4 Steps to Strengthen Responsible Hiring With AI

How to help ensure your hiring tools are responsible, ethical, and fair

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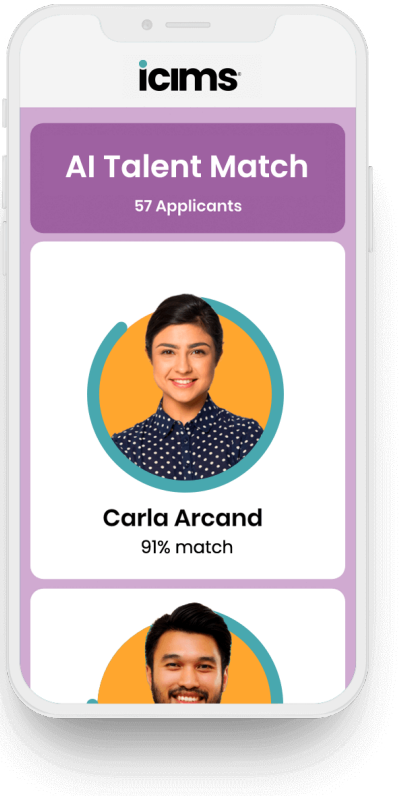
We know AI technology can make our lives easier – from filtering shady emails threatening to shut down your PayPal account, to asking Alexa to tell you the capital of Indonesia (Jakarta, FYI). AI-informed tools have also helped improve hiring processes by providing valuable insights based on data to help speed up workflows so HR teams can focus on more strategic initiatives.

However, for leaders to confidently transform hiring with AI-powered, data-driven recommendations, they need to trust how the technology works, and right now, execs aren't so sure. According to Harvard Business Review, based on current levels of preparedness, over half of execs reported "major" or "extreme" concerns about the ethical and reputational risks of AI in their organizations and identifying and mitigating those risks.

Despite their trepidation, more talent teams are adopting AI tools. **According to the research firm Absolute Market Insights, AI recruitment platforms will increase at a compound annual growth rate of 7.6% through 2027.** To adjust, leaders must ensure that AI technology retains its human connection and is used to recommend and not replace human decision-making.



How? By ensuring their technology is responsible, ethical, and fair.

What makes AI "responsible"?

AI tools now go way beyond filtering our emails and answering our random questions. They are used to make decisions that affect individuals and businesses, which could incur far-reaching personal and professional implications.

In talent acquisition, using AI to identify and recruit candidates runs the risk of perpetuating inherent biases in the data.

Responsible AI can help to recruit a broader group of candidates and upholds the following pillars:

- **Accountability:** Complies with data protection law to support audits, risk assessments, and mitigation actions.
- **Explainability and interpretability:** Provides you with reasons behind AI-powered results and recommendations so you get the clarity you need to take next steps.
- **Data quality:** Ensures high-quality data to power our AI, minimizing sources of error or ambiguity to carry out our AI-powered functions.
- **Bias and fairness:** Built with ongoing bias detection and mitigation efforts that could help your team boost your DEI efforts.
- **Robustness:** Reliable, scalable, and secure, ensuring that there's a backup plan for any avoidable risk.

78% of C-level leaders say they are "poorly equipped to ensure the ethical implications of using new AI systems"[1]

of recruiters and managers report AI reduces human bias in the hiring process[2]

believe AI delivers better candidate matches[3]

1. ZDNet
2. HRExecutive
3. LinkedIn

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Steps to work toward responsible and ethical AI hiring processes

1. Create an ethical AI committee

This committee can help provide oversight of your organization's AI tools and could include leaders in HRIT, recruiting, HR, and DEI.

Choosing members who bring expertise from various segments can help bring thorough oversight to your organization's AI process. According to experts in regulatory laws governing AI, membership characteristics and expertise might include:

- **Diverse makeup of members**
- **Technical understanding of how AI products and services work**
- **Legal and regulatory** aspects of AI and data
- **Human resource and education issues** related to AI
- Representation of various **AI stakeholders**, such as customers, business partners, researchers, and business leaders
- **Communicating AI ethics policy** with the public, customers, regulators, and competitors
- **Administrative skills**
- **Fundamentals of ethics**

Here's a step-by-step process to create an ethical AI committee for your organization:

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2. Educate yourself and the recruiting team on the possible consequences of not using AI ethically

The writing is on the wall that AI's Wild West days are coming to an end.

In the US, banks are under tighter scrutiny on how they use the technology, and the Federal Trade Commission released a strict set of guidelines this spring addressing "truth, fairness, and equity" in AI. The European Union also released a proposal for regulations this spring that included fines of **up to 6%** of a company's annual revenues for noncompliance.[4]

Failure to implement responsible AI processes can also result in an overall lack of diversity, according to Andreea Wade, Portfolio Director of AI/ML at iCIMS. Bias, in particular against historically underrepresented groups, can emerge due to many factors – including the design of the algorithm itself; or unintended or unanticipated use or decisions related to the way data is coded, collected, selected, or used to train and productize algorithmic models.

Wade added, "Coded, intentional fairness is key to any organization that promotes diversity goals."

