

PRSA Foundation / Prosek Toolkit: Recruiting & Hiring Diverse Talent

Seeking More Diverse Talent? Expand Your Recruiting Program

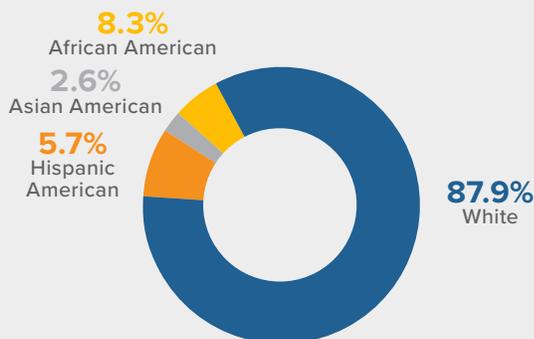
The “pipeline problem” has long been the scapegoat for companies looking to explain away the lack of diverse employees within their company. However, this excuse shows a lack of awareness and consideration for particular barriers to entry that are present, specifically for communities of color.

There is no shortage of talented, diverse professionals. However, to seize that talent and make diverse groups feel seen, organizations need to take a holistic look at their processes, including where they go to recruit talent.

“Traditional” hiring practices have contributed the problem, and only by reassessing practices and being open to changing the process – for the better – will the industry fix the issues holding it back from achieving true inclusivity and proper representation.

The Public Relations Society of America Foundation (PRSAF) and Prosek Partners have joined together to develop three toolkits aimed at helping the PR industry effectively recruit, retain and advance diverse talent.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the ethnic makeup of the PR industry in the U.S. is...



The Recruitment Process

Hire Potential, Not Set Skills:

Having a public relations and / or communications degree doesn't guarantee success in this industry. In fact, some of the most talented people in the industry don't have a communications or PR degree at all but have transferable skills that allow them to be a trusted and strategic advisor. Perhaps, in a past life, they were lawyers who brought their unique skills to the PR industry. We shouldn't be limiting ourselves to looking for talent in the places they *should* be, but instead, looking for where they *could* be.

7 Skills That Translate Well To PR



- Work with your HR teams to determine what schools they typically recruit from. Are you targeting the same set of schools and is there room to diversify?

- Review selection committees to ensure there is representation from diverse groups of employees. By creating a diverse panel, the organization can limit or mitigate the influence of biases, gather perspectives from diverse groups of employees, but also show the candidate that the organization strives for diversity
- Update job postings to look for transferable skills like critical thinking, analysis, project management, time management, flexibility and communication, persuasive, forward thinking, problem solving etc. Incorporate language that discloses that varied skills and background are encouraged to apply.
- Work with HR teams to assess what values are most important for an employee to have in order to eliminate fit over contributions

Recruit at HBCUs:

Given that more people are meeting virtually due to COVID, use this as an opportunity to connect directly with minority communities. To effectively find diverse talent for your recruitment pipeline, you need to recruit where diversity thrives. Many are familiar with Howard University, Morehouse or Spelman College; however, ignoring the full network of HBCUs would be a disservice to the communities they serve. Take a look at the full list [here](#).

Here are some additional ways to incorporate HBCUs in recruiting entry-level talent.

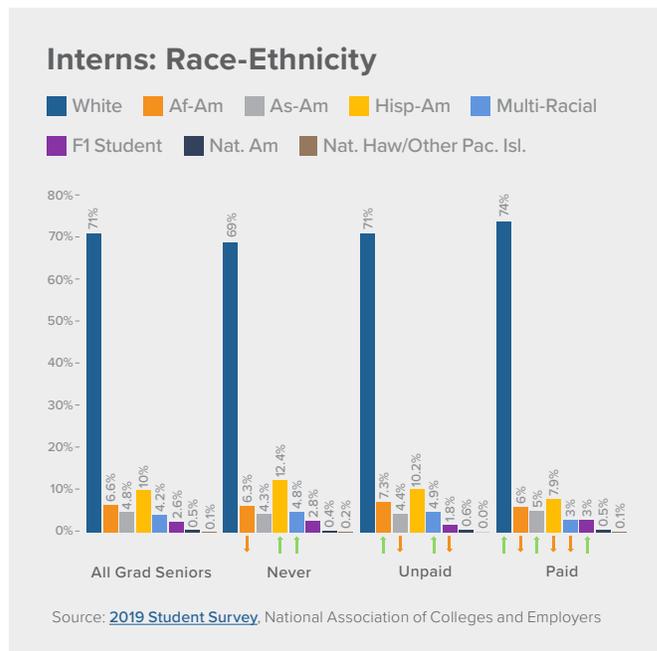
- Make sure HR knows that the organization would like an emphasis on diverse groups of candidates and develop a working relationship with HBCU school career centers
- Create specialized scholarship and / or internship opportunities designed for underrepresented identities
- Regularly connect with HBCU student organizations to establish a meaningful connection
- Connect with students via on-site or virtual events
- Engage your company’s ERGs to boost your recruiting efforts and establish a bias free way of interviewing candidates. Within your own

organization, be prepared to address resistance to blind hiring processes by explaining how it creates more objective decision making

- Curate marketing materials so they reflect diverse groups of people

Offer Paid Internships:

Internships play an integral part in kickstarting an individual’s career path, especially in public relations when so much of what we do daily is learned on the job and outside of the classroom.



- However, a significant number of firms are still not paying their interns, putting communities of color at a disadvantage. Unpaid internships create extreme financial barriers for young workers who can’t afford to offer free labor in exchange for training and professional connections. According to the National Association of College and Employers’ breakdown on race ethnicity among interns, only 7.3% of Black students are taking unpaid internships when compared to 71% of White students. This trend continues among other minority groups including Hispanic Americans (10.2%), Asian American (4.3%) and Multi-Racial students (1.8%).

- Offering a minimum of \$15/hour compensation for the work that is done at the intern level could have an immense impact on creating opportunities for a subset of people and talent that in the past, have been left out.

Connect with Outside Organizations:

There are many organizations whose focus is serving underrepresented groups. Building connections with these organizations creates familiarity and ensures a steady pipeline of diverse talent for your organization.

- [ColorComm](#)
- [The Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement](#)
- [Ascend \(for Pan-Asian professionals\)](#)
- [Catalyst \(for women\)](#)
- [Executive Leadership Council \(for Black professionals\)](#)
- [Diversity Action Alliance](#)

Tap Your Senior Leadership:

Word of mouth can be a powerful tool in the recruiting process. Organize a referral system where senior leadership can provide recommendations on diverse candidates they've worked with and tap them to work on your team.

- As senior leaders at your company, ensure that the organization is genuinely building these pipelines by nurturing and building relationships with diverse groups of candidates
- Training and education for leaders factor in to learning how to address and establish a culture that can attract diverse talent. Senior leaders should create a plan to reinforce the lessons (e.g., tactical behavior training)