



CASE STUDY: CIVICACTION & ACCENTURE

Tapping into Artificial Intelligence for More Inclusive Job Postings

Current Hiring Challenges

The Non-Inclusive Language Barrier

Beyond the Resume

Historically, employers tended to place great emphasis on a candidate's experience and education when looking to fill positions at their organization. However, job requirements today are evolving to demand a broader set of technical and behavioural skills, out of which the latter cannot necessarily be assessed through a resume. Because of the juniority of entry level jobs, a candidate's past experiences on paper might not reflect their true qualities and abilities. Systemic barriers such as accommodation needs, racism, gaps in education, and lack of flexibility in roles also contribute to the inaccessibility of entry-level jobs to high potential candidates. Hence, traditional practices may inadvertently screen out candidates that have the skillsets and capabilities to perform job functions, as well as bring a new or diverse perspective to the organization. This may help to explain why 30% of employers have trouble filling entry-level roles, and a staggering 71% have a hard time finding applicants.

Youth Perspectives on Inclusive Job Postings

To understand the perspectives of youths on this topic, CivicAction worked with NPower Canada, a charitable organization that launches low-income, diverse young adults into tech/digital careers, to survey 200+ youth enrolled in its program. The survey resulted in the following findings:

> Clarity on role

Youth require clarity on the essential functions of a role and its day-to-day activities. 1 out of 2 participants surveyed indicated that an unclear job title would cause them to lose interest in a posting. In addition, overcomplicated or vague job responsibilities often deter applicants by making it difficult for them to assess if their skillsets are a match for the role. On the contrary, using job descriptions to exemplify company culture is a well-received strategy by youth, who value the insight into their potential work environment.

> Focus on Capabilities over Experience

The first barrier to youth-inclusive employment is the inclusion of arbitrary requirements. 3 out of 4 survey participants say

they've felt their capabilities and skillset were suitable for a role, but mandatory education or experience requirements prevented them from applying. Youth are more likely to apply for roles that list skills and competencies needed for the role and prioritize these qualities over experience. 4 out of 5 survey participants stated that they want employers to focus on capabilities required to succeed in the role rather than number of years of experience.

> Specificity on Working Conditions and Benefits

Specific information surrounding salary range, flexibility of hours, and health benefits are effective in targeting youth, with approximately 80% of survey participants indicating that the inclusion of this information would increase their chances of applying for a role. The most valuable job benefit to youth is an employer's commitment to their professional development. 84% of survey participants responded stating that they would be more likely to apply to job postings specifying opportunities for education assistance and professional growth.

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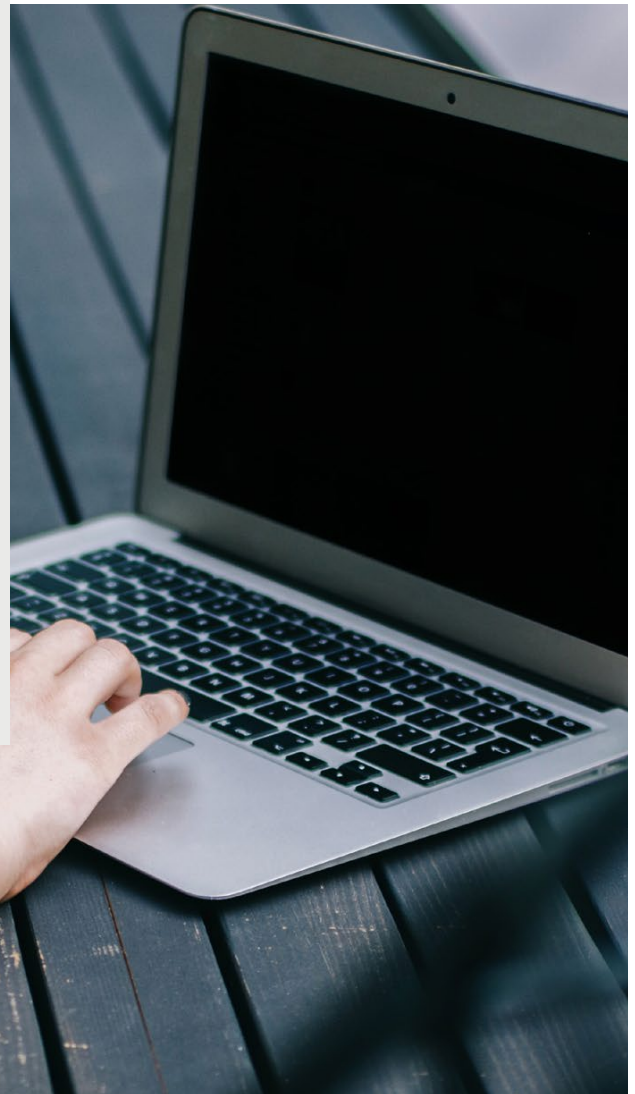
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CivicAction & Accenture:

Tapping into AI to Address the Barrier

CivicAction has tackled this issue by seeking ways to encourage employers to rethink traditional practices when creating job descriptions for entry-level roles and to spark change in the direction of inclusivity and equal opportunity. The team partnered with Accenture to create an artificial intelligence tool, which provides practical recommendations for employers to improve the language around inclusivity of current entry-level job postings.

The tool leverages natural language processing algorithms to evaluate an existing job posting's structure, use of inclusive wording, clarity, requirements, language, and tone against a curated dataset of 23,000 gold standard digital job postings. The curated data identifies common job posting structures, headers and was supported by additional research on the best practices surrounding clarity, requirements, language, and tone. The tool then prompts employers with actionable recommendations on how their job postings can be written in a more inclusive manner to attract a diverse and qualified pool of youth candidates.



Creating Job Postings: Best Practices

Youth-inclusive job postings should communicate competencies, responsibilities, and company culture in a clear, concise, and unbiased way. Here are 6 best practices to incorporate in a job posting:

- 1 Recognize that Barriers Differ Among Youth**
Keep in mind that different subsets of youth face different barriers when searching for entry-level jobs, including youth with education gaps, Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, and recent immigrant youth. Unconscious bias in job postings impact these subsets, as well as other subsets of youth (e.g. gender), discouraging applications.
- 2 Keep It Simple**
Overcomplicating requirements and responsibilities confuses and deters applicants. Avoid corporate jargon, buzzwords, and overused descriptors to make the posting accessible at the entry-level.
- 3 Prioritize Competence Over Experience**
Focus on professional skills and ability to achieve results over education and prior experience requirements.

- 4 Structure and Language Matters**
Short paragraphs, clear headings, and bullet points make the posting accessible and easy to read.
- 5 Be Concise and Precise**
Clearly state the function of the role and include only must-have (4-6) competencies. Limit the length of the posting by reducing non-essential information.
- 6 Make It Real**
Highlight meaningful benefits, development opportunities, and the impact of the role on the company. Make on the job learning opportunities and support clear to demonstrate a commitment to employee development.

Expected Outcomes

CivicAction's new tool will unlock tremendous value for small, medium and enterprise businesses looking for ways to attract fresh talent whilst streamlining their job posting processes with access to personalized recommendations.

Over the coming months, in preparation for a Spring 2021 launch, CivicAction will test the tool among employers of key sectors, optimize the user experience, and monitor key metrics such as number of organizations using the tool, type of recommendations provided and youth sentiments to evaluate the performance, usage and benefits of the tool to small medium businesses as well as youth seeking employment.

By combining data science with research into existing inclusion and diversity best practices in recruiting, CivicAction looks to reduce entry barriers for youth seeking employment and continuously improve understanding of barriers to application for entry-level job postings.