

## CEP Magazine – November 2023



Mary Shirley ([mary.shirley@masimo.com](mailto:mary.shirley@masimo.com), [linkedin.com/in/iheartcompliance/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/iheartcompliance/)) is a New Zealand-qualified lawyer with 18 years of ethics and compliance experience that includes working for data privacy and antitrust regulators, in-house and private practice/consultancy across five countries and four regions of the world.

### Diversity in the hiring process: A surprisingly common pitfall

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By Mary Shirley

The 2023 *State of Risk & Compliance* report issued by Navex states that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is rated to be “at least important” to 88% of organizations.<sup>[1]</sup> As an ethics and compliance professional with multiple diversity strands, this rating is promising. And coupled with other indicators, such as overt statements and anti-discrimination assurances on company websites, this shows that companies are conscious of the value of a diverse workforce and associated stakeholders.

The empirical evidence on pro-diversity being a sound approach to building teams is also clear.<sup>[2]</sup> Diversity shouldn’t just be a fad. It’s simply prudent business, and it’s backed up by science.

#### Diversity is important! Or so we say . . .

Therefore, it came as a surprise during a recent job search to find that there were jobs for which I was qualified but unable to properly apply. Mandatory fields in electronic forms were set up in such a way that I, a foreign national, was unable to select relevant responses.

**Example one:** A well-known apparel company was hiring a chief compliance officer, and the application form required that candidates supply their grade point average (GPA). Putting aside the fact that it’s perplexing why an organization hiring at such a level would need to consider GPA as a relevant factor, this was problematic for candidates like me. We don’t use GPAs in New Zealand education.

**Example two:** A less well-known electrical company included robust anti-discrimination commentary within their application process documentation, but it failed to provide for any university education attained outside the United States. Their drop-down menu for selecting a college pertained only to those based in the US. In this instance, I was connected on LinkedIn with the hiring manager, so I reached out to him to let him know of the issue. He was unperturbed and referred me to his human resources (HR) person, who advised that she had fixed the issue. I reentered my information only to find that the issue had not been addressed. Perhaps it’s not the worst thing in the world that I was not in the running for that role.

These examples are essentially companies that likely have good intentions and don’t mean to discriminate; however, the result is that diverse candidates (in these examples, foreign-educated nationals who do have the authorization to work in the relevant jurisdiction) are unable to be considered for the role without selecting inaccurate mandatory responses. It also sends a signal that there is an acceptable group of people who will be considered for the role. How would you feel about applying to work for an organization if you got the impression you didn’t belong right from the start?

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