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A Data-Driven Approach to Hiring More Diverse Talent

by Sandy Cross and Porter Braswell

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Summary. There are plenty of reasons companies should strive to be more diverse: to develop products, services, and experiences for a changing population in the U.S., for example, or to outperform or out-innovate competitors. But many companies aren't sure how to go... **more**

Within 25 years, people of color are projected to be a majority in the United States. As this key demographic rapidly expands, businesses of all sizes across America are realizing the need to hire diverse talent in

order to develop products, services, and experiences for a changing population. Further, research shows that companies that have more diverse workforces outperform and out-innovate those that don't. According to a 2018 McKinsey report, companies in the top-quartile for workforce diversity are 33% more likely to financially outperform their less diverse counterparts.

But while companies understand why they need to have a more diverse workforce, many aren't sure how to make it happen. The PGA of America was one, and it faced challenging public perceptions. Golf is often viewed as a primarily white sport, which makes it difficult to recruit from underrepresented communities. Historically, there have been many barriers to entry for people of color interested in golf, including financial hurdles to enter training and acquiring equipment. While the PGA of America has historically instituted programs geared toward attracting diverse talent (like the PGA WORKS program, which actively recruits people from diverse backgrounds to apply for fellowships and other pathways of entry), there's still more work to be done.

Recently, the PGA decided to partner with Jopwell, a career advancement platform for Black, Latinx, and Native American students and professionals. The partnership is one of many the PGA utilizes to identify new strategic ways to engage, recruit, and retain talent from underrepresented communities by having an authentic voice in these same communities.

What the PGA learned is in some ways unique to golf. But there are plenty of lessons for other companies looking to move from wanting to be more inclusive and diverse to actually hiring employees from diverse backgrounds.

To Create Change, Start with Data

Jopwell, after being commissioned by the PGA, collected direct feedback from its community on their perceptions of the golf industry, including barriers to entry and career opportunities within

it. (Jopwell's community is made up of Black, Latinx, and Native American students and professionals who have a profile on Jopwell.com and have opted in to receive Jopwell's communications.) Jopwell segmented the members of this community they polled based on their self-selected interest in sports, finance, and marketing. (Jopwell offered ten $100 gift cards as incentives for the 476 survey participants.)

The data found that there is more of a lack of awareness about career opportunities in the PGA of America than a lack of interest in golf. This was encouraging, as it validated the PGA of America's ongoing efforts to raise awareness of the availability of these roles.

Key findings include:

- When asked to name the main obstacles to why they have not applied for jobs in the golf industry, the aforementioned lack of awareness (27%) and access to contacts in the industry (26%) were cited as the top two reasons.
- While two-thirds of respondents believe the golf industry is not diverse or inclusive, the majority of respondents also felt that a career in golf could be enjoyable, cool, and rewarding.
- The PGA of America also discovered there was more they could do to educate people about available opportunities. When asked why they didn't apply, 51% said they believed a background in golf or business was needed, and 76% were unaware of career opportunities with the PGA of America.
- However, once it was explicitly stated that the PGA of America wants to recruit professionals from various backgrounds, the likelihood of applying went up from 46% to 64%.

Regardless of whether results of surveys like this are surprising or expected, having accurate data is fundamental to any inclusion and diversity effort. Many people anecdotally have a hunch about what the barriers that prevent diverse candidates from applying are, but gathering actual data points motivates, validates, or disproves decision-makers, and empowers leaders to take action. Many other

companies are facing similar challenges in modernizing and diversifying their workforces and would benefit from taking time to hear from the candidates they're trying to reach.

Then Translate Data into Action

Using these findings, the PGA of America and Jopwell developed a plan of action to lay the foundation for lasting change around hiring. The three key steps are to improve accessibility, increase awareness, and create systems of accountability.

Step 1: Improve accessibility. It's important for companies to consider barriers to entry and what can be done to break them down. They must take steps to ensure diverse candidates are part of the pipeline of consideration for new hires. To address these issues, the PGA of America is now:

- Featuring PGA WORKS fellowships, scholarships, and career exploration events — as well as PGA of America Headquarters internship and full-time career opportunities — more prominently on its digital and social media platforms.
- Centralizing job postings on one website rather than having them scattered across a variety of web pages based on the focus of the position.
- Dedicating resources to growing networks and reaching the community where it is looking for jobs (Jopwell, Black Enterprise, LinkedIn, etc.).

Step 2: Increase awareness. After ensuring that job opportunities are accessible and distributed widely, the PGA also asked itself: What are we doing to educate diverse candidates about the opportunities that are available? Are we reaching this community where they are in ways that speak to them authentically? Resulting actions include:

- Using PGA of America and PGA WORKS social media channels to tell the stories of current diverse employees and PGA members and how they have navigated their careers.

- Engaging in strategic partnerships with major multimedia partners, like *Black Enterprise* and *Sports Business Journal,* who have a strong presence in the traditionally unengaged golf communities.
- Ensuring there are diverse faces and vocal champions of diversity at the top leadership levels.
- Increasing visual representation of people of color in golf careers. For example, *Golf: The Jopwell x PGA Collection*, an album of authentic stock photos, was developed as a resource for both the PGA of America and the general public to use to highlight the existing diversity in the game and business of golf and has now received over 19 million views.
- Attending career fairs and highlighting the fastest growing job areas within the industry to diverse audiences.
- Creating high visibility events, such as the PGA WORKS Collegiate Championship, where each year approximately 200 student-athletes from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and other institutions serving underrepresented populations compete. Athletes also have the opportunity to explore internship and entry-level employment opportunities with the golf industry's leading employers at a career expo before play begins.

Step 3: Create systems of accountability. Systems and processes must be put in place to help change a culture. For example, if you get a wave of applicants, do you have the right interview channels set up to quickly move them along? If you say you are open to candidates without a background in golf, does everyone interviewing the candidates know that? Some steps to take:

- Put systems in place that help propel candidates through the application funnel, such as fixed candidate-review timelines and a process for pivoting candidates to other appropriate open roles.
- Understand who the key stakeholders for decision-making in the hiring process are and secure buy-in for diversity recruitment from the top using data.

- Set interview and top-of-funnel goals for candidates from underrepresented backgrounds. Make sure those goals are shared throughout the company, and that people are working toward them together.
- Share, track, and report progress toward goals with hiring managers.

The PGA of America and Jopwell both understand that change doesn't happen overnight. Yet, armed with the right data, new ideas, and a plan for steps to take, the two organizations are excited to continue breaking down barriers to entry and inviting people of all backgrounds to explore opportunities in the golf industry. We hope the lessons learned through our data and the action items outlined can help other companies that are attempting to attract diverse talent, too.

SC

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PB

Porter Braswell is the CEO and cofounder of Jopwell, the leading career advancement platform for Black, Latinx, and Native American students and professionals. Launched in 2015 with fellow former Wall Street analyst Ryan Williams, Jopwell has facilitated tens of thousands of connections between its community and 200+ partner companies across dozens of industries.