

## Addressing the ESG Framework and the connection to Diversity & Inclusion

At Octavius we believe that the following considerations are key when addressing your firm's approach to the ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) agenda. Today's workforce are channeling their energies toward meaningful action - whether that means increasing political involvement, aligning spending and career choices with their values, and driving change on societal issues that matter most to them. In turn, the workforce today expects institutions like businesses and governments to do more to help bring about their vision of a better future.

The increasing importance, therefore, being placed on ESG, means it is one of the most active areas of the market, which offers candidates a lot of choices. Therefore, it is important that your messaging and positioning on ESG is clear to candidates and sits front and centre from the beginning.



### Some key considerations when addressing your positioning on ESG are:

- **Clear Messaging** - There should be a clear message on where you stand in relation to key ESG issues, for instance, sustainability, diversity, etc. This should be focused on your 'corporate responsibility' and not just your investment ESG/sustainability criteria.
- **Company Introductions** - During interactions with candidates, a full introduction to the organisation should be made including the approach to ESG, what the organisation is trying to achieve through their ESG agenda, the opportunities candidates have to impact/influence the agenda, and the interactions with the market.
- **Interview Preparations** - It's important that whoever is holding interviews with candidates understands the organisation's approach to ESG, what each element stands for, what the organisation is trying to achieve, how and what role they play in the market and industry, the value and importance of the agenda, and other things alike.



The workforce's heightened expectations for companies around the ESG agenda is only growing in scale and therefore, is something that needs to be front and centre. Along with a clear approach to the elements that the organisation is tackling within this agenda, such as Diversity and Inclusion, which is a key element of the ESG Framework.

The pursuit of diversity isn't just about doing the right thing. It is about understanding that a diverse workforce can drive better outcomes that can actually enhance business growth and brand reputation.

**Octavius** are the Diversity & Inclusion recruiter of choice for many of our clients across various industries. We not only understand the role and importance of the broader ESG agenda, but we also understand the value in addressing the elements within the framework itself. This is why we help our clients in developing recruiting strategies that enable a more inclusive, diverse, and engaged workforce that is able to contribute and impact a wider agenda within the organisation, with its clients, and within the broader society.

At **Octavius**, we see it as our responsibility, as recruiters, to ensure we are enabling our candidates to receive fair and equal opportunities.

We know this will help not only to diversify the job market long term but will also ensure we are providing our clients with a diverse and skilled shortlist that they may not have had access to previously, thereby, helping to address the wider challenges that the industry faces.

Finance is still undoubtedly a white male - dominated industry, and while that problem is widely recognised and efforts are being made to rectify it, significant challenges still remain.

Firms are required, therefore, to understand the industry challenges and thereby adapt their approaches across a range of areas, which includes talent acquisition. Ultimately, if a firm is actively conscious of supporting and creating a diverse, inclusive environment, it, in turn, will lead to high employee satisfaction, which leads to better customer service and a stronger brand across multiple areas including ESG.





At Octavius, we have devised five key recruitment strategies, that you can employ to ensure a more inclusive and diverse workplace:

### ***1. Managing the impacts of Bias in the initial stages of candidate interactions.***

Job specs are the first real interaction that candidates have with an organisation, therefore the role description must be reviewed to help remove any biases which may result from the language, tone, etc. that is used. Therefore, when it comes to writing a Job spec, we advise that you put it through various tools such as a gender bias tool, which will support you in having masculine words replaced. These kinds of tools are readily available and can be found on Total Jobs.

Further, you want to ensure that your role descriptions call out various elements of the diversity attributes to showcase to candidates that you are addressing the challenges the industry faces and are focused on rectifying them.

Some examples of statements that you could include in the job spec are:

- We strive to ensure that opportunities to work and develop at XXXX are open to all. We welcome applications from all qualified applicants, regardless of age, disability, gender identity or gender expression, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or any other equality characteristic.
- XXXX supports flexibility and we welcome career returners.

Some firms will also put a full Diversity & Inclusion statement on their website to ensure that messaging is consistent across all elements that the candidate may leverage in their initial research of the role and organisation.

