You may be wondering why I am qualified to write an article on Diversity sourcing. Well, when my buddy and Diversity Recruiting Guru Martin de Campo and I first sat down and discussed this at length in a dark dining room in downtown San Jose surrounded by rich hardwood paneling and more multicultural influences than you can shake a stick at, it became apparent that not only did we both share a passion for this topic but we approached it from two very different yet complimentary and equally successful angles. It was at that time that Martin had the brilliant idea of collaborating on an article like this, offering point and counterpoint, and discussing our two approaches in a public forum. But back to my original question, I asked Martin “why me?” Is it just because I was raised in Colombia, South America and like many other Latin Americans immigrated to the USA in 1989? Nope. Is it because I once ran a passive candidate diversity sourcing team for a well known software company? Nope. Well, then why?

That fateful day Martin said something that reverberated in me like a giant gong. He said that diversity recruiting is all about relating, knowing your audience, getting in the mind of the very same groups you are attempting to recruit. And that’s why I am qualified to co-write this article with him. I strongly believe that finding diversity leads is only slightly different than finding any other leads. To find anyone you have to think like them. It doesn’t matter if you are looking for Software Engineers, Accountants or Hispanics. Just like Software Engineers and Accountants, Hispanics join communities and interest groups where they get together and discuss topics they care about. To find Software Engineers since 1996 I’ve gone to groups and “locations” where they exchange ideas about C++ or Java. Finding those groups has enabled me to identify talent that mainstream recruiters are not typically contacting.

Why would it be any different to find Hispanics? Frankly, the most self evident way to find people is to go where they go. But what do Hispanics talk about, what groups do they join, where do they go? That’s the big question. It’s not about what diverse candidates looks for in an organization. Aside from some minor differences in our perception and preferences originating from our cultural heritage, we look for the same things everyone does for the most part. A good job is just as much a good job to a Hispanic as it is to an African American or Asian. What matters is where we are. Think like us and you will find us. We post resumes on Monster like everyone else, but how do you find us in there? In this four part series Martin and I will discuss the two sides of finding that out. Martin will focus on strategic and offline techniques, while I will get deep into details on online research. This approach should lead to a balanced perspective on both traditional face-to-face and advanced electronic tactics.

Because identifying where diverse candidates hang out depends greatly on learning to think like them, we only have room in this series of articles to focus primarily on the “big three” groups that many diversity efforts tend to focus on – black, Hispanic and Asian. We totally get that there are many more, and quite a few different ways to define diversity. Groups like veterans, the vision impaired, and Native Americans tend to get overlooked in conventional diversity efforts. Though we can’t cover all groups in this
series, many of the techniques we will discuss will give readers the opportunity to explore diversity recruiting for those groups on their own as well.

The Big Boards

Naturally, with so many millions of job seekers using the major boards like Monster, CareerBuilder and HotJobs, going to the big resume databases ranks at the top of the list for diversity candidate sources. As a job seeker, when I think of getting my resume into the hands of recruiters the first thing that comes to mind isn’t “I’m Hispanic, so where should I go to post my resume?” Instead I think “What is the best place for me to put my resume so recruiters can see it?” Later on I may start focusing on some of the other places, but to start out I’m going to go where I get the most exposure. This is why Diversity resume databases have a much smaller population than the big boards.

But searching on the big boards is tricky because whether by choice or unintentionally most diverse candidates don’t clearly state their protected status on their resume. So even inside the big boards the amount of people who self-select to be listed under the “diversity” section is relatively small. To get around that, we use a diverse approach to basic keyword searching. If I’m Hispanic, I may be proud of my involvement in groups like NSHMBA or SHPE and therefore mention the organization on my resume describing my role as chapter President or my participation in any of the committees. If I’m African American I may belong to NBMBAA or NSBE. So by looking for those keywords on resumes we find a high percentage of Hispanic resume. Keep in mind that not everyone who participates in groups like that is going to self-identify their protected status when they complete their employment paper work.

What if I didn’t join one of those professional organizations? Well, I may have had an active social life in college that included belonging to one of many brotherhoods or sisterhoods. I may mention that on my resume instead. For example, black females may have joined the Alpha Kappa Alpha sisterhood while their brothers joined Alpha Phi Alpha. Latino women may have joined Kappa Delta Chi while their brothers joined Omega Delta Phi. Asian’s would have joined cross-national Asian fraternities like Lambda Phi Epsilon or maybe they went for a more focused group like Beta Chi Theta, focused particularly on South Asian members. Besides social organizations like fraternities and sororities there are also clubs, student associations, service groups and student unions, many of them with ethnic focuses.

Many years after graduation I may still be involved with these groups, or I may have decided to join other groups like NSHP.org or NAAAAP.org where I take on a more national role and continue to support the professional development of my peers from the same ethnic background.

All of these associations make great keyword searches on the major job boards, but that’s not enough. There are a great many diverse candidates who either didn’t join them or left them out of their resume for any number of reasons. It would stand to reason then that searching for words like “black,” “asian,” or “latin” may work. However, that doesn’t
work very well. Think of how many resumes are going to have the word black in the context of “six sigma black belt” or “black box testing” a software QA methodology. Phrases like “work with Asian countries” or “business in Latin America” don’t necessarily point to diverse candidates. Even keywords like “Spanish” or “Chinese” when used alone can be misleading. Its possible those are languages studied by candidates who are not diverse, or words used to describe business situations not related to the individual’s ethnicity. Along the same lines, searching for “ethnic sounding names” also doesn’t always work. Even with an advanced degree in etymology its hard to tell if Lee is African American or Asian, assuming they didn’t choose to list their resume as “confidential” in which case there would be no name at all.

What can work in limited amounts is searching for “natural phrase” keywords such as “African American,” “Asian American” and “Latin American.” Though not widely found on resumes, such natural phrases do occur and when used inside OR statements along with names of professional and educational organizations, they can be an effective way to expand a search. In addition, some groups may use colloquialisms when referring to themselves like for example “latino” and “