBTQ in Tech event and another group at a Bay Area Black Designers event, you're not necessarily going to want to send them the same content about your organization. Segmenting them in your talent CRM allows you to send relevant content (an invite to your next pride event; a webinar by your Head of Design, a badass Black woman). At Gem, some of our most forward-thinking customers take the guesswork out of segmenting and include a request in their initial outreach for prospects to self-identify. When prospects respond, our customers know what nurture campaign to put them in.

Of course, not all prospects for your diversity initiative need to hear the same things; and this is where strategic segmentation will come in. Maybe you've been segmenting your prospects into categories like role or geo; but consider segmenting prospects for your diversity initiatives by demographic. If you recently met a group of prospects at an LGBTQ in Tech event and another group at a Bay Area Black Designers event, you're not necessarily going to send them the same content. Segmenting them allows you to send relevant content (an invite to your next pride event; a webinar by your Head of Design, who's a badass Black woman). Recruiters need to start catering to prospective candidates the way marketing messaging caters to prospective customers. (That said, remember that these groups are *not* perfectly distinct! To honor intersectionality, you might allow prospects to self-identify or to opt-in for specific newsletters so you can segment them according to how *they* self-select.)

Naturally, you'll send this targeted content alongside the content you send to *all* your prospects: product updates, press releases and media mentions about your company, reports or ebooks by your marketing team that are relevant to the prospect's field, free tools (*also* relevant to their field), news on social or civic activity you're involved in, webinars with your CEO or managers, Glassdoor reviews, and so on. Share a combination of these things. Don't reference your LGBTQ+ team members in *every* email you send to the person you met at that LGBTQ in Tech event. (After all, just because you met them there doesn't mean they identify as such. What it *means* is that they support the LGBTQ+ community.) They also want to see case studies to understand how your product is working for its customers. And they want to hear from you *personally*—congratulating them on a work anniversary or a recent talk they've given, or asking how they feel about their recent product launch. Granted, you won't be able to keep up on every prospect like this; but for those hard-to-fill roles, it'll be worth it.

One terrific strategy is to do your research internally: Talk with the underrepresented talent in your company and find out what's important to them. What caused them to respond when your team initially reached out? What facets of your company kept them moving through your funnel; and why did they ultimately decide to join? From there, you can build recruitment messaging that is relevant and effective. As you get responses from prospective candidates, listen to the concerns they may voice, and use these concerns both to help build a more inclusive culture, and to shift your own messaging strategies.

## Signaling Inclusion through Language

This is perhaps the most obvious strategy; but we're keeping this section short for two reasons. In the first place, we covered a vast majority of what "signaling inclusion through language" *looks* like when we discussed your job descriptions. Your JD is (necessarily) a text-based document; and a lot of what you'll want to remember about the language to use in your outreach and on your careers page you'll find there. But we're also keeping this section short because, when all is said and done, talent will care less about what you *say* and more about how you *show* your commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. With that, here are two additional ways you can signal inclusion in the language you use in your outreach and on your careers page:

### **Put Your Pronouns in Your Signature**

This is a small but very important signal. Including your pronouns—in your email signature, yes, but also on your LinkedIn profile, which you might link to from your signature—is a way of affirming your allyship and showing that your company values diversity enough that it's *even* paying attention to how employees "introduce" themselves. They're small words, but a "she/her," "he/him," "they/them," etc. appended to your name will show gender-nonconforming talent in particular that—as a recruiter and a spokesperson for your company—you're conscientious about how talent identifies.

### **Include a Diversity Statement on Your Careers Page**

Your diversity "statement" could take many forms. It might look exactly like the statement you've appended to your job description. It might come in the form of one of your core values, the list of which you publish on your careers page. It might be a statement directly from the CEO—quoted on your website or presented in a video. Indeed, video can do wonders here: in the space of a few minutes, a diversity video allows prospective candidates to hear directly from the CEO *and* employees—both underrepresented and majority. They'll hear what workplace diversity means to the company and what it's signified for individuals. They'll get to hear your successes, objectives, intentions, and strategies. They'll get to see diversity at work in your office.



## Signaling Commitment to Representation

This is where you get to move from the realm of *telling* into the realm of showing. Representation is fundamentally about numbers. If your company is committed to representation, it means you're collectively working toward a day that the makeup of your team reflects the makeup of your geographical location, of your customer base, and of the communities you serve. Representation means underrepresented talent can already see people who look like themselves in the company that's trying to hire them. Signaling your company's commitment to representation entails sharing everything from images of your team, to social proof from external sources, to demographic data, and more. Here's how:

### Share Images of Your Team—In All Its Diverse Glory—On Your Careers Page

One thing you *don't* want is for a prospect to leave the email in which you're celebrating your organization's commitment to diversity to click into your career site, where they don't see a single person who looks like them. Images of white men grouped together in conference rooms will make female talent and talent of color think *that's* what all your meetings look like. What's the impact of this? They anticipate a diminished sense of belonging and may expect to be stereotyped more. As a result, they're less likely to respond to your outreach. (If your company's meetings *do* look like this, it's great that you're reading this. The images of your current team should still be true to life; but be clear about your hopes to shape a less-homogenous workforce—and include some of the elements we recommend in other sections both in your outreach and on your website.)

Beyond honoring the diversity of your employees, represent the diversity of day-to-day activities: laughing and collaborating around a desk at the office, socializing at industry events, learning new art forms at team-building offsites, or doing work with the community organization you partner with for your social responsibility initiatives. The more work-related activities you depict, the more likely you are to resonate with talent who is looking for more than regular after-work happy hours. And the more likely prospects are to envision themselves working with you.

### Illustrate (or Point to) Your Company Culture in Outreach

All prospective candidates want access to the human side of your company: they want to see, hear *from*, or hear *about* the folks that make your organization tick. But underrepresented prospects are looking for you to show—not *tell*—that your company is invested in creating a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment for talent who look like them.

Your careers page shouldn't just represent the diversity of your employees; it should also represent the diversity of work-related activities they participate in. Displaying images of employees socializing at industry events, learning new art forms at team-building offsites, or doing work with community organizations makes you all the more likely to resonate with talent who is looking for more than after-work happy hours.