Examples of these statements are:

- When it comes to diversity and inclusion, we're not just talking the talk, we're on a journey to walk the walk!
- At XXXX we are wholeheartedly committed to building and nurturing a strong culture of diversity and inclusion and therefore welcome everyone.
- We champion a healthy and inclusive work environment, where ALL people are welcomed, included, and respected — a place where people feel comfortable to be themselves. We believe that accepting, celebrating, and valuing the richness of diverse cultures, opinions and experiences is what motivates, engages, and empowers us and is a key part of XXXX's success.
- Our vision is that XXXX will continue to thrive and grow with a diverse mix of unique, bright, talented, and passionate people joining us, people who care about the world we live in and the future of its environment.

Beyond the job spec, you also want to ensure that your interview board/ hiring committee is set up to support the removal of bias and also to be representative of what you are trying to achieve from a Diversity & Inclusion standpoint. Therefore, it is important to consider Diversity & Inclusion training for all of those included in the interview and hiring process, whilst also including a wide range of individuals (e.g., creating a committee that is representative of a variety of positions, ages, cultures, beliefs, backgrounds, gender, ethnicity, strengths and personalities) in the process that are clear on what you are trying to achieve and encourage as an organisation when it comes to the Diversity & inclusion agenda.



## ***2. Setting targets and metrics that align to Diversity & Inclusion strategies/visions.***

One way to encourage accountability around hiring a more diverse workforce is to have and set targets that align with what you are trying to achieve. Examples of how you can set these targets and/or ensure that you are providing a fair process/experience include:

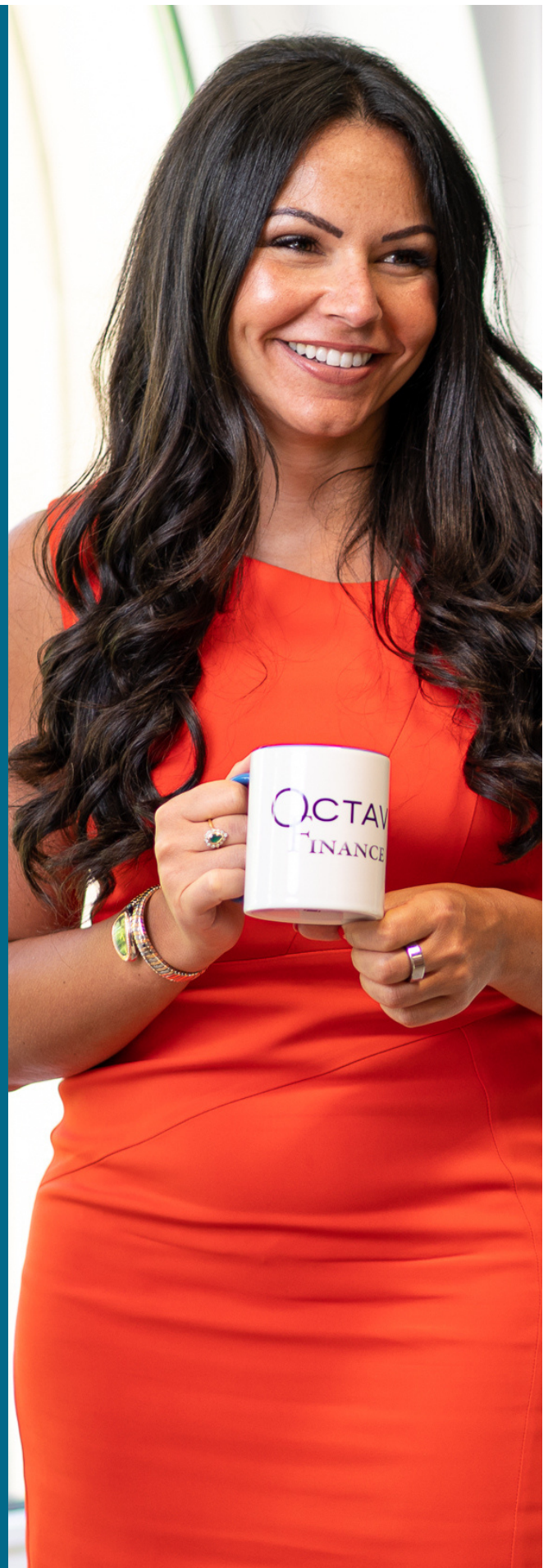
- Creating focused shortlists of candidates that meet the hiring criteria, but are also representative of aspects of the diversity attributes, for example, at least one female and at least one BAME candidate on the shortlist.
- Setting specific targets such as 2 or 6 out of 6 or 50% BAME/female to be invited in for the interview stage - remember that specific targets should be linked to the organisations wider strategy on Diversity & Inclusion to ensure alignment.
- Creating clear criteria to guide the interview and selection process that supports any feedback you may need to provide to the candidate after - this can include elements such as experience, skills, team fit, passion for the role, etc. that support your overall justification for selecting one candidate over another.



