

Engaging and Elevating Black Employees

1964

July 24th-26th: The community of Rochester, NY rioted against the unequal and discriminatory practices of the landlords, corporations, and police towards Black migrants from the south.

1966

Xerox's CEO, Joe Wilson, partners with Rev. Franklin Florence, leader of the grassroots organization FIGHT, and together they create Xerox's Step Up program. ~300 Black Americans are recruited, trained, and placed into jobs.

1970

Xerox launches the National Black Employee Caucus, the first official Employee Resource Group in the U.S.

1980

The Black Women's Leadership Caucus at Xerox forms.

2009

Ursula Burns becomes Xerox's CEO and first Black woman to lead a Fortune 500 company.



This Xerox example offers one company's journey with Black talent over the course of 50+ years. Change takes time and so many of these changes are long overdue. This guide offers suggestions on how you can start, or enhance your efforts to engage and elevate Black talent.

At Hummingbird Humanity

THE FOUR LENSES

We view Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through 4 Lenses of Representation: People, Culture, Customer, and Community. The people's lens focuses on attracting, hiring, developing, and retaining talent. Here are four ways in which you can apply this lens to supporting the Black workforce during Black history month, and every day.

Attract:

If candidates know from the instant they interact with your organization that you are an advocate for racial equity, you are more likely to attract talent that is on board with your goal. One way to do this is through publicly sharing diversity and inclusion goals.

Diversity Hires Goal (%)

Example: [X company] commits to doubling the percentage of Black representation of its [total number]-person U.S. staff

Benefits to Achieve Equity

Example: [X company] offers benefits like tuition reimbursement and assistance, and free mental health counseling.

Direct philanthropic giving to D&I causes

Example: [Company X] commits \$1 million to causes related to ending racial injustice between now and 2025.

Want to see more examples? [ONGIG's 25+ Examples of Diversity Goals](#)

Hire:

Companies often say they have difficulty finding talent, without reviewing their current recruitment process. From where to post to implementing changes in the hiring process, here are a few things to keep in mind:

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Before you tell me you'd rather just hire "the best talent", unlearn the idea that the best talent is straight, white and remember that the word "professional" is a social construct.

- Madison Butler (she/her)



• Recruitment

There are many job boards focused on recruiting people of color. A few to start:

- [Black Career Network](#)
- [Black Jobs](#)
- [Incluzion](#)
- [Diversityjobs.com](#)
- [Noirefy](#)

• Job Posting

Bias can start with job descriptions, changing phrases such as “culture fit” to “culture add” can increase the number of candidates that apply to your company. Software tools such as [Pinpoint](#), [Textio](#), will help remove bias.

• Hiring Committee

A study from the Journal of Applied Psychology showed that the applications of candidates from underrepresented backgrounds went up by 118% when the search chair was also from an underrepresented background.

Develop:

Black employees as with other historically excluded groups, often lack support in growing their careers, professional development, and mentorship opportunities.

1-on-1 - having intentional conversations on how you can best help your employees develop and brainstorm together will make folks feel seen and valued. How to start:



Schedule an hour to speak with your current Black employees.

Identify and create a plan for developing additional skills to reach their goals.

Assign relevant projects through which they can demonstrate their skill growth.

Schedule check-ins for constructive feedback, acknowledgment, and praise.

Read: HBR; Toward a Racially Just Workplace for advancing Black leaders.

Retain:

The Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted the Black community, as well as the economic crisis, and the murders captured on video and subsequent protests. Your Black employees are going through a lot of added stress and trauma in their lives.

Make Space

Allow space in your paid time off programs for Black employees to take time for specific issues that may emerge in their lives and engage them in conversation to encourage them to take this time off when needed. Make it intentional by staying updated of current events (e.g. verdicts of police brutality).

Culturally Specific Mental Health

Share Black-focused mental health resources:

- [Therapy for Black Girls](#)
- [Therapy for Black Men](#)
- [National Queer & Trans POC Network](#)

Anti-Racist Initiatives

Address racial discrimination through education, trainings, and involvement of all employees and leadership. Some to consider:

- [Harvard's Implicit Association Test](#)
- [Hummingbird Humanity's Diversity Learning Circle](#)
- [Cornell's D&I Certification](#)

Additional Thoughts:

Engaging and elevating Black talent is successful when the voices of Black employees, and community are included in the conversation. A few ideas suggested here:

[5 Steps to Launch an Effective D&I Council](#)

[Why Black ERGs are Essential and How to Form One](#)

[How to Set Up an External Advisory Board](#)

External Consultants:
[The Black Consultant Group](#)

[How to Start a Book Club Celebrating Black Voices](#)