



AI and DE&I

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Whilst 2022 will continue to see high demand for talent, the perennial challenge of delivering the personal touch and a strong focus on DE&I in the hiring process is stronger than ever. What role can AI play?

In such a challenging market the notion of getting “bums on seats” is doable on the surface, but when DE&I is front of mind for employers, TA teams are faced with a truly difficult task: Get the staff needed, and quickly, while creating a diverse workforce.

How often do we daydream about things we need and want? Sure, there is a level of whimsy around never having to work again, or retiring at 45 in Barbados, but what is always top of anyone’s wish list is one thing: More time.

But how do you free up time in an environment that is constantly time-strapped? There could be a way...

At TALiNT Partners’ first dinner of 2022, in partnership with Eightfold.ai, we got together with talent acquisition leaders from various industries at The Haymarket Hotel to discuss how AI can positively impact the resourcing and hiring processes while playing into D&I. We had time for a hearty meal and a few glasses of wine as well...

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF AI AND HOW DOES IT PLAY INTO DE&I?

According to Max Schroeter, Senior Account Executive for Europe at Eightfold.ai, while AI can help eliminate high-end bias and save time, cultural change within a business is needed to facilitate it. “To free up time in a busy work environment there needs to be a change of habit and internal culture. To maximise the effect of AI, there must be a better understanding of the skill sets needed in candidates and how those skills are acquired. We see the application in such a way that it is designed to help recruiters do what they need to do, very quickly and effectively.”

BUT HOW?

AI can increase conversion rates on applications. Various organisations have run tests within their TA teams by pitting their consultants up against



Debbie Walton
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AI to determine who’d win at the candidate selection process. AI has won every time.

LANGUAGE MATTERS

AI is not there to replace the job of the TA team. It’s an application that is designed to source the CVs of candidates who accurately match the job description and possess the skills required to do the job – it can also help find candidates from a more diverse talent pool.

“Often when searching for candidates on external databases, you can be given 50 candidates that supposedly could be a good fit for your business, but when you look at them, they don’t meet the requirements at all!” said Todd Harrison, a Global Talent Acquisition Director.

By aligning terminology, the notion of sourcing candidates who meet diversity and general requirements for the role becomes easier. By narrowing the search and retrieving CVs that are more relevant to the TA’s needs, the TA is saved time by not having to sort through mismatched CVs and profiles. What also helps the AI to produce accurate results is refining search criteria and using a variety of names and job titles in a search. Once these refinements have been made, the time saved by using AI can be spent sorting through CVs and selecting top candidates.

QUICK FIRE HIRES

TA teams have never been under as much pressure to hire quickly. But without proper workforce planning, it’s difficult to source a workforce that will stay – which is so important in the current market of high attrition.

“If we know what’s coming down the line, we have a better chance of getting hiring right,” said Rachel Barr, Director of Talent Acquisition, EMEA at Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation. “It’s really difficult to strategise and make sure we find the right people if we don’t have a good



overview of the future of the business,” she continued.

“It’s still about ‘bums in seats’ for us. Because we’ve just IPO’d we are hiring at speed because of rapid growth. We have a focus on women in leadership now which is forming part of hiring strategy,” commented a senior team member with focus on DE&I at a social media company.

The pandemic has caused many candidates to re-evaluate what they want from their careers. Often candidates are now seeking out employers whose values align with theirs and that culturally fit in with their needs and wants. Therefore, company culture and a sense of belonging plays a very important role in the hiring process. If a candidate is hired and they don’t fit the business culturally and visa versa, the hire will inevitably leave.

“AI has made assumptions based on the terminology used and some AI is even able to give the reason why a candidate is a match. It doesn’t have to be only about key word matching,” said Max. “AI can pick up public information and can assist in matching a candidate to your business based on culture as well,” he said.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DATA

“The pre-condition to using any HR tool is organised data,” stated Ken Brotherston, CEO of TALiNT Partners. And according to Max, the data you get out is as good as the data you put in but this can often be a challenge.

“We capture gender data at application level but didn’t have ethnic tracking capabilities at my previous place of employment,” said Todd Harrison, a Global Talent Acquisition Director.

“Data is stark and we’re not going to solve problems through lateral hiring. We need to be more conscious of the future of the business and ask ourselves what we can do to attract and select candidates to support a five-year plan for the business,” said Rachel Barr, Director of Talent Acquisition EMEA at Sumitomo Mitsumi Banking.

Gender, when disclosed by candidates, is tracked throughout the hiring process and using AI gives the opportunity to widen your talent pool. AI helps to predict the potential of the talent pool,” said Declan Slattery, Head of Talent Attraction and Engagement at NatWest Group. “It’s important that data management isn’t confused with AI capability though,” he added.

“AI is setting the outcome and tweaking it to get what you’re after only enhances the hiring experience for both candidates and TA teams,” said Declan.

At the end of the day, people may have unrealistic expectations or unfounded fears about AI and what it’s capable of, but what it does at its core is it takes care of the mundane tasks therefore leaving the important parts of the hiring process to recruiters to perform more diligently in less time. Who wouldn’t want that?

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