### 3. *Creating equal opportunity for all of your candidates.*

It may not always be apparent but everything that is set across the hiring process can have an impact on the candidates' experience and thereby set a tone around the level of inclusivity that the organisation actually adheres to. Some examples of things to consider include:

- **Interview Times** - The timings that you allot for interviews can have a profound impact on who you can engage with. For example, by avoiding interview times of only 8/9 AM or after 4 PM, you are discouraging anyone with childcare responsibilities from being able to continue in the process. This for example could have a significant impact on your ability as a firm to attract female candidates who are just returning to the workforce after spending time focusing on parenting responsibilities.
- **Application Deadlines** - Application deadlines can have a really big impact on the candidates you get applying for roles. For example, Female candidates are often much more considerate when deciding whether to apply for a role which is usually why the first 80% of candidates you see are often male. By not setting a deadline on applications you are likely to increase the non-male representation within the candidate pool as well as those who have neurodiverse traits.
- **Pre-screening ahead of receiving a CV** - There is often a pool of resources who are less likely to look for a job for varying reasons. For example, we know that Female candidates are often much less likely to look for a job which means they need to be directly sourced (head hunted). The task of writing a CV can put a multitude of candidates off (e.g., passive and/or neurodiverse candidates), therefore if you can conduct a first-round interview leveraging tools such as a LinkedIn profile the % of diverse candidates are likely to increase.



#### ***4. Understanding the diverse talent pool.***

To increase the mix of your candidate pool, you need to understand and connect with them.

Therefore, it would be great to connect with different organisations in your industry that have drawn upon underrepresented candidates well and understand what strategies and techniques they have employed. It would also be helpful to attend networking events and meetups for diverse candidate groups, which will help you to improve your reach, contacts, and opportunities to gain strong referrals. This may also help you gain a better understanding of other hiring issues affecting specific groups and thereby help you to reconsider your approach going forward.

#### ***5. Leveraging Internal Mentoring and Leadership Programmes.***

One of the top strategies cited for addressing diversity and inclusion in organisations is investing in and/or leveraging existing mentoring and leadership programmes. These schemes create great benefits for firms as they contribute to the development of a more focused, engaged and committed workforce.

If we take women as a talent pool to focus on as an example - for years women have been underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) university courses, which translates to STEM-related occupations, where women make up just 24%.

The top three reasons that impact women from joining this field are one the lack of role models in the industry, two the stigma around STEM being more masculine and three the lack of support/encouragement in place for women. Therefore, by investing in women focused leadership and/or mentoring schemes in STEM you have the ability to challenge and change the stigma that is currently present, whilst encouraging and supporting more women to join the field by providing them with the tools they need to grow and develop in this space.

And that is just one example. In general, these types of schemes provide talent from all backgrounds and ages with the encouragement and skills that they need to grow and develop in their chosen field, whilst also creating a level of commitment and loyalty to the firms they are and/or could be employed by. There are so many external programmes that firms can take advantage of when considering what to do in this space (e.g., the 30% club), whilst also looking at internal means to drive a similar agenda (e.g., reverse mentoring and/or board mentoring schemes).

