Gartner: Only 12% of HR Leaders Believe Their Organisation Has Been Effective at Increasing Diversity Representation

HR Can Undertake Three Actions to Reset How the Organisation Advances Underrepresented Talent

July 30, 2020 — Only 12% of HR leaders feel their organisation has been effective at increasing diversity representation, according to a survey by Gartner, Inc.

Based on a global survey of 113 HR leaders in April 2020, Gartner said there are three organisational barriers to the advancement of underrepresented talent: Unclear career paths and steps to advancement; too little exposure to senior leaders; and lack of mentors or career support.

"An April survey of heads of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) found that 69% are prioritizing advancing underrepresented talent especially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic," said Lauren Romansky, managing vice president in the Gartner HR practice. "While the intent is there, there is no two-hour training remedy for this challenge. Organisations need to assess their current systems and processes to mitigate bias and address organisational factors that prohibit equal opportunity for advancement."

HR and DEI leaders must address the systemic bias embedded in their systems, processes, and stakeholders to truly increase the diversity of their managerial and leadership benches. Gartner has identified three actions HR can take to reset how they advance underrepresented talent:

Fix the Manager-Employee Relationship

To make progress on increasing diversity representation, organisations need to build healthy manager-employee relationships that set the right foundation for advocacy and advancement.

"Our research and conversations with HR and DEI leaders show that managers are unable to effectively execute critical advocacy and advancement-related activities if they do not have a solid working relationship with their employees, which can be more challenging when manager and employee come from different experiences," said Ingrid Laman, vice president, advisory, in the Gartner HR practice.

To fix the manager-employee relationship, HR should do the following:

Teach managers how to build personalised support for direct reports while enabling them to be effective talent coachesBuild manager awareness of the employee experience of underrepresented talentBroker trust between underrepresented talent and their managersThe most successful organisations go beyond traditional leadership development programs that focus solely on skill-building to advance women, LGBT+, or racially and ethnically diverse employees, they also target managers of program participants to spread awareness of the employee experience of their direct reports, build trust, and enable greater manager advocacy.

Enable Growth-Focused Networks

Growth-focused networks are intentional and self-sustaining, providing an array of diverse individuals in role, skills, level and experience. They also offer exposure to senior leaders who are positioned to support growth and advancement.

When underrepresented talent has diverse networks, the organisation wins. Gartner research reveals that organisations that create networking programs for underrepresented talent, HR leaders are two times more likely to report they are effective at improving organisational inclusion and 1.3 times more likely to report they are effective at increasing diverse employee engagement.

Key actions HR can take to enable growth-focused networks include:

Help all employees understand how networking will enable better diversity and inclusion, particularly for underrepresented talent. Authorise underrepresented talent to actively network, and teach managers, and leaders how to build and manage networks to help underrepresented talent with their performance, development, and advancement.Create accountability for networking across underrepresented talent, managers, and senior leaders.Redesign Talent Processes to Mitigate Bias

Redesigning processes is often the least used technique in bias mitigation because DEI does not own talent processes, and it requires a significant change effort. However, it can be one of the most effective.

There are several talent processes that can be redesigned to fully embed inclusion and provide fair consideration to underrepresented talent for advancement, including:

Challenging hiring managers on need-to-have versus nice-to-have requirementsExpanding labour market opportunities to consider adjacent and nontraditional talent poolsUpdating definitions of potential for relevance as market conditions and business needs evolveExploring job design to accommodate diverse talent with varying needs and preferencesRethinking how performance is evaluated, including who provides feedback and how productivity is defined, and holding leaders accountable for balanced evaluation of candidates and successorsChanging internal hiring methods"COVID-19 and the transition to remote work has created a variety of change in talent processes already. This is the opportunity to adjust talent processes to prevent non-compliance on D&I goals and ensure there are no opportunities for bias to occur," said Ms. Laman.

Gartner clients can read more in the Gartner report, "Advancing Underrepresented Talent: 3 Ways You Need to Reset Your Strategy."

CHROs and HR leaders can learn more about how to lead organisations through the disruption of coronavirus in the Gartner coronavirus resource centre for HR, a collection of complimentary Gartner research and webinars to help organisations globally respond, manage and prepare for the next phase of COVID-19.

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