How to write an inclusive job ad
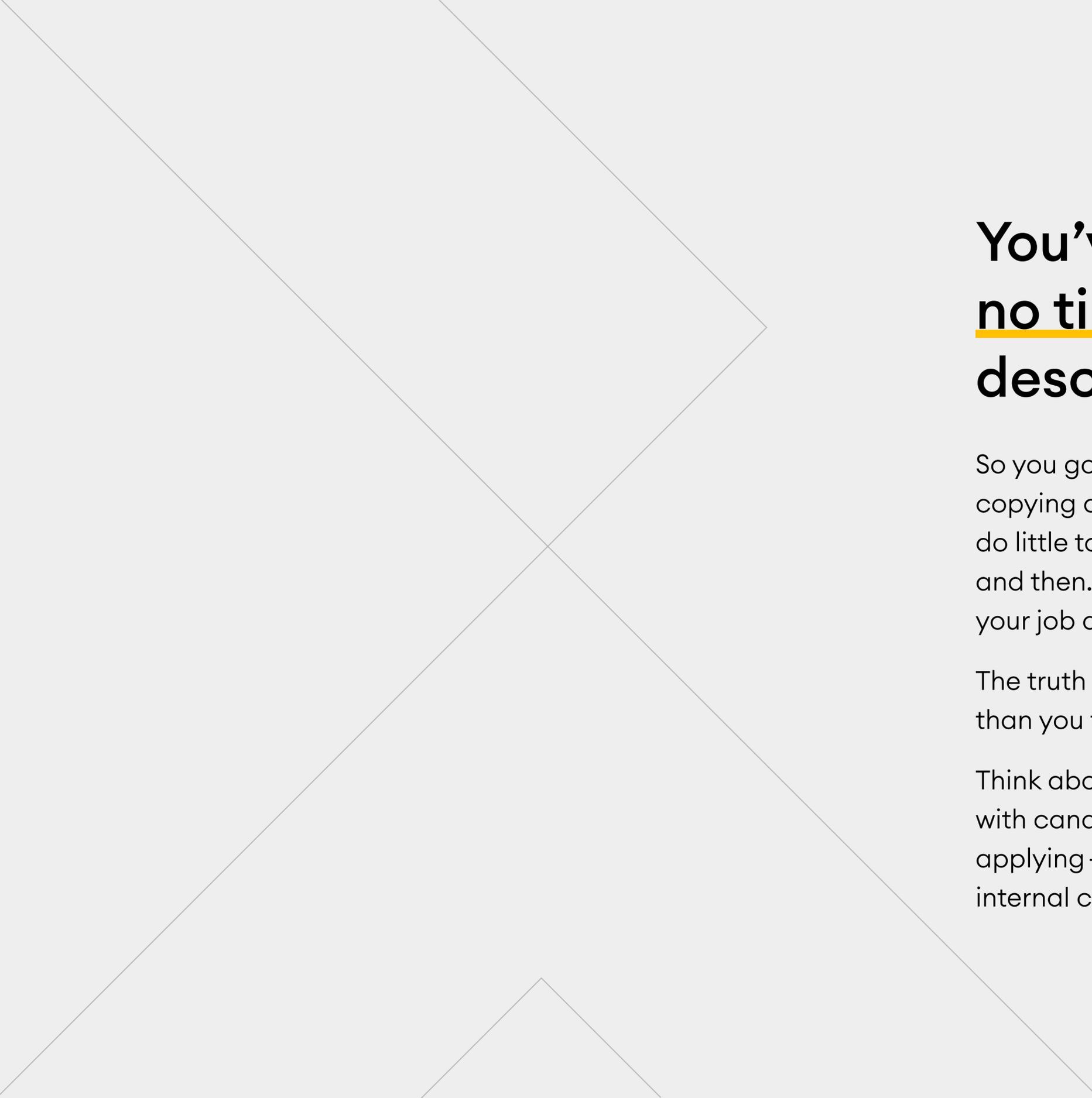
You've got <u>20 seats to fill</u>, and <u>no time</u> to craft customised job descriptions.

