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A recent study by researchers at Technische Universität München (TUM) Germany has shown the importance of carefully chosen wording in job descriptions and advertisements. The researchers found that women are less likely to apply for a job that "sounds" stereotypically male. The results showed an impact of words on applicant behavior; if the advertisement described a large number of traits associated with men, the women found it less appealing, and were less inclined to apply. Words such as "assertive", "independent", "aggressive" and "analytical" tended to have this effect. But words like dedicated, responsible, conscientious and sociable were appealing to female subjects who were more likely to apply for positions described in these terms. The experiment found no effect of wording on male test subjects.

Ideally, with all the awareness of stereotypes and the negative impact they can have on women and minorities, wording shouldn't impact whether a woman applies for a job, but this recent research shows that stereotypes persist, and could have a significant impact on your application process.

Attracting a diverse pool of qualified applicants is often a challenge. In particular a lot of time and money is spent creating recruitment strategies that attract women into traditionally male dominated fields and senior leadership positions. But while much of the focus is on where to advertise and how to appeal to a particular demographic, how much time and consideration do you typically give to the specific wording of a job advertisement in this context? Inexperienced hiring managers may just rely on a brief summary of the job description; more experienced hiring managers may even develop a specific and targeted job announcement with an enticing invitation to apply. But whatever the approach, the outcome more often than not creates a bias in the recruitment process right from the start.

- Ensure your job descriptions are gender neutral. It's surprising how many documents have a strong male orientation in the language they use.
- Create a balanced job advertisement to attract good female applicants. Ensure that you have a mix of descriptors.
- Use metrics to see what is working....compare a current or future recruitment designed to be 'gender balanced', with a similar position previously recruited. Has there been an impact on the number of qualified female applicants?
- Without a profile featuring at least balanced wording, organizations are reducing their chance of attracting good female applicants. Taking a moment to create that balance could be a small step towards impacting one of the most enduring diversity challenges - hiring more women into traditionally male dominated positions. Will the presence of the semi-retired employee impact on the transition of new leadership, the new manager, or the new employee hired to replace the retiree? Consider if there an alternative approach to ensure mutual benefit without creating obstacles for the new person. For example: Can the retiree take on a coaching or support role to the new employee rather than still be engaged in the day-to-day operation? Or if succession

planning has resulted in an internal employee stepping up to replace the retiree, consider creating a short-term well-defined transition period.

- Are there alternative types of engagement that fit the situation – e.g. can the employee be engaged as an Independent Contractor for a specific purpose or project?
- If staying connected is desirable for both parties, an alumni program could be a mutually beneficial alternative to continued employment, affording an opportunity to tap into the wealth of knowledge and experience of former employees (both retirees or those who have left for other opportunities).

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of considerations, rather suggestions to help frame retirement discussions with a goal of finding a mutually beneficial arrangement, and perhaps longer-term strategy for engaging retirees beyond their official retirement date.