### Spotlighting company culture in your outreach:

- Quote employees celebrating your company's inclusion efforts directly in your outreach
- Offer to put underrepresented talent in touch with underrepresented employees—female-identified tech talent in touch with your female lead engineer, for example
- Link to your company's diversity recruitment video or to blog posts written by underrepresented talent
- Link to your social platforms... and make sure those feeds celebrate the range of talent in your org

There are a hundred ways to show this (or at least point to it) in outreach. Maybe you quote an employee talking about company culture directly in your outreach. Maybe you offer to put female-identified tech talent in touch with your female lead engineer. Maybe you partner with marketing to create a “diversity recruitment video” that you link to in outreach, in which your CEO and employees share what diversity means to them, and what your company's inclusion practices have taught them. Maybe you choose one employee a month to showcase on your blog or social media accounts, so that prospects who jump into those platforms get a sense of the variety of interests and personalities floating around your office. Then link to individual posts or to those social platforms in your outreach.

As far as your social media feeds go, consider these types of posts:

- Images employees take when it's *their* turn to “take over” social for the week and tell their stories
- Photos from internal events that celebrate diversity: your annual multicultural potluck, employees marching in your city's pride parade, the poets your company brought into the office for a lunchtime performance to celebrate Black History Month, and so on
- Photos of a variety of team-building events that appeal to *all* demographics—not just happy hour Fridays, which alienate parents, caretakers, and sober folks
- Images of team members speaking at (or otherwise participating in) industry events. Is one of your back-end developers speaking at a local Women in Tech event? Document it on social, put the video up on your website, and ask her to write a blog post about the experience afterward.
- Images of all your employees taken during internal gatherings: All Hands meetings, Go-to-Market meetings, Employee Resource Group gatherings, mentoring circles, and so on
- Community involvement. Whether this looks like sponsorship of organizations whose work you admire, internship or mentorship programs, volunteer work, or other philanthropic activities, showcase what you're doing in the realm of corporate social responsibility (CSR), and the ways you're advocating for social causes that advance underrepresented groups.

### Display Diversity Awards You've Won, or Call Them Out in Outreach

Of course, you'll want to share *any* public recognition that your company receives with passive talent—whether it's a news segment about your company's environmental initiatives, stellar Glassdoor reviews, or your ranking in this year's “Best Workplace” list. But if you've won specific D&I awards (Best Employer for Diversity, Top LGBTQ-Friendly

### Here's what data you might share in your public demographic stats:

What percentage of employees in your company are currently female-identified and nonbinary?

What percentage of employees in your company are currently URM? (Break this out as you see fit: Black, Latinx, Native, Pacific Islander, veterans, disabled, LGBTQ+, etc.)

What does the above data look like when broken out by role (tech, non-tech, leadership)?

What are your demographic goals?

If you need a model, check out our customer Twilio's diversity page ([www.twilio.com/company/diversity](http://www.twilio.com/company/diversity)). They even include an internal wage gap assessment in their stats.

Employer, Best Place to Work for People with Disabilities, Top Company for Employee Resource Groups, etc.) or public recognition of your organization's D&I efforts (high ranking on the Disability Equality Index, Diversity Best Practices Inclusion Index, or Corporate Equality Index), these should absolutely be highlighted on your careers page and called out in your outreach.

Acknowledgement from an outside source serves as social proof that your organization is what it says it is. For underrepresented talent in particular, public recognition of your DEI efforts suggests the company is doing more than talking the talk. And if you didn't know these awards existed, now's the time to look into them. Competing in these external award programs is a powerful way of holding your organization accountable to upholding the values it claims to hold. At worst, you'll have a series of benchmarks against which to measure your current and future efforts. At best? You'll have some recognition to share out to prospective candidates.

### Share Demographic Stats

In recent years, forward-thinking companies like our customers Pinterest, Slack, and Twilio have begun to publicly share their demographic data. What we love about the data shared from all three companies is that they offer more than overall composition; they also break down the demographic makeup of their leadership teams. Like competing for those diversity awards, displaying these metrics on your website (and pointing to it in your outreach) helps your org hold itself accountable for making progress in its DEI goals. You might announce your demographic goals on your careers site. You might also include data like percentage of participation in your company's ERGs, or supplier diversity.

Even if the numbers aren't exactly what you'd like them to be, transparency has a (positive) dual consequence: aside from forcing you to hold yourself accountable to your numbers, it also evokes trust in prospective candidates. Research suggests that even if its numbers are low, an organization can engender trust with a strong statement about its commitment to D&I alongside that data. The amount and type of information you publish will be entirely up to the company; but the point is transparency. Be willing to publish an externally-visible set of scorecards and put yourself under the microscope. It will be a breath of fresh air for prospective candidates. After all, you'll be doing better than the vast majority of Fortune 500 companies, only 3% of which were sharing their diversity data in 2017.

One word of caution for companies here is to not fold different departments together in strange ways to try to mask true diversity numbers. We've seen companies combine "Product" under their technical numbers; we've even seen

them include their tech recruiters in order to make the company’s “technical team” appear more gender-balanced. For URMs in departments that have particularly bad representation (i.e. engineering), this can probably do more harm than good.

### **Consider a Prospect Self-Identification Form**

This is something some of our customers have been experimenting with, and it’s worth mentioning here. A prospect self-identification form is exactly what it sounds like: an opportunity for prospective candidates to self-identify before they apply—and before you can officially gather EEOC data. One option is to include a link to the form in your signature (below your pronouns!) for all prospect outreach. Another is to actively ask prospective candidates to consider filling it out once they’ve replied as “interested.”

There are any number of ways to phrase the messaging around this. One up-front way is to say something like: “At [company], we know how important it is to have a diverse team in order to have a strong one. That’s why we want to build relationships with as broad a range of talent as we can... even before you apply. If you’d like to help us do that, we’d love for you to fill out this short form to tell us a little bit about yourself.” Another option which doesn’t so explicitly refer to your diversity initiatives might read something like: “I’m so glad to hear you’re interested in hearing more about us! At [company], we’re serious about starting relationships off on the right foot; and we want to make sure that we call you what you want to be called, refer to you the way you want to be referred, and send you the content about our company that’s most relevant to you. If you have 2 minutes to tell me a bit about your preferences before we chat, it’ll help me get to know you... *before* I get to know you.”

However you decide to phrase it, the point, of course, is to underscore that diversity and conscientiousness around the various ways talent identifies are both values you prize. Make sure you note that talent’s responses will *not* be linked to any application or be used to influence hiring decisions. For organizations that de-couple demographic information from applications as a bias-management strategy, this is key.

