

# Hiring Revolution / RESOURCE

## A Guide to Disrupt Racism + Sexism

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### ANONYMOUS OPTIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

#### *Finding Out Who's in Your Hiring Pool*

When you set mix goals and success indicators for your hiring process, you'll need to know who you are and are not successfully reaching in your job outreach. Whether we admit it or not, we are often on the lookout for code in application materials—names, addresses, milestone dates, and so on—that will give us hints about race, gender, age, class, and more. Be careful! Guessing is dangerous. *We do not know* the reality of someone's lived experiences unless and until we ask.

**Do NOT Guess Someone's Race!** Your guesses will often be incomplete and inaccurate. You cannot simply look at someone and know what their racial makeup is. You might guess and be right. You also might guess and be wrong.

The same holds true when you are reviewing a job candidate's materials. Through marriage, adoption, gender transition, whitewashing of names, and more, we cannot just look at people's names and assume an ethnicity or a race correctly.

*For example, imagine seeing the name Michelle Hernandez on an application with the skill "I speak Spanish fluently." Would you be surprised to find out that Michelle is white, has blonde hair, and does not identify as Latinx, but married a Latinx man and chose to use his last name after marriage?*

So, how do we find out who we are reaching in our job searches while still operating within the bounds of the law? We're glad you asked! Our answer was an anonymous optional survey. We had Team Dynamics' general counsel, Zaylore Stout, Esq., founder of Zaylore Stout & Associates, weigh in:

*A hot topic question for employment lawyers these days is "Should all employers collect demographic data on applicants and employees?" My response has been, and continues to be, you'll secure some great data, but be conscious of the possible legal exposure.*

Legal interview questions tend to illuminate an applicant's strengths, weaknesses, experience, and skills, which are then used to determine job fit. Whereas illegal interview questions and practices (ones that focus on the applicant's personal life/characteristics) could make your organization the target of a US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) lawsuit.

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Here's some best practice tips to help you avoid running afoul of the law:

- Participation by the applicant must be **voluntary**.
- **Enlist a third-party** person/entity (who has nothing to do with the hiring/supervisory process) to gather the data in a spreadsheet.
- Only use the data for **tracking**/statistical purposes for determining patterns and opportunities for improvement.

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**In each round of hiring, you'll want to know if any groups or individuals hit a bottleneck in your funnel.**

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Collect anonymous, optional demographic survey data **at each phase** of your hiring process.

Be clear that results are **anonymous** and **not linked to applications**; you are asking for responses in order to hold the company accountable to its goals around mix, ensuring a racially and gender diverse pool of candidates from which to choose.

Based on your current demographic mix and data gathered about your hiring pool, you can build your quantitative rubric for recruitment and track your results. Here's an example scenario:

- **Problem:** There are no women directors in the department currently.
- **Goal:** A minimum of 40% of women candidates in each round of selection.
- **What Happened:** Population of phone screens was only 27% women/trans candidates.
- **Fix:** Additional circulation of job postings through women's job network.
- **Do:** Extend posting period and return to early parts of the process until your candidate pool is consistent with your goals.

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### Sample Demographic Questions + Sample Instructions and Examples Intentionally Designed to Help a Respondent Answer

*This is an anonymous survey; we invite you to answer each question, using your own words, in the language(s) in which you feel most comfortable. Thank you, in advance, for taking time to let us know more about our team! For the following questions, we would love for you to use the words you use to describe yourself to friends, family, and colleagues:*

- ◆ What word(s) do you currently use to describe **your racial identity**?  
*(ex. Third Generation Mexican American; Black; African American; Filipino and White; Lakota)*
- ◆ What word(s) do you currently use to describe **your gender identity and/or gender expression**?  
*(ex. woman; masculine of center; genderqueer; trans + FTM; male; androgynous; Two Spirit)*
- ◆ What **pronouns** do you currently use?  
*(ex. they/them; she/her; prefer not to use pronouns – just my name; he/him)*
- ◆ Do you currently have visible and/or invisible physical, cognitive, or emotional **disabilities**?  
*(ex. yes; visible physical disability; not currently)*
- ◆ Which **languages** are you currently fluent in (able to read and write at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level or above)?  
*(ex. Portuguese, Arabic, Hebrew and English; English only; Spanish + English)*
- ◆ What word(s) do you currently use to describe **your sexual orientation**?  
*(ex. bisexual; straight; lesbian; gay; queer; asexual; questioning; pansexual)*
- ◆ In which **country** were you born (to the best of your knowledge)?  
*(ex. Somalia; Vietnam; United States; Canada; on an Air Force Base in Germany)*
- ◆ What is your **lived experience of immigration and/or forced migration**, thus far?  
*(ex. grew up in a refugee camp in Kenya; my parents immigrated from Laos before I was born; I moved to the U.S. from Russia in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade; I got my Green Card when I was 26; I grew up on the Rosebud Reservation; I do not have lived experience immigrating)*
- ◆ In which **year** were you born (to the best of your knowledge)?

