

## Companies Increase Efforts to Recruit Black Remote Workers -- WSJ

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(Dow Jones) --

Some businesses are hiring from regions with greater Black populations. Others are training Black front-line workers for jobs that can be done from home.

By Kathryn Dill

Some companies are using remote work to bring more diversity into their workforces, by hiring or developing recruits far from the communities where the companies are based.

As more staff return to offices, some employers say remote work remains a tool to recruit and retain workers, including those from ethnic or racial minority backgrounds. A broader recruiting net lets them hire in places with bigger pools of Black and other minority talent than, for instance, Silicon Valley or the rural Midwest. And recent surveys show a greater share of Black workers want jobs that let them work from home, compared with their white peers.

"From a diversity perspective, there's not a lot of Black talent in San Jose," says Aleta Howell, global diversity and inclusion business

strategy lead at Cisco Systems Inc., which has its headquarters in California.

Cisco has had success in stepping up its recruiting at historically Black colleges and universities and other schools near its North Carolina campus in Research Triangle Park and its offices in Texas and Atlanta for jobs that can be performed at home, she says.

### Changes in recruiting

Companies are finding one challenge is the lack of Black professionals already working in occupations that can be done remotely. Like Cisco, they are taking recruiting efforts further -- by rethinking the traditional hiring requirements for jobs that can be done from behind a computer and training more Black workers for such roles.

The makeup of the remote workforce in the U.S. largely tracks the population of college-educated workers, which means a smaller share of Black Americans have the option to work from home than other major ethnic groups. Some 38% of Black employees worked from home at least part time between February and May 2021, compared with about half of their white peers and 45.7% of Hispanic or Latino workers, according to Labor Department data on workers in their 30s and 40s.

OneTen, a coalition of leaders from big businesses with the aim of creating one million family-sustaining jobs for Black Americans by 2030, recently announced a partnership with Merit America, a nonprofit that provides job training and placement for low-wage workers. Together, the groups launched an effort to train and place thousands of Black workers without four-year degrees in remote-work opportunities. OneTen, which includes Merck & Co., Delta Air Lines Inc. and Nike Inc., says the initiative aims to give Black workers greater access to higher-wage jobs in fast-growing sectors.

Even if such jobs aren't remote full time, having the flexibility to work from home at least some days - or because of a child-care emergency -- is a powerful recruiting tool, says OneTen Chief Executive Maurice Jones.

"It's those things I see companies early on trying to figure out," he says.

Steven Cortez was working as an assistant store manager and making Uber Eats deliveries when he received an email about Uber Technologies Inc.'s partnership with Merit America. Through Merit's program, he completed a Google IT Support Professional Certificate in August 2021, putting in as many as 25 hours a week of studying while making deliveries. He landed a project-management job in October at Cisco, which also belongs to the OneTen coalition.

Mr. Cortez now works from home full time, earning a six-figure income that is double what he made before. He is working toward earning a project-management professional certification.

### Remote preference

In surveys, Black workers say they prefer remote work for an array of reasons, including the freedom to live where they choose, the ability to better manage child care and family responsibilities, and distance from office environments where they are often the only or one of a few Black faces in the room.

A 2022 survey of more than 10,000 workers by the Future Forum, a research consortium created by Slack Technologies, found that 83% of Black knowledge workers prefer a hybrid or fully remote work arrangement, compared with 79% of their white colleagues.

The ability to hire workers anywhere has helped other companies build more diverse workforces. Twitter Inc. says its early adoption of fully remote work has been a boon to its hiring goals: Black workers made up 9.4% of the company's U.S. workforce in 2021, up from 6.9% the previous year. Meta Platforms Inc. found that candidates who accepted remote jobs in the past year were more likely to be Black, Hispanic, Native American, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, veterans and/or people with disabilities.

Online-course provider Coursera Inc. has started hiring heavily from Atlanta, the Washington, D.C., area and in locations where it doesn't have offices to diversify its ranks, says CEO Jeff Maggioncalda. Along with plans to open smaller office hubs in those regions once its remote workforce takes shape, the company says it will shrink the footprint of its Mountain View, Calif., headquarters.

More than two-thirds of U.S. workers Coursera hired in the first half of 2021 weren't close to an office, the company says. Of those hires, 41% identify as Black or Latino.

"We didn't want to be constrained by geography," Mr. Maggioncalda says. "This is the only way we're going to build a diverse workforce."

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