## Signaling Psychological Safety

Many of the suggestions we gave above are about representation: showing the variety of identities represented in the workforce to let folks know that diversity is important to you. But diversity means nothing without inclusion. Similarly, representation means nothing without cultivating psychological safety. If you can signal your company's commitment to *representation* in your messaging, it means your org has succeeded in bringing a diverse range of talent into its fold. But once they're *there*, do underrepresented talent feel seen, heard, welcomed, honored and appreciated as essential parts of the community? Do they feel they have the same access to resources, opportunities, and promotions as their peers do? There are certain cues underrepresented talent will look for that your company is as committed to *inclusion* as it is to diversity—and it shouldn't surprise you to hear that a lot of them entail hearing from your employees directly.

### **Link to Your Employee Blog, Where *Everyone* on Your Team Gets a Voice**

Even better than seeing images of your employees is getting to *hear directly from* them. One way to allow for this is to include testimonials on your careers page in which employees tell prospective candidates why your organization has been such a terrific place for them to work. We also recommend you highlight and link to your employee blog, where *all* employees get spotlights. (You might even highlight some of the most compelling posts directly on your careers page.) Maybe you interview a different team member every week about their experiences with your company. Maybe underrepresented talent picks up the pen *themselves*, and describes their career trajectory and the opportunities they've had to advance while with you. Maybe employees don't talk explicitly about diversity at *all* in their posts; but it's clear from their range of experiences, idiolects, and enthusiasms that you've got a diverse team built on a sweet, strong, inclusive culture.

That said, absolutely make sure prospects can hear directly from your female Lead Data Engineer, or your veteran Sales AE, or your trans Head of People. When talent sees that underrepresented groups are in leadership roles in particular, they'll perceive that your company is a place where they could actually grow their careers. Make sure employees are pronoun-forward when they introduce themselves in that "spotlight" video, and/or that they have their pronouns listed on their LinkedIn profiles. This is a way of affirming allyship and showing that your company values diversity enough that it's even paying attention to the subtle signals—like the kind gender-nonconforming talent are looking out for.

When your employees introduce themselves—whether in videos or blog posts, on their LinkedIn profiles, or to candidates who come into the office to interview—make sure they're in the habit of leading with their pronouns. This is a way of affirming their allyship and showing that your company values diversity enough that it's even paying attention to the subtle signals—like the kind that gender-nonconforming talent are looking out for.

## Let Majority Talent Reflect upon Your Inclusion Initiatives, Too

We've just discussed having employees author blog posts that describe why they love working for your company, what their career trajectory has looked like in their time with you, and the things they've learned (both personally and professionally) while with you. It's worth pointing out that *none of those blog posts has to say anything about how employees identify*. In fact, you *don't* want to ask underrepresented employees to talk about who they are if that's not something they're comfortable doing. You can also show that your *majority* talent is cognizant of—and enthusiastic about—your organization's attention to DEI. After all, underrepresented talent won't just be looking to see if some of their future colleagues *look like* them; they'll be looking to see if the ones who *don't* are aware of the lived experiences of their Black, Muslim, queer, trans, veteran, etc. colleagues. Sometimes it can be even *more* meaningful for talent to see someone from the dominant group speaking about inclusive company practices.

One idea is to have majority talent reflect on any ethnic, cultural sensitivity, gender, or unconscious bias trainings that your company offers. Whether your org has asked employees to complete trainings from Facebook, Grovo, Catalyst, Paradigm, or elsewhere, or they've brought in a guest speaker from the D&I space to give a talk, invite reflections after these experiences. (This is a great thing to suggest even if employees *don't* plan on publicizing those reflections. Some employees may recognize their biases for the first time thanks to these trainings, which is always a little jarring and worth sitting with afterwards.) If there's an employee who's willing to publicize what the experience meant for them—what came up, what veils/walls came down, what they came away with—sharing that out will help demonstrate the thoughtfulness of your team. You can also, of course, think beyond trainings. Maybe a straight, White employee writes about their experience at last month's Black in Tech conference, or about their first-ever pride parade with their colleagues.

Privilege-mapping is another exercise your employees can put themselves through. This idea comes out of Jason Ford's remarkable Medium article "The Real Reason My Startup was Successful: Privilege." Jason did the emotional labor of listing the ways his success was, in no small part, a product of his environment and circumstances. As Aubrey Blanche has put it: "It's okay to say 'I worked hard, I'm smart, but I also know that I benefited from these pretty messed up systems.' All of those things can be true at once—you just have to reconcile that in your own mind." Are there employees in your company—maybe in your ally groups—willing to try this exercise? If so, maybe this is another reflection you can share out. The point is to let prospective employees know that belonging and inclusion are intentions for the *entire* team—not just for your underrepresented employees.

### Other things employees might reflect on, and that you can share in outreach:

How did your Muslim employees feel about the fact that your company decided to celebrate Ramadan together? What did your non-Muslim employees learn about their coworkers' culture during the celebration?

What have employees experienced in your company's decision to implement the "Round Robin" technique in meetings, in which everyone gets to contribute without interruption?

How did your non-binary employees feel walking into your bathrooms the day after you replaced your binary bathroom signs with inclusive ones? Or after you ordered company swag from a non-gender binary clothing company?

## Highlight Your Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

ERGs are employer-supported networks of employees with a shared demographic—from veterans to women of color to members of the LGBTQIA community—that come together for community, engagement, and personal development; and to hold events, overcome hurdles, advocate for diversity in recruiting, and more. These groups not only offer underrepresented employees an opportunity to present concerns, advocate for change, and promote visibility as a united front; they also serve as material proof to prospective candidates that inclusion efforts have support from the top. Share out any information about these groups prospective candidates would want to know. That includes describing the kinds of support ERGs receive in your organization.

A Culture Amp inclusion survey recently found that Black women and Latinx women (with LGBTQ women coming in at a close third) don't feel like their perspectives are included in decision-making at their respective companies. This is the beginning of a vicious cycle of exclusion which often results in the needs of these demographics getting ignored completely. That's why underrepresented talent wants to know that your company will hear—and what's more, seek *out*—their voices and opinions once they've been hired. It's why, according to a recent LinkedIn survey, 30% of talent acquisition professionals say they talk about ERGs with their candidates to underscore the company's commitment to diversity. ERGs send a strong signal about a company's values—after all, they meet during working hours, and their primary return on investment (ROI) isn't monetary. So show them on your careers pages, and link out to those pages in your outreach. If there was a recent event, share photos from it on social—or even in your outreach itself.

By the way, the flip-side of this coin is ally groups, which are made of members that represent your organization's majority talent. These groups are just as committed to taking action against the inequities experienced by underrepresented talent; the difference is that they come from (and *understand* that they come from) a place of privilege. These groups can be just as effective in creating a welcoming and supportive environment for underrepresented talent when they arrive.