So you go back to your old job listings and revive them. After copying and pasting and plugging in a few vague phrases that do little to capture the role requirements, you publish your job ads and then... silence. Only a handful of candidates apply. In short, your job ad failed to capture applicants' attention.

The truth is, poorly written job descriptions are more common than you think, and they do more harm than good.

Think about it. Job ads are the first point of contact you have with candidates. If written poorly, it can put off candidates from applying – or worse – informs the candidate about what your internal culture is like.

How do you create inclusive job descriptions?

In this guide, you'll learn our seven-step formula to writing inclusive job ads, and apply these insights to your own hiring processes.

1. Figure out what diversity means for your business
2. Create your description framework
3. Be mindful of how you communicate
4. Highlight your company's commitment to DE&I
5. Think outside the box when advertising for the job
6. Measure impact
7. Review your hiring process

Let's unpack each step together.
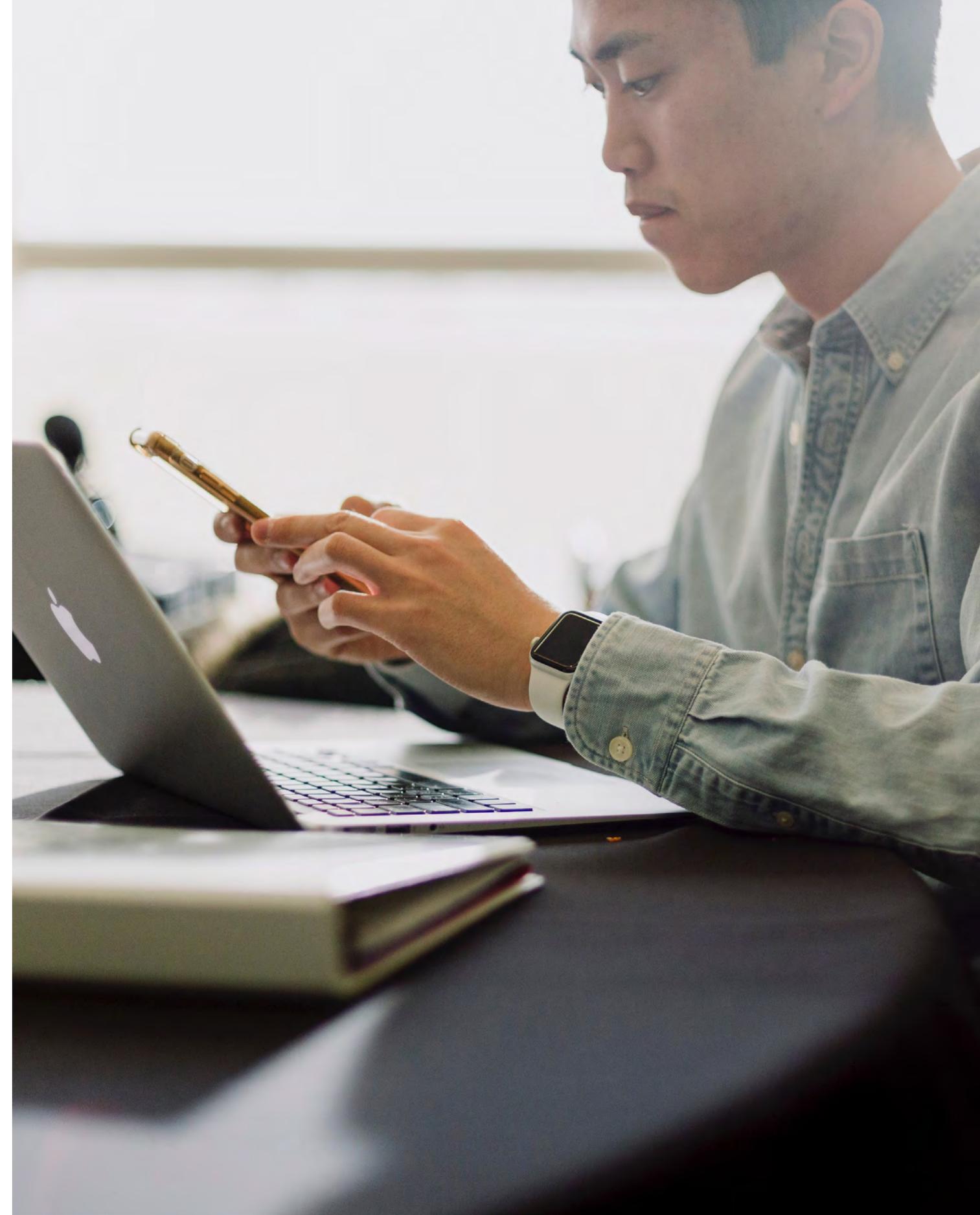
Do some soul-searching

