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Kindly Hire Me: The Process and Impact of Inclusive Hiring

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Kindly Hire Me

The Process and Impact of Inclusive Hiring

Annie Bélanger & Preethi Gorecki
Library Diversity Residency Studies Conference
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This presentation will explore perspectives on inclusive hiring practices from both sides of the table. Grand Valley State University Libraries conducted its first diversity residency search in the summer of 2018, which integrated recently developed inclusive recruitment and high-empathy hiring practices. The search committee chair, Annie Bélanger, and one of the successful residency candidates, Preethi Gorecki, team up to dissect the hiring process from both of their perspectives. Annie Bélanger discusses the work behind critically examining the existing hiring process, designing an inclusive recruitment plan, and implementing a new structure in order to ensure empathy to applicants going through the process. Preethi Gorecki then discusses the impact of inclusive hiring on perceptions of the work environment, satisfaction with the search, and overall experience of the hiring process.

A Journey to Hiring with Heart

A Process Overview

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Bringing Empathy, Respect, and Kindness to the Hiring Processes

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High-Empathy & Kind Hiring: Why?

- Social responsibility to profession
- Develop more diverse candidate and hiring pools
- Model leading practices
- Optimize candidate experience
- Have empathy and respect to support success for all
- Learning opportunity for candidates

Our professional values and core principles are meant to inform our practice as librarians and library professionals. How would that look if we took those values and working principles into the realm of recruitment? How might it change our hiring practices?

In particular, I wanted to consider the intersection of diversity, lifelong learning, user-centered practice, empathy, and respect.I then asked: What if we were to bring the compassion and empathy we bring to our users to our candidates and colleagues? What if our recruitment process could move from a grueling challenge where only the worthy may be left standing at the end to a learning opportunity for all?

We have a social responsibility to the profession to help each other learn what kind of librarian and library professional we want to be. We can do this through professional modelling of what a strong, confident library where informed risk taking occurs and inclusion is woven right into the hiring process. When we center the needs of the candidates as we prepare the day, we can challenge our habits and biases to ensure we are doing things that will truly inform our decisions and help us provide feedback to the candidates. By rooting our processes in empathy and respect, we remember that we are not only interviewing them, they are interviewing us too.

We also remember that though job searches will always be stressful, we can do a lot to make it smoother and a healthy process. We can also support candidates in their retention in the profession by helping them in their journey by providing constructive, impactful feedback through a dialogue model; providing strengths and areas of growth.

Letting Candidates Know They Belong: Mindful Ads

- Be mindful of bias
  - Examine the language used
- Keep number of qualifications in check
  - Look for aptitude and quality of experience
- Be explicit about learning opportunities and benefits
- State Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility commitment
- Invite dialogue and questions

- Stick to must haves
- Years and rigid approach to types of experience will prevent you from hiring emerging talent and from outside of the traditional pathways.
- Studies have shown that many women won't apply for a job they do not 100% qualify for, whereas men will apply for a position they feel they're only 60% qualified for.

Your hiring manager might have an unending list of qualifications in mind for a given role, but in order to highlight your commitment to inclusion, it's important to trim the list down. That's because studies show that <u>while men are likely to apply to jobs for which they meet only 60% of the qualifications, women are much more likely to hesitate unless they meet 100% of the listed requirements.</u>

Instead of including all of the "nice-to-haves" that a dream candidate might possess, stick to the "must-haves," and you'll likely see your applications from women candidates increase. Or if you'd still like to call out certain desired skills, you can soften the message with language like "familiarity with," "bonus

points for," or "if you have any combination of these skills."

That said, it's a good idea to cut down your long lists not matter what—one study found that the average jobseeker spends just 49.7 seconds reviewing a listing before deciding it's not a fit.

Transparency: Communication with Candidates

- Customize communications
- Give opportunity to contact someone
- Share information early and often
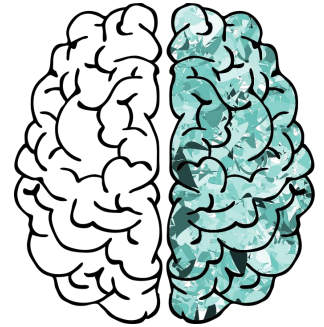- Offer follow-up dialogue

INTERVIEW PROCESS

From the applicant side, the search process is often mysterious and lengthy. Communication with candidates can help ensure a smoother process, and keeps applicants engaged.

- Customize communications leveraging templates for evenness
- Give opportunity to contact someone in the organization
- Share information about where you are in the process, the search committee, and the organization
- Offer follow-up dialogue with non-selected candidates

Intentionality: Deliberate Interview Planning

- Plan everything ahead of candidate review
- Anchor questions to job qualifications
- Define success criteria for each question
- Use open-ended questions
  - Plan for prompts to support candidates
- Develop an assessment rubric
- Consider inclusion and accommodations

INTERVIEW PROCESS

- Plan everything ahead of candidate review
- Anchor questions to the job qualifications

- Define success criteria for each question - these are the concepts that a successful answer would touch upon. Not what the correct answer is.

- Use open questions
  - If entry-level position, could someone without experience successfully answer?
  - Is it asking for someone to know more about your institution than is reasonable

Challenging Habits: Interviewing with Compassion

- Articulate why each portion of the interview is there (to the candidate)
- Leverage universal design to lower barriers
  - Share the questions with the candidate
- Think about safety and comfort
- Set clear expectations for candidate interactions

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INTERVIEW PROCESS
- Be able to articulate why each portion of the interview is there
  - Does every librarian position require a presentation? What components will help you decide on core skills? If a presentation or portfolio is required - will you retain the materials? Is the topic, inadvertently, asking for free labor?