## Link to Webinars or AMAs on Diversity

Has your Head of Talent Acquisition recently participated in a webinar about growing a diverse and inclusive workforce? Share it out. Has your CEO recently hosted an AMA (Ask Me Anything) about your diversity practices? Make sure prospective candidates have access to it. When it comes to signaling psychological safety, it shouldn't be a surprise to hear that passive talent will particularly want to hear from folks at the top and to see that your company has made it a practice to speak publicly about D&I (and will therefore hold itself accountable to walking-the-talk).

### Why a flexible work policy?

- The #1 company value that attracts female-identified talent is a flexible schedule
- In fact, women are 22% more likely than men to cite flexible work arrangements as a decisive factor when considering a job
- Flexible work widens your talent net to include talent with disabilities, caretakers, and those who live in more rural areas
- Because distance from downtown office locations is often correlated with more diverse neighborhoods, a work-from-home allowance means you're more likely to appeal to underrepresented talent who can't make the daily commute to your office

## Signaling Investment in Retention

We've discussed your company's commitment to belonging and inclusion in the short term; but how is it indicating a commitment to retaining underrepresented talent over the long haul? Another way of asking this is: what are the organizational structures in place to ensure *not only* that underrepresented talent will feel a sense of safety and belonging with the team that currently works for you, but also that, as the company grows, their sense of belonging will remain top-of-mind? It's wonderful if your current employee community is made up of folks who are all deeply invested in DEI. But talent changes jobs quickly these days; and if those structures aren't in place, you can't guarantee that any new formation of employees will hold themselves accountable to the same thoughtfulness and diligence. So you'll want to let underrepresented talent know that the architecture is there to support them, no matter *how* many employees come-and-go. (By the way, Employee Resource Groups, which we just discussed in terms of psychological safety, could just as appropriately have been mentioned here.)

### Highlight Your Inclusive Benefits

Consider what your outreach and careers page sound like to members of underrepresented demographics when it comes to employee benefits. Calling out perks like beer fridges, ping-pong tables, and company retreats to Tahoe in your outreach signals to talent that your culture was built with a certain demographic in mind, and may turn off candidates who don't fit that demographic. But "perks" and "benefits" are not the same thing: the latter is more meaningful for *all* types of talent you're looking to hire. Hopefully your organization has considered broad demographic appeal in creating its benefits... but they're not going to attract underrepresented talent if you don't call them out. Here's what to mention:

**Your flexible work policy.** "Workplace flexibility" might mean allowing employees to work from home or to set their own hours. Flexible policies allow parents (often new mothers who are transitioning back into the workforce) and caregivers (again, often women) feel valued and included in the workplace. But a flexible work policy appeals to talent across every demographic. Distance from downtown office locations is often positively correlated with more diverse neighborhoods, for example. A work-from-home option is likely to appeal to more geographically-remote talent, who is also more likely underrepresented. Flexible options will likely also appeal to disabled talent.



***Paid parental leave.*** In a 2014 survey of women who left tech, more than 10% of respondents said they left because of their company's maternity leave policy. Most of those new mothers said they would've returned to their jobs within months after giving birth; but because their companies didn't offer maternity leave, they had to quit. We like to think companies are generally offering maternity leave—indeed, parental leave for *both* parties—these days. You may remember what happened when Google increased its paid maternity leave from 12 to 18 weeks in 2007: The rate at which new moms left was reduced by 50%. The move was “much better for Google's bottom line,” said YouTube's CEO Susan Wojcicki, “to avoid costly turnover, and to retain the valued expertise, skills and perspective of our employees who are mothers. Best of all, mothers come back to the workforce with new insights.” Parental leave is a win-win for all parties. If you offer it, shout it out in both your JDs and your email outreach.

***Inclusive health insurance benefits.*** Are your health insurance benefits inclusive of employees with disabilities? Employees who are aging? Does your policy allow trans employees equal access to benefits, including trans-inclusive doctors and transition-related care? If same-sex marriage isn't legal in your state, do your benefits cover domestic partners? The more demographics your health benefits support, the more diverse talent you'll attract.

***Floating holidays.*** Your company likely closes for the majority (or all) of federal or bank holidays, regardless of what your employees' backgrounds or beliefs are. But what about those who celebrate a different set of holidays? If you offer employees the option of taking time off for their own religious holidays (and you should!), list that among the benefits in your outreach. Prospective talent that celebrates Ramadan or Hanukkah rather than Christmas or New Year's, for example, will be pleased to discover they won't have to use vacation days to observe their holy days.

As a recruiter, you may not be leading the conversation on company benefits; but you've certainly got competitive intelligence on what benefit packages your competitors are offering. If your company is lagging on inclusive benefits, bring that competitive intel to the attention of your hiring manager or your company's executives. You may help swing the pendulum there.

Only 1 in 5 C-suite executives is a woman, despite the fact that women have made up 57% of college graduates since the '90s. Only 1 in 25 is a woman of color. Mentorship and sponsorship programs boost the representation of minority demographics by offering advocates who can speak on talent's behalf at meetings, giving them visibility in the company, and helping draw out their abilities and demonstrate their potential for leadership.

## Spotlight Your Mentorship and Sponsorship Initiatives

Hopefully your company is providing opportunities for growth and development for everyone who works there; but these opportunities are particularly important for women and underrepresented minorities, who continue to face barriers and challenges to internal promotion. This talent is much less likely to see people who look like them at the top: only about 1 in 5 C-suite executives, for example, is a woman—*despite* the fact that women have made up 57% of college graduates since the '90s. Only 1 in 25 is a woman of color.

When talent lacks internal role models who are members of their demographic, it's harder to imagine career advancement within the company. When women and people of color can identify and forge bonds with role models in leadership positions who “look like” them, on the other hand, advancement begins to feel possible. Confidence increases. So does the likelihood that they'll reach out for support or mentorship. The moral of the story? Regardless of whether you currently have minorities in leadership positions, you'll want formal mentorship and/or sponsorship programs. Let your “majority” leaders mentor your minority employees until those URMs rise in the ranks.

Formal mentorship and sponsorship programs have been shown to boost representation of Black, Hispanic, and Asian-American women in managerial positions, as well as Hispanic and Asian-American men, by 9% to 24%. Employees with sponsors are 62% more likely than those *without* to have asked for and received a promotion. That's because sponsors help ensure that employees' career plans and roadmaps for advancement are reviewed on a regular basis. They give new and underrepresented employees the resources and insights they need to advance. They act as advocates who can speak on their behalf at meetings, give them visibility in the company, and help draw out their abilities and demonstrate their potential for leadership. All of which puts underrepresented talent in the pipeline to be recognized. Which ultimately means more than attraction; it also means retention.