Before you start writing a job ad, zoom out and look at the big picture.

→ Why is diversity important to you?

→ Is there a particular aspect of diversity you want to focus on?

Be specific with what you're trying to achieve with this job ad. For example, if your goal is to increase gender diversity within your organisation, then that should be your focus and you should optimise your hiring processes to meet this goal. If you're aiming to achieve a more diverse workforce that recognises and supports every employee's unique characteristics and background, then this is the ambition level you should be striving for when screening and hiring candidates.

Hard truth:
If diversity isn't a strategic priority for you at the moment, avoid saying it is! If you're unsure, the best way to figure out your organisation's commitment to diversity is to consult with company heads on the matter.

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If you want to attract, hire and retain diverse talent, commit to it round-the-clock. This includes ensuring decision-making processes are fair and inclusive and creating a culture around celebrating diverse perspectives. Knowing the why and how is what will set you apart from others who talk about DE&I on paper, but not in practice.

Linnea Bywall, Alva's People Leader

Create your description framework

Before drafting your inclusive job description, run a calibration check with your hiring team and map out the role requirements and responsibilities. What will the candidate own? What skills should they possess and how will they grow into the role? Pinpoint what requirements are essential for the role itself, and which ones aren't.

Tip: Avoid being too rigid with your list of requirements as you might exclude a large pool of applicants (research shows how women are less likely to apply for jobs if they don't feel like they meet all the requirements).

In particular, challenge the idea of whether "years of experience or education" is a mandatory requirement. Are you excluding candidates who have the potential to excel in the role, but not necessarily the formal qualifications you're after?

Step 3:

Be mindful of how you communicate

Challenge what you're putting out there and ask yourself whether you're using inclusive terms or not. Things to avoid include using jargon or gender-encoded language that may put off certain candidates from applying.

Also, try to be as specific as possible when listing the actual job requirements and really unpack what the candidate would be doing in the role.

Extra tip: For a neurodivergent pool of candidates, let them know you're here to support them. For example, adding a gentle prompt for them to get in touch to discuss the application process or let the recruiter know if they have any specific needs before the interviews. This can go a long way in making them feel included in the application process. It also signals that you're truly committed to finding a solution for each candidate.

> Research shows that masculine-fueled job ads put women off from applying, with less than half of women choosing to apply for positions which use male-coded language.

Hira Wasif, DEI expert

What to <u>include</u> in your ad

✅ Impact statement on what the candidate will be working toward/how they will contribute to your company's vision

✅ Inclusive benefits and accommodations
(For example, mentioning what your company offers like generous annual leave, parental leave, health insurance, a hybrid-work model, etc.)

