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5 Steps You Can Take to Prevent and Correct Incomplete, Inaccurate, and Inconsistent Data

Informed decisions require good data—so what do you do if some information in your database of employee and applicant files is incomplete, inaccurate, or inconsistent? There's a wide range of different individual fields and relationships to consider within the three "I's"—perhaps to the point where you're wondering how you can possibly remember everything! But don't worry: just follow the steps and checklists below, and you'll be making sound decisions underpinned by the best possible information.

1 Understand Why Data Reconciliation Is Essential

Poor data:

- Diverts time and resources towards data corrections
- Exposes your business to inaccurate discrimination claims
- Undermines your ability to isolate problem areas and limit liability when defending against discrimination claims
- Misleads your strategic decision-making based on inaccurate reporting trends

2 Understand Why Data Errors Happen

Your data:

- Is often captured by a range of different people who may approach the task differently if not trained in a standardized way
- Is frequently entered by individuals dealing with many competing priorities, leaving room for error
- Passes through multiple different systems built for different purposes

3 Obtain Your Data and Work With Your Data Partner

It's important not to put this task on a single individual, to work with your stakeholders and (ideally) get a partner with experience working through this data on your side.

- [ ] Decide whether you will work with an internal or external data partner to reconcile your data
- [ ] Establish and communicate who owns, who can access, and who routinely works with the following key files:
  - Employee snapshot files
  - History files
  - Applicant files
- [ ] Decide who will be responsible for gathering your employee snapshot, history, and applicant files
- [ ] Plan for how the employee data files get to the data partner
- [ ] Determine whether anybody will review and/or edit the snapshot before it goes to the data partner

4 Follow These General Best Practices

There are also some overarching best practices to consider before providing your data to a partner:

- [ ] Locate and correct missing data variables: when you pull the data from your systems, do a quick review for obvious major gaps
- [ ] Review files for "broken" records with missing hires and terminations: check you have records to account for employees that mysteriously appear or disappear
- [ ] Make sure data files are run "as of date" instead of the report generation date
- [ ] Ensure job titles/profiles share the same attributes. Each job title should have:
  - 1x EEO code assignment
  - 1x Census code assignment
  - 1x Grouping variable assignment
- [ ] Check that unique plan variables are reportable and tracked in the HRIS

5 Look Out for These Problem Areas

- [ ] Establish a business process (e.g. visual inspection) for demographics in your employee files—while "voluntary", you'll need this data for some state/federal reports
- [ ] Get personnel to re-validate the demographic data in their employee file around every five years. Federal contractors are required to solicit disability status on this timescale. This is easier with a self-service portal
- [ ] Pay attention to "From" and "To" variables in your history file. You need a way to link new joiner records to later transfer or promotion records with different EEO codes
- [ ] Make sure your applicant file contains a candidate ID for every record: you need to know if an individual applied to multiple requisitions
- [ ] Ensure each job title has only one EEO code and grouping variable associated with it
- [ ] Ensure every employee—including remote workers—is assigned to an establishment. (They cannot simply be "working from home")
- [ ] Check that generic-sounding transaction reasons (e.g. "changes") haven't been selected when a more accurate reason could've been used (e.g. promotion/transfer)
- [ ] Watch out for a range of data inconsistencies—changing races, locations, job titles, same-day transactions, duplicate records and transactions, hires without applicants, and more—these all require further investigation!

See our ebook, "The Poor Data Problem: How to Prevent and Correct Incomplete, Inaccurate, and Inconsistent Data" for a full list of fields and problem areas. Download the ebook and get further insights here: affirmity.com/resources

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