Whether your mentorship program entails informal coffee dates, allowing women in the company to connect across teams and network organically, or is a more formal mentoring ring for new employees that runs for a set duration, underrepresented talent will want to hear about the initiatives and structures you have in place to ensure they'll be as nurtured-and-invested-in as their straight, White, male counterparts when they arrive. So if you have them? Shout them out in your outreach. Link to blog posts by mentees who rose in your company's ranks thanks to their internal mentors. Include images from your recent mentoring event. Maybe you even send one of the emails in your outreach sequence on behalf of a mentor currently in a leadership position, who advanced to that position specifically with the help of her mentors. And so on.

## Implying that They're *Already* Included

There's perhaps no better way to help underrepresented talent believe that they'd belong at your organization than to make them feel like they're *already* at the party, and that they've *already* been invited to the conversation. However you can, invite prospective candidates to engage with you—whether on social media, at industry events that you share with them, or as part of your talent network. Implying that they're already included can also mean things like sharing industry data, which makes talent feel that you're invested in their careers no matter where they end up. Here's what we mean by all of these things:

### Share Industry Data, such as Salary Trends

We've discussed how including salary information in your job description alleviates the concern underrepresented talent may have that your organization may not be committed to equity and fair pay. That's why salary trends are a great set of data points to offer: in sharing these trends, you're reinforcing your company's commitment to keeping pace with them. Gather the data from sites like Dice, Hired.com, Glassdoor, and LinkedIn. Ensure your prospect and candidate database is segmented in your talent CRM so you can send the information most relevant to talent's roles.

Other industry data you might share includes trending skills/skills currently in high demand, career outlooks, market predictions, and more. Sending this data out to talent proves you're interested in supporting their career trajectories—*regardless* of whether or not they decide to come work for you.

### Invite Prospective Candidates to Events

With all of this outreach content, you'll surely have piqued prospects' interests through your efforts. Now invite them to events so you can carry on the conversation in real time. After all, one of the best ways to get talent hooked on your company is to get them interacting with their (hopeful) future colleagues. Of course, *any* opportunity for a candidate to meet the employees at your company will give them a window into your organization and accelerate their evaluation of your workplace. But events give prospective candidates the lived experience of the community your company has worked so hard to build—and because they're focused on inclusion and growth rather than on selling roles, there's no pressure from any of the parties involved. For all the curated content we've discussed, nothing beats the live experience. So don't overlook this strategy when it comes to diversifying your talent pool.

### Leveraging Hashtags

Consider coming up with your own memorable company hashtag for employees to use in their posts. Ask them to use it when they post work-related content to their own feeds as well. This way you'll build up an archive of images for talent to scroll through if they become interested in your company. You can also leverage the hashtags for diversity events or conferences that your employees attend to make your company more discoverable. Leverage those better-known event hashtags to give visibility into your company, its inclusive team, and its commitment to community.

If you read Part 2 of this series (*Diversity Sourcing at the Top of the Funnel*), you'll remember that we discussed jumping on event platforms like Eventbrite or Meetup.com to search for community and professional events happening locally that would likely attract your target prospects. You can also ask your underrepresented employees, who may have their ears open and access to those communities. As you attend these (“Devs with Disabilities”; “Women in AI Ethics Networking Meetup”; “Queer Tech NYC”), you'll do more than network with prospective candidates. You'll listen. You'll look for areas of overlap between their concerns and your company's offering. You'll also discover what makes a successful event for underrepresented talent—such as what topics and interests drive them—so you can begin to plan your own.

Targeted events held onsite will literally get talent in your doors, allowing them to evaluate your physical space as well as your team. (After all, environmental cues can also signal inclusion: think decor, names of conference rooms, whose pictures are on the walls, and how accessible the space is to talent with disabilities.) If you don't have the physical space to host an event, or brand awareness is stronger for an organization you could partner with, hold the event at *their* space instead. Maybe you participate in a talk about D&I held by a few companies that do work tangential to yours. (Maybe the talk isn't about D&I *at all*, but at least 50% of your panel is underrepresented speakers.) Maybe you're not hosting, but one of your team members is a participating speaker—that's still an event worthy of an invite to your talent pools! Whatever your relationship is to the event itself—whether hosting, sponsoring, or supporting—you'll increase both your visibility and your credibility in underrepresented talent communities.

### Invite Prospective Candidates to Engage on Social Media

Inviting talent to follow you on social media means putting them in a position to get consistent updates about your culture and the ways you celebrate your diverse team. (Note: This may be a project you share with your marketing team, or whomever owns social in your company.) It also allows them to join in on the conversation that's already happening there. Have a diverse set of employees take turns taking over your organization's social accounts, where they can share “a-day-in-the-life” stories. When their teammates are encouraged to engage with and share those posts, the content you have about life at your company multiplies—plus prospects get to see how team members relate to each other in that space. When every team member—and not just talent leaders or marketing teams—has a voice on the company's social platforms, prospective candidates feel like they get a real behind-the-scenes look at your company. It's social proof at its finest.

**Remember: every employee in your company is part of the broader “recruiting org.”**

Talent acquisition doesn't have a monopoly on networking. Employees' willingness to keep eyes and ears open in every encounter they have in the world is invaluable to your diversity sourcing strategy. This is especially true at events that cater to underrepresented demographics—whether you're hosting them or employees are attending them. Encourage everyone to prioritize networking—for the sake of your team, your company culture, and your product.

### Offer an Opt-In to a Talent Network for Underrepresented Talent

A talent network gives you the opportunity to stay in touch and nurture relationships with underrepresented prospects. And it gives *talent* the opportunity to say they're interested in continuing to hear from you—they just don't want to apply yet. An opt-in talent network allows you to share company news, product updates, and employee stories; congratulate talent on recent successes and work anniversaries; and more, over time. When the next right job opens up—or when they're ready for a change—you'll have been fostering that relationship all along, and you'll be top-of-mind for that prospect.

Talent networks are a low-commitment opt-in for underrepresented talent, and they deepen your talent pool so you can fill future open positions more quickly while continuing to honor your diversity initiatives. That's because it tends to take longer to fill an open position with an underrepresented candidate than it does with a majority candidate: when companies have to fill positions quickly, they typically get filled by White men.