✅ A succinct outline of the role responsibilities and requirements

✅ DE&I statement with a link to your company policy

<u>Bonus tip:</u> In your ad, spell out how the candidate will divide their time doing different tasks. This helps you remain transparent, and lets the candidate know what to expect, therefore equaling the power balance between the employer and candidate.
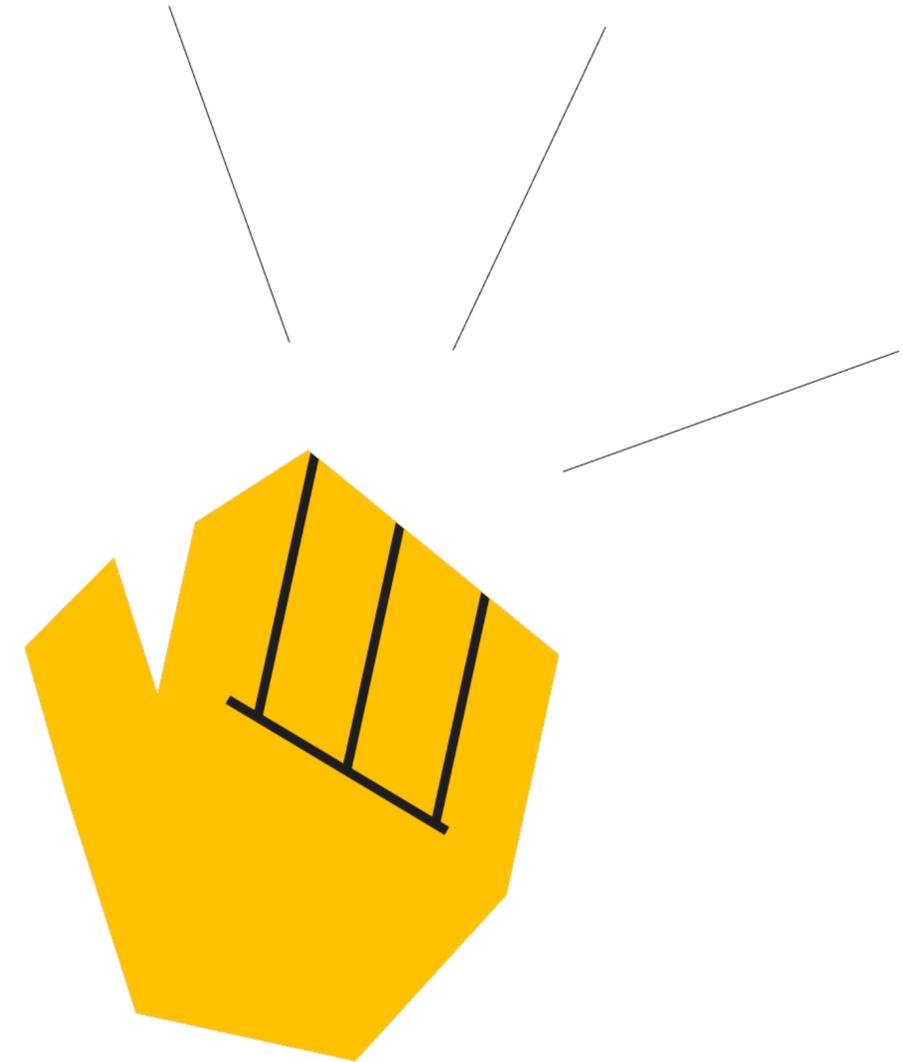
What to <u>avoid</u> in your ad

❌ Jargon and gender-encoded language

❌ Vague job descriptions with no mention of how the applicant will build their skills or advance their career

❌ Fun-sounding titles that don't capture the position

❌ Questions related to the candidates' immigration status (The exception here is if you have a strictly no-sponsorship policy-in which case, be transparent and state this in the job description)

Bonus tip: Run your ad through <u>Gender Decoder</u> – a free tool that picks up subtle bias in your ads.

Highlight your company's commitment to DE&I

Showcase how your processes and policies are inclusive by linking to your own DE&I statement and making it your own.

