

Tokenism: How to rise above it and articulate your value.

[Tokenism](#), or the practice of making only a symbolic effort to appear inclusive, is a phenomenon that impacts both job applicants and the organization to which they are applying. Before experiencing the organization's workplace first-hand, it is difficult for applicants to be knowledgeable about an employer's company culture, policies, and practices toward inclusion. Below are strategies that will help internship or job applicants assess the corporate ethos you may be entering as you prepare to ace your interview.

One of the most straightforward methods of gaining and assessing this knowledge is to simply [ask about diversity](#) during your interview. Remember, that [diversity is not synonymous with inclusion](#), and the two terms are not interchangeable; however, employers are often eager to talk about their diversity-related policies and may disclose useful information about inclusivity. Regardless of their answers you receive, keep in mind that [research](#) indicates that diversity policies rarely make companies fairer and certain populations are even threatened by them.

Your racial and ethnic make-up are fixed and often visible. Gender and sexual identity, on the other hand, are fluid and also factors in during interviews, hiring decisions, and how new interns and employees are viewed after starting a new position. [Discrimination](#) on the basis of identity and appearance-related stereotypes is real! If you sense an organization [offered you a role to fulfill a quota](#) (instead of valuing your credentials, prior work experiences, skills, and knowledge) then your relationship with that organization is less likely to be mutually beneficial.

Consider the questions below as you prepare for an interview.

- ◆ Have you done your research?
 - ◇ In addition to reviewing an employer's website, are you familiar with their publications, their successes and short-comings in the past three to five years, their reputation with customers, or even what their reputation is with their competitors?

- ◆ Do you know what *you* want?
 - ◇ The employer-employee relationship is a two-way street, beginning with the job interview, through initial and long-term employment. How does this relationship look to you? What kinds of inclusion practices are you hoping to see within the organization where you ultimately want to work at? You are going to be a part of a team – how do you want that team to look, value, and function?

- ◆ Are there red flags?
 - ◇ You may have your own set of warning signals that tell you to avoid certain companies or bosses. Here are a few to keep in mind:
 - When you ask about diversity, your interviewer has nothing to say. This spells imminent disaster should you ever have the need to address concerns about diversity and inclusion.
 - Micro-aggressions: comments or assumptions based on your physical appearance, dress, accent, name etc. that surface during your interview.
 - The intuition – does this *feel* like somewhere you want to work? Does the person interviewing you make you feel comfortable? Trust your instinct!

While the factors mentioned above will always – implicitly or explicitly – be part of the equation, executing [due diligence](#) will distinguish you from your competition and display the value you can bring to the organization.

To further discuss this topic, please [schedule an appointment](#) with the [Internship Coordinator, Ned Khatrichettri](#).