So offer a standout call to action (CTA) button to join the talent network on your careers page. Make sure passive talent knows they're welcome, and that you'll only give them the best, most interesting updates. Make it easy to sign up. Even better, add it to your diversity microsite, which increases the likelihood that the talent that's subscribing is underrepresented. Which brings us to:

### Consider Targeted Microsites on Your Careers Page

It's one thing to have a careers page that invites all talent; it's another to offer a few sub-pages that speak directly to *underrepresented* talent. Consider a microsite that's dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Perhaps you go into greater depth about relevant ERGs here. Perhaps you spotlight employees from relevant demographics. A microsite for veterans might include a skills translator so visitors can enter their MOS code and see if you have open roles that match their qualifications. Including an opt-in CTA in each of these sub-pages allows you to see *which* sub-page talent signed up from. Then you can provide more relevant content to those subscribers, increasing the likelihood of engagement down the line.

# Outreach Examples for Diversity Sourcing

The recipients of your outreach might come from a variety of sources—referrals, talent you met at industry events, folks you discovered on LinkedIn or other social platforms, and so on. With referrals, the referrer may know the prospect well enough to be able to tell you how they identify. With talent you meet out in the world, you may have already been able to ask those questions before you returned to your talent CRM and put them in a project. Take particular care around folks you find on social platforms. The vast majority of demographic data you can collect on someone isn't "observable" from their profile picture: think sexual orientation, gender identity, physical disability, and ethnicity.

That said, in some sense it's true that talent is "self-identifying" all the time. They self-identify through the groups they belong to, the organizations they support, and the events they participate in. They self-identify through whom they follow and the content they share on social media. They self-identify on their LinkedIn profiles when they mention whom they've mentored and where they've volunteered. People are sharing more about themselves publicly than ever before; and your prospects are leaving virtual breadcrumbs that point toward their demographics.

But just because their LinkedIn profile says they volunteered for the Human Rights Campaign doesn't mean they identify as LGBTQ+. (Though it almost certainly means that's a demographic they care about!) So use the information talent puts out there, yes... but be conscientious about not slotting talent into a demographic unless you hear *directly from them* that that's a category they identify with. While identity-specific outreach campaigns can be invaluable, so can a nurture campaign that speaks to DEI more broadly. These kinds of campaigns can help underrepresented folks feel that, even if *their specific* difference isn't named, they'll be safe at your company.

We know we've given you a lot of information to digest so far. So below are three examples for what *initial* outreach might look like that hopes to show prospective candidates how diversity and inclusion is top-of-mind for a company. We stress the word "initial" because there's no way you'll be able to fit every best practice we've suggested above into a single email. We also stress it because it's worth remembering *intersectionality* as you plan your outreach: the interconnected nature of a person's social and political identities (race, class, gender, ability, etc.), and how those identities combine to create unique and overlapping experiences of discrimination or disadvantage. In other words, while the below examples are for female-identified, Black, and queer talent respectively, each of these three prospective candidates identifies as *more than* that singular category. You may want to speak to those various identities in your second, third, or fourth email. Or if you don't know how the prospect identifies *at all*, you'll simply want to speak to DEI more broadly in your outreach.

## Example Outreach for a Female Engineer

### Subject: What's Your Next Career Move, Emily?

Hi there Emily,

My name is Kelly Arnone and I'm the CEO at X App. I discovered your profile on LinkedIn this week while looking for a DevOps engineer for our fast-growing team. If you're getting a lot of emails about career opportunities these days—and I'm sure you are!—I imagine you're not hearing much from CEOs directly. But I attribute the success we've seen so far at X App in part to my dedication to finding the best talent, putting them in the same room, and watching them flourish. That's why I commit so much of my own personal time to sourcing and outreach.

I'd love to tell you all about our infrastructure and in-house tools; but before anything, I'd want to know that X App was offering you a culture you felt you could thrive in. Here are some resources I think you'd be interested in:

What it's like to work on the eng team:

- A [one-year anniversary reflection](#) from our lead engineer, Deena, about what made her choose X App and what she's learned in her time here
- A [video from our recent Women in Tech meetup](#)—with our Series B funding, we now have a big enough office to hold these onsite!
- We were recently voted a [Top Company for Employee Resource Groups](#), which we're thrilled to add to our [100% CEI score](#) from the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index

If this sounds like a ring you'd like to throw your hat into—or even a company you'd like to keep on your radar!—I'd love to grab a coffee with you.

I look forward to talking to you,

Kelly Arnone  
CEO, X App  
(she/her)



## Example Outreach for a Black AE

Note: The below is an example of outreach that focuses on culture and belonging broadly speaking. While we're writing to a Black prospect, you'll note that there's nothing in this outreach that refers to blackness. While it's important to acknowledge and celebrate people's identities, if every single interaction you have with talent highlights their underrepresented identity, they may reasonably wonder if they're being tokenized—that is, if you're seeking them out just because of who they are, not for the awesome skills they also bring to the table. So play around with different ways to engage underrepresented talent. This email links to the company's demographic stats (where hopefully Travis will discover something great about representation—Black and otherwise—at ZenLend). And the reference to the monthly opportunity to work on passion projects or take a self-care day would alert Travis to the fact that the company cares about all of its employees' mental health and well-being. A commitment to equity is baked into that policy.

## Subject: Read (and loved!) your Medium articles

Hi Travis!

My name is Javier and I'm working alongside one of our AEs (Jeff) at ZenLend to find the best Enterprise AE out there. ZenLend is a newer arrival to the B2B lending space; but we came out of the gate strong two years ago and have moved with remarkable speed ever since. Last year we opened our second engineering hub in Chicago, raised \$47M in funding, and we're on track to double in size by next year. Our next hire on the sales side will initiate and own our enterprise sales strategy.

Your LinkedIn profile led me to both your articles on sales team leadership on Medium. I'm really impressed by the thought and consideration you've put into running your teams. It sounds like culture is a top priority for you—we're with you!—so I thought you might be interested in checking out our team's own Culture Page, where you'll find everything from our demographic stats to our best-in-class benefits. (One of my favorite benefits is that, on top of our generous vacation policy, ZenLenders are given one day a month off to work on their own passion projects or take a self-care day. Last month, Jeff spent his day at the MoMA with his 12-year-old daughter, Jasmin. He wrote about the experience here.)

I'd love to tell you about our plan to open up a new market this year and about how we see experimentation and autonomy as central to a world-class sales team. Would you be open to hopping on a quick call this week so I can tell you about it?