For example:

→ What measures have you taken within your recruitment processes to decrease the possibility of bias?

→ What is your parental leave policy?

→ What is your stance on working from home?

Tip: Add flair to your copy. This is the section where you want people to get excited about your company culture. List your perks!

Think outside the box when publishing your ad

If you only advertise on select platforms, chances are, you're shutting the door on various candidates. For example, in Sweden, roughly half of the people are on Linkedin. This means that advertising on Linkedin will only yield a 50% applicant pool, and most likely, a very specific pool of candidates.

On the other hand, advertising on multiple platforms enables you to cast the net wide and attract a diverse range of talent.

→ **How we do it at Alva**
We write job ads in English and spell out that Swedish is not a requirement.

We further advertise jobs on different platforms and more niche communities. For instance, we recently advertised for an engineer role in an online engineering community and got a lot of interesting applicants with huge potential.

Another tip is to leverage the power of employee advocacy and get employees to share your job opening among their networks.

> "Acknowledge how tapping into your own network when looking for candidates is equal to who you are. Meaning, by advertising in your own network, you will find mini copies of yourself.

Linnea Bywall, Alva's People Leader

Measure impact

One thing is to write an inclusive ad, but another thing is measuring whether your ad does what it's set up to do–aka attract a diverse range of candidates. A good starting point is to identify what part of diversity you're working on and then figure out the best approach.

For instance, if you're wanting to make your working force more equal in terms of gender, then a simple way to track this is to use an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to see how many of the applicants are male versus female, as well as how many shortlisted candidates are female or male in the final stages of the application process.

Some extra ideas:

→ Send out a survey after candidates have applied, with a disclaimer explaining what you're hoping to achieve from collecting data on their background.

→ Add a short DEI statement to your job ad asking candidates to volunteer information about their ethnicity, age or gender, pinpointing that it's to help you measure your own impact. If done right, this can actually help enhance the candidate experience by showing you're seriously committed to DEI.

Review your entire hiring process

When a person applies for a job at your company, is your hiring process open and diverse or narrow and excluding? A simple way to put this to the test is to look at your entire recruitment process and run a quick audit.

→ Do you have quality candidates applying from the get-go? If not, then chances are, your screening process isn't as objective as you think, and it's time to revisit how you source and screen candidates for interviews.

Beyond looking at the number of candidates applying for your open position, take a look at how you proceed with candidates and who ends up at the interview stage. If you're not meeting different candidates, then again, something is probably broken in your hiring process.

Your own hiring process can look like:

1. <u>Candidate assessment tool</u> for objectively screening candidates and shortlisting top talent

2. <u>Mini exercise</u> to assess candidate's skills related to the role (coding test, writing test, etc.)

3. <u>First interview with</u> the HR manager to assess general competencies

4. <u>Second interview</u> with the hiring manager to assess potential and readiness in role

5. <u>Case presentation</u> to assess technical competencies and how the candidate would actually perform on the job

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Writing an inclusive job ad doesn't matter if as hiring manager, you end up hiring someone based on gut-feeling. Trust your hiring processes the entire way. Objective hiring equals fair opportunity for all candidates.

For example, by keeping your job ad open and inclusive, and your screening process fair and objective, you're signalling that candidates have equal chances to apply. This is a motivating factor alone for candidates to apply.

Hira Wasif, DEI expert
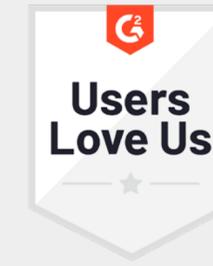
Thank you for reading our guide!

Alva's candidate assessment platform enables you to find the candidates that best match your job criteria, and quickly move shortlisted applicants to the interview stage. Built using Modern Test Theory, our adaptive logic reasoning and personality assessments are accurate and fast to complete.

Start your 14-day free trial