Most academic hiring processes are more grueling than other processes. Some of this has become habitual. When the norm is one to two days of interviewing, building in a process that allows a candidate to stay focused, energized, and connected is key if we want to be inclusive. Academic hiring is also full of mystery and can be a black box. We have a lot of power as hiring managers to change what we can.

- Share the questions with the candidate. This lowers the need to request accommodations as well as lowers candidate anxiety about the process. It allows for inclusion from the start. You want to get to know their skills and strengths, not necessarily their ability to interview.
  - By developing prompts, you can prepare for a candidate who struggles to answer questions up front but has deep experience

- - or aptitude. You can scaffold them to success, having the best interview they can.
- Thinking about safety and comfort, build in breaks, state who will pick them up, what do they look like.
- It is also important for library administration to set the tone for candidate experiences:
  - Let's make them comfortable
  - Let's keep the pace reasonable
  - There are no gotcha moments needed
  - Avoid inappropriate territory with candidate questions
    - Keep questions to reasonable level
    - No personal questions

● Provide recharge time

Humanely Hired

Impact Story

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"Thanks for not making me feel uncomfortable."

Living through a Hiring Process Imbued with Empathy, Respect, and Kindness

Opening Lines of Communications: Phone Interview

- Questions sent one hour before phone interview
- Questions targeted to better understand candidate's goals, philosophy, and work-style
- Interviewers repeated their name before asking questions
- Time for candidate questions

The questions for the phone interview were emailed to me about one hour before the interview was scheduled to start. This gave me time to prepare for the interview and jot down some bullet points to touch on for each question. I felt that this helped me perform better during the phone interview and made me feel more comfortable throughout the process.

The questions felt genuine- like the committee wanted to better understand me as a candidate and what I felt I could bring to the table.

Each interviewer repeated their name before asking questions, so that I always knew who was addressing me. This reduced ambiguity over who I was responding to and took the guesswork out of the equation

There was also time budgeted at the end for candidate questions. I appreciated that they also let me know they had buffer time between phone interviews scheduled that day, just in case my questions pushed the interview past its timeslot (which it did! I had a lot of questions planned!)

No Surprises Ahead: Interview Preparation

- High level of communication:
  - Interview team bios
  - Detailed agenda with focus statements
  - Clear pick up and drop off information
  - Cues for dinner formality level and link to menus
  - Prompt for dietary restrictions, accommodations
  - Discover the campus time - mine to choose
  - Presentation topic with prompts and evaluation criteria

Ahead of the in-person interview, I received a lengthy email that included:
- Short biographies of the search committee and the names of all others I would be interacting with during my interview
- A detailed itinerary including addresses, links to menus, descriptions of the cars and people who would be picking me up, times and locations for meetings/interview segments, and purpose statements for each segment of the interview day (such as "to evaluate the candidate's research and presentation skills")
- Information about how the people at my interview dinner would be dressed (this was great because it turns out I would have overdressed if I hadn't received this information)
- Questions about dietary restrictions
- Questions about whether accessibility accommodations would be needed
- Various options to select from regarding how I would spend 90 minutes of my interview day (tour of the library from a student colleague, tour of the women's and gender equity centers, meeting with the library's inclusion and equity committee, or meeting with the campus' inclusion and equity division staff)

- My presentation topic, which was theory-based rather than practice-based

Interviewing with Kindness: Candidate Visit

- Interview "guide" to ease the interview day
- Time built into schedule for private/reflection time if needed
- Presentation scheduled for the beginning of the day
- Questions after the presentation portion pertained to the presentation

Someone was assigned to guide me through the different parts of campus and ensure that each portion of my interview remained on-schedule. The "guide" checked between each segment of the interview day to see if I needed private/reflection time, washroom breaks, water breaks, and asked if I had any questions about the library or campus throughout the day.

Being prompted for breaks made me feel like I could express my needs without being perceived as unenthusiastic or shy, which may have been the case if I excused myself without being prompted.

The presentation was scheduled at the beginning of the interview day, which was the portion I was most anxious about, so I appreciated the opportunity to get it out of the way first. Attendees were prepped for what is appropriate to ask following the presentation. One question asked during my presentation did not pertain to the presentation itself, so a library administrator and someone from my search committee followed up with me after the Q & A to acknowledge that the question was out-of-scope. This helped make me feel more comfortable with how the presentation went and my performance during the question portion.

Setting Precedents: Post-Interview Impacts

- Inclusion, equity, & accessibility focus
- Work culture integration
- Collegiality rather than competition
- Balancing effectiveness with self-care

Overall, I was really pleased with the way I was hired. I felt more confident throughout the interview than I would have if GVSU had gone with more traditional hiring practices. I felt like I was set up for success leading up to and during each segment of the hiring process. The hiring process itself also demonstrated aspects of inclusion, equity, and accessibility that I look for in any work environment I consider becoming a part of.

This made me feel more comfortable with and integrated into the work culture when I started at GVSU. It also set a precedent for collegiality rather than competition- I felt like my colleagues were truly on my team and intent upon helping me succeed.

This perception made it easier for me to ask my colleagues questions when I was unsure of something, and it helped me trust that my questions would be well-received. Additionally, high-empathy hiring practices encouraged self-care and reflection, which were modelled in the work environment.

Hiring Toolkit

GVSU Libraries samples extracted from recent searches

https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/library_presentations/80/

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Scott Ayotte, Sarah Beaubien, and Annie Belanger presented on "Towards High-Empathy Hiring: Implementing Leading Practices for More Inclusive Recruitment". The Appendix is a hiring toolkit.

Best Practices for Interactions with Candidates

GVSU Libraries Document

https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/library_reports/3/

GVSU Libraries created this document to support a positive candidate experience and ensure all colleagues were ready to participate actively.

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Questions?

Slides available at
https://scholarworks.gvsu.
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