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Javier Hernandez

ZenLend (on Twitter / on Instagram)  
(he/him/his)

### Example Outreach for a “Queer”/ Queer-Inclusive Product Manager

Note: We “found” this prospective candidate on LinkedIn. Their profile said that while in undergrad, they worked with the Office of Multicultural Affairs to develop an online program to interface with students struggling with LGBT issues. They also gave talks at recent Lesbians who Tech and Out in Tech events. Once again, none of this means that they identify as queer (that’s why we put scare quotes there)! But it does point to the fact that they care about that community. So we crafted our outreach with that in mind.

### Subject: Chat before your pilates class this week?

Hi Katie,

Happy Friday! I hope this finds you well. My name is Carmen and I’m a recruiter at [heal.io](#), the digital health application just named [one of the Top 10 Startups to Work for in the Bay Area](#). I’m writing because I love your background in health tech. (Your LinkedIn profile tells me you also teach pilates?! I go twice a week in the Outer Mission!)

I don’t have to tell you what an incredibly meaningful time it is to be in our industry; and I wonder if you’ve considered what’s next after your current role? We’ve got a product manager role open right now, and I have a suspicion you’d be a great fit for it. The culture at heal.io is like no company I’ve ever worked for. Here’s why:

- Diversity and inclusion are top priorities for our CEO (you can see his recent talk on our DEI initiatives [here](#))
- We’ve got a strong mentorship program that’s allowed newer mid-level employees to see terrific promotion rates
- We put on quarterly talent events (next month’s mixer is called “[Women in Health Tech](#)”, October’s panel is “[Healthy or Unhealthy? The State of LGBTQ+ Visibility in Health Tech.](#)” I’d love to see you at either or both!)

Sound like a place you’d want to grow your career? If so, I’d love to chat this week... How’s Thursday at noon?

Carmen Hudson

she / her / hers

P.S. At heal.io, we know how important it is to have a diverse team in order to have a strong one. That’s why we want to build relationships with as broad a range of talent as we can... even before you apply. If you’d like to help us do that, we’d love for you to fill out [this short form](#) to tell us a little bit about yourself.

# Tracking Metrics and Measuring Success

It's one thing to have diversity efforts in place; it's another thing entirely to know if they're *working*. How has your pipeline transformed since you've implemented your diversity sourcing efforts? How has the makeup of your company changed? What does the turnover of new hires made under your diversity initiatives look like? You won't know the answers to these questions unless you're measuring.

We know: as a sourcer, most of your work is done at the very top of the funnel; and even as a full-cycle recruiter, it's easy to think that your job is done once that candidate has accepted your offer. But there are plenty of metrics both throughout the hiring funnel and *after* the offer-accept to pay attention to. Each of these metrics—combined with regular contact with candidates and employees to get feedback about how your practices affect their decisions—will ultimately help you source and nurture better. In other words, what's happening at the bottom of the funnel—and even *after* the funnel—will reflect your top-of-funnel efforts and effectiveness.

**Here are some numbers to pay attention to—or to ask your hiring managers or HR to pay attention to:**

- The number of underrepresented prospects you reach out to for any role
- The response and interested rates (number or %) for that outreach—particularly in comparison with the response and interested rates for majority talent for the same roles
- Number or % of underrepresented candidates that make it to phone screen
- Number or % of underrepresented candidates that pass through from phone screen to onsite
- Number or % of job offers extended to underrepresented candidates
- Number or % of offers accepted by underrepresented candidates
- Best source for underrepresented talent
- Average satisfaction score for underrepresented candidates when it comes to your hiring process
- The % of female and URM talent at every level of your company—from individual contributors to C-suite
- The average turnover/retention rate of underrepresented talent within the first year

- Average performance rating of underrepresented talent after the first year
- Hiring manager satisfaction scores for underrepresented talent (individually and in aggregate)
- Employee satisfaction scores when it comes to D&I (we recommend you compare the satisfaction scores of underrepresented employees with the satisfaction scores of majority employees)

Combined, these metrics will help you measure everything from your own effectiveness as a sourcer, to the hiring process as a whole, to the state of inclusion and belonging at your company. Note we recommend that you track the number or percentage of underrepresented talent at every stage of the hiring funnel. This will give you a sense of the places in your hiring process that are acting as a barrier to equitable hiring, and give you a sense of where your work lies, so you can make meaningful adjustments to your diversity sourcing strategy as you go.

Use these metrics not only to track your progress, but also to set clear goals for yourself. Be willing to constantly iterate on, and improve, *everything*. This might mean closely observing click rates in your outreach to ensure the links you drop in your messaging are resonating with the talent-audiences you hope to connect with. It might mean creating satisfaction surveys for both candidates and hiring managers. It might mean being the one to sit hiring managers down and talk to them about the ways unconscious bias can surface during interviews, or what questions are illegal to ask. And so on. Pay attention to both quantitative and qualitative data—the numbers your sourcing solutions and talent CRMs are giving you, and the direct feedback you get from candidates. Both data types will be crucial to success.

## How Gem Can Help

To learn more about the Gem recruiting platform and see a demo, visit [gem.com](https://gem.com)

Our long-term goal at Gem is to help teams track and analyze diversity across the board, in all the ways that word is meaningful for their respective organizations. We know that the strongest diversity hiring initiatives begin at the top of the funnel, before prospects even apply. Channels like inbound and referrals are inherently less diverse; so if teams aren't actively sourcing and nurturing diverse talent pools, they won't see a diverse pipeline, a diverse set of interviews, and ultimately, a diverse team. This means sourcers and recruiters have perhaps the most important role to play in the "D" of a company's D&I initiatives... but it's hard to assess the effectiveness of diversity-focused hiring strategies unless you can measure diversity in the hiring pipeline.

In 2018, we shipped gender insights so talent teams could understand how their efforts were impacting gender diversity from first outreach through hire. Gender insights allows sourcers to report gender (male/female/non-binary/unknown) by person or in aggregate, so that managers can determine if there's bias in the sourcing process, whether by role or by recruiter. After many customer requests for a similar feature to track other underrepresented groups in the pipeline, we're now able to apply the same care to race/ethnicity insights. Gem's customers with Pipeline Analytics can analyze conversion rates through the funnel for racial/ethnic groups. This data can shed light not only on whether teams are reaching out to a diverse talent pool, but also on whether there are systemic biases that might show up as some candidate segments get stuck at certain stages of the funnel... or don't even respond to outreach to begin with.