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### Why We Ask Open-Ended Questions

Language is ever-changing, and culturally infused. *For example, some people use the word “queer” to refer to their sexual orientation, while other people would bristle at that word because it may have been used as a derogatory term or a threat.* The best way to keep your finger on the pulse of how different people and communities are talking about themselves is to ask open ended questions so you can learn about the language they are using.

At first glance, it may feel like creating check box is a simpler way to make inquiries about identity. But we assure you, if you are actually seeking robust, informative data, the very best way to learn about people is to allow them to self-describe. For example, imagine how much more informative it is to know that someone is “ethnically Somali, born and raised in Kenya, now residing in Minnesota” than someone just checking boxes about their national origin, race, and immigration experience.

### What Questions to Include + A Note About Question Priorities and Sequence

We recommend starting with questions about the protected classes in the region/state/county you are serving. You can look up the protected classes online. These identity markers have become legally protected because **bias, prejudice, and discrimination has been proven to exist.** *For example, a person may have been denied the ability to rent an apartment that they passed all other qualifications for, but they were Muslim, Jewish, Transgender, or some other identity and were denied housing solely for that reason.*

At Team Dynamics, we created our “Embodied Identity House.” For us, this is a helpful metaphorical reminder to consider each of the protected classes when we are working to stay conscious about the number of differences currently making a difference for people currently living and working in the United States. Right now, race is the single most predictive factor of discrimination.



**\*\*\*TIP: Your request should be universal** (ask everyone → don’t just single out certain staff members) because you want a full sense of your entire team. And your request should happen regularly; annually for staff and board is recommended. That is because some elements of our identity can change over time: ex. disability, gender-identity, sexual orientation and immigration status. Participation should be requested and optional (not mandatory) → it will take time to build trust that you will use the results well and with care. For good reason, some folks are afraid to disclose certain things. Make a practice of asking and responding will start to feel like a more normalized pattern as well.

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### Clearly Stating WHY You Are Asking + What is Going to be done with this info

When you're beginning a new practice, like asking demographic questions (either in a new way, at all, or at different point in a process than you have before), **it is good to be clear about why you are asking and what you are planning to do with the information.** Building trust takes time, and for many of us, facets of our identities have been used to exclude or diminish us in the past. Viewing diverse identities, and therefore lived experience, as assets can feel new and different. Not everyone will feel comfortable asking or disclosing certain facets of their identity. That's okay. That is one reason we recommend asking everyone *while also* making sure it's optional. The more often we ask, the more regular the pattern becomes, the less loaded it may begin to feel. Remember, if we don't ask, we'll never know. And in order to meet our goals of having a more diverse team, across differences that make a difference, asking demographic questions is a great way to start.

**Sample opening sentences to a demographic survey** you could include in your preamble prior to a survey, dependent on if this is a brand new practice, if it's about hiring, if it's about tracking who is already part of your team:

- ◆ *It is important to us to know who our outreach for this role is reaching. As part of our efforts to ensure a diverse pool of candidates for this role, we are including this anonymous survey about demographics.*
- ◆ *Capturing demographic information this helps us hold ourselves accountable to a robust recruitment process.*
- ◆ *The information shared here will be kept anonymous. In accordance with employment law, we will not be discriminating against any candidates based on elements of their identity.*
- ◆ *We will be reporting on the demographic diversity of our overall pool of applicants, but will not be connecting applicants or applications to the information captured in this survey. Thank you in advance for helping us learn more about who we are (and may not be) effectively reaching with our outreach.*
- ◆ *As you know, we are working to proactively address disparities and gaps that exist. Part of that work includes more fully tracking demographic data ourselves so that we can learn more about the differences currently making a difference in the lives, health, and well-being of distinct populations.*

For more examples, or help phrasing a particular inquiry, please email: [team@teamdynamicsmn.com](mailto:team@teamdynamicsmn.com)