Other possible implications to organizations if responsible AI processes aren't adopted include:

- **Compliance/regulations violations**
- **Fines**
- **Negative impact on reputation and employer brand**
- **Missed diversity hiring goals**

4. Harvard Business Review

3. Audit existing technology to ensure it meets the responsible AI pillars

- **Accountability:** How does your current tech stack up against new regulations? The EU's movement toward addressing ethical issues within AI lays the groundwork for proper regulation of the technology to ensure it remains trustworthy and human-centric. It's important to create a code of ethics for your organization to address additional aspects of AI and ML not addressed by data protection regulations like GDPR. You can see iCIMS' AI code of ethics here.

- **Robustness:** Ensuring the purpose of the model is aligned with how it's being used and whether it's able to adjust as new data is entered. AI/ML technologies are designed as robust applications to decrease the risk of unintended consequences or errors.

- **Explainability and interpretability:** AI/ML contextual recommendations are explainable to support human understanding and decisions. For example, when matching candidates to jobs, showing which skills and experience overlap in terms of job requirements.

"The whole world of fairness and bias starts with data."

-Andreea Wade, Portfolio Director AI/ML, iCIMS

- **Data quality:** "Everything starts with data," says Wade. "If you don't have quality data, you won't have an accurate model. It just won't work. And if you don't have accurate data, you will most likely have a biased or unfair model as well."

  When data isn't representative, you're likely to end up with bias and a model that doesn't work. Here are some famous recent examples that made the internet say, "Huh?":

Racist soap dispenser: A Facebook employee famously tweeted a video of an automatic soap dispenser depositing a mound of suds into the palm of a white-skinned person but not registering the hand of a darker-skinned man. He tweeted: 'If you have ever had a problem grasping the importance of diversity in tech and its impact on society, watch this video."

Coded bias: Netflix produced a whole documentary spurred by the discovery by an MIT lab researcher that Microsoft's facial recognition software only registered her dark-skinned face when a white plastic mask covered it.

- **Bias and fairness:** Context-aware intelligence that doesn't take sensitive data into account, such as education, age, or address. With this ability, AI can help recruiting teams surface candidates from historically excluded groups that they may not have seen in a long list of resumes. This gives you an opportunity to remediate bias so you can build a more inclusive workforce.

  The examples of seemingly biased models are well-known, including those from MIT, Optum Health, and Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS).[5] iCIMS' own data team is invested in building models that avoid bias.

5. Towards Data Science

Under the direction of Wade, data scientists conducted four studies on iCIMS' own AI to look for bias based on gender and ethnicity, looking at whether more senior roles go to male candidates, if more managerial roles are offered to white candidates, and if more manual jobs go to Hispanic candidates. The results were positive for iCIMS' use of responsible AI. "We could not find relevant signals of noise to indicate that there is this kind of bias based in the methods used," said Wade.

4. Educate leadership on responsible AI to get their buy-in

Working toward responsible AI and hiring practices will require leadership support. Share your work and findings in these three areas:

Research on consequences of not monitoring for responsible AI practices

Outline the members, practices, and findings of your ethical AI committee

Ethics committee's recommendations for technology to help ensure AI responsibility

The benefits of working toward responsible AI for your organization

If you use AI in your recruitment and hiring platform, doing so responsibly can lead to several benefits:

- **Deeper understanding of your HR technology**
- **More secure grasp of the HR technology market and future trends**
- **Stronger partnerships with your technology vendors**
- **Improved organizational collaboration and feedback**
- **Opportunities to work toward your DEI goals in both hiring and your workforce**

iCIMS code of ethics: Our commitment to trusted, powerful AI

At iCIMS, we believe that AI and ML elevate HR's impact but that hiring decisions should be made by the humans, not the technology. That belief has led us to create scalable solutions that mitigate risk to protect our customers as they adopt AI and ML tech.

iCIMS believes that AI and ML for talent should be:

- **Human-led.** All decisions should begin and/or end with human decision points.
- **Transparent.** AI/ML contextual recommendations should be explainable to support human understanding and decisions.
- **Private & secure.** Applicable data privacy and security measures should be extended to all AI/ML data storage and processing.
- **Inclusive and fair.** AI/ML should be designed as fair, compliant technologies to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion while furthering the well-being of customers, candidates, employees, and partners.
- **Technically robust and safe.** AI/ML technologies should be designed as robust applications to reduce the risk of unintended consequences or errors.
- **Accountable.** AI/ML technologies should be designed to work responsibly and support audits, risk assessments, and mitigation actions aligned with good corporate governance.

Meet iCIMS Talent Cloud AI & ML

The insight behind a scalable, innovative talent acquisition platform designed to help you with who and what comes next:

- **AI-led search, match, and job fit recommendation capabilities to candidates**
- **A single common AI platform across candidates' attraction, engagement, and hiring (ATS)**
- **Purpose-built AI that increases the quality and explainability of data-based recommendations**
- **'Best fit' and 'close match' profiles routed directly into hiring workflow**
- **Both hard and derived skills are considered when recommending candidates who will grow into tomorrow's jobs**

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