Gem's A/B testing feature allows sourcers and recruiters to try out new D&I content and discover what prospective candidates most want to hear about. We also want to help you think holistically about your diversity strategy, from events to content; so we've integrated with Splash so you can track underrepresented prospects that RSVP and/or attend your events, and follow up with them in automated (yet personalized) sequences afterwards. And as we work on our capabilities on the product side, we'll keep offering content on best practices for your diversity recruiting initiatives.

### Outreach Stats: Gender and Race/Ethnicity

GROUP BY: Recruiter

BREAKDOWN BY: Gender

Name	Recruiter	Phone Screen	Phone Interview	Face t	Added to Gem	First messages sent	Follow-ups sent
▼ Luke Losin		77	25				
Women		31 (40%)	9 (36%)	7			
Men		46 (59%)	16 (64%)	15			
Non-binary		-	-	-			
Unknown		-	-	-			
▼ Margho Dunnahoo-Kir...		117	37	32	2	15	17
Women		38 (32%)	10 (27%)	11 (34%)	2 (100%)	6 (40%)	5 (29%)
Men		79 (67%)	27 (72%)	21 (65%)	-	9 (60%)	12 (70%)
Non-binary		-	-	-	-	-	-
Unknown		-	-	-	-	-	-
▼ Kylie Money		46	19	13	0	8	11
Women		26 (56%)	11 (57%)	9 (69%)	-	4 (50%)	7 (63%)
Men		20 (43%)	8 (42%)	4 (30%)	-	4 (50%)	4 (36%)
Non-binary		-	-	-	-	-	-
Unknown		-	-	-	-	-	-

  

Breakdown by:	None	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Outreach Type
▼ Q1 2020				
		6067	5600	8073
Black		853 (17%)	848 (18%)	1043 (14%)
Asian		1203 (20%)	1815 (32%)	2627 (33%)
Hispanic/Latino	-	905 (19%)	677 (18%)	938 (18%)
White	-	2649 (44%)	2415 (43%)	3544 (44%)
Unclassified	-	25 (0%)	1 (0%)	-
▼ Q4 2019		16928	3314	2282
Black		-	349 (11%)	261 (11%)
Asian		-	155 (4%)	77 (3%)
Hispanic/Latino		-	100 (3%)	50 (2%)
White		-	1465 (8%)	1015 (4%)
Unclassified		-	100 (0%)	50 (2%)

Gem's Outreach Stats breaks down candidate outreach by gender and by race/ethnicity. Individual sourcers and recruiters can see how—or whether—their messaging appeals to female, non-binary, and underrepresented talent; and talent leaders can observe those early stats to determine whether there may be bias for any recruiter at the top of the funnel. These views can also be broken down by project, or be shown in aggregate.

### Passthrough Rates: Gender x Hiring Manager

Show applications that had their first Pre-Interview within: All Time --/--/-- - --/--/--

Group by Gender and then by Hiring Manager

Funnel metric: Passthrough Rates

**Columns** ▾

Gender	Pre-Interview	Phone Interview	Onsite	Offer	Hired	Hire Rate
<b>Overall:</b>	<b>1067</b> <span>→56%</span>	<b>595</b> <span>→46%</span>	<b>275</b> <span>→43%</span>	<b>119</b> <span>→69%</span>	<b>82</b>	<b>1 / 13</b>
▼ Women	572 <span>→54%</span>	307 <span>→47%</span>	144 <span>→41%</span>	59 <span>→71%</span>	42	1 / 14
Nick Bushak	213 <span>→64%</span>	136 <span>→34%</span>	46 <span>→54%</span>	25 <span>→68%</span>	17	1 / 13
Mike Pinkowish	200 <span>→63%</span>	126 <span>→29%</span>	37 <span>→54%</span>	20 <span>→65%</span>	13	1 / 15
Catherine Ladd	51 <span>→47%</span>	24 <span>→58%</span>	14 <span>→64%</span>	9 <span>→89%</span>	8	1 / 6
Caroline Stevenson	23 <span>→74%</span>	17 <span>→76%</span>	13 <span>→38%</span>	5 <span>→100%</span>	5	1 / 5

Pipeline Analytics shows teams and talent leaders passthrough rates by gender and race/ethnicity—from initial phone screen all the way to offer-accept. Talent leaders can apply a secondary filter to see how their underrepresented funnels look for individual roles, or by department, source type, hiring manager, and more. This way, they can optimize stages where female-identified engineers may be dropping out of process, or see where certain hiring managers may need training in unconscious bias.

### Passthrough Rates: Job Req x Gender

Group by: Time

Breakdown by: Gender

	Gem			Greenhouse			
	Send	Reply	Pre-Interview	Phone Interview	Onsite	Offer	Hired
▼ This week	138	39	9	5	1	1	1
Women	45 (33%)	19 (49%)	5 (56%)	2 (40%)	1 (100%)	-	-
Men	83 (60%)	13 (33%)	3 (33%)	3 (60%)	-	1 (100%)	1 (100%)
Non-binary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unknown	10 (7%)	7 (18%)	1 (11%)	-	-	-	-
▼ Last week	358	79	5	2	4	2	0
Women	163 (46%)	42 (53%)	3 (60%)	1 (50%)	1 (25%)	1 (50%)	-
Men	192 (54%)	35 (44%)	2 (40%)	1 (50%)	3 (75%)	1 (50%)	-
Non-binary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unknown	3 (1%)	2 (3%)	-	-	-	-	-

“

Let's say I have a recruiter who is working with four different hiring managers. I'll go into Gem and filter the interview stages by gender. And from there I can see, based on passthrough rates, which hiring managers need help balancing the gender equity on their respective teams. By analyzing the passthrough rates of female candidates across different hiring managers, we can address areas of opportunity when it comes to hiring strong talent that truly represents the diverse market. And if I see a team that's significantly moving the needle on diversity, I dig into what they're doing to see if there's something that can be scaled to the rest of the company. I'm constantly using Gem to look for practices we can magnify and launch as best practices across the org.

**Joel Torres**  
Lead Talent Sourcer







**Lauren Shufuran, Author**

Lauren is a content strategist with a penchant for 16th-century literature. When she's not trying to tap into talent teams' pain points, she's on her yoga mat or hiking the hills of Marin County. Come at her with your favorite Shakespeare quote.

Gem is an all-in-one recruiting platform that integrates with LinkedIn, email, and your Applicant Tracking System (ATS). We enable data-driven, world-class recruiting teams to find, engage, and nurture top talent. With Gem, recruiting teams can manage candidate pipeline with predictability.

To learn more and see a demo, visit  
[gem.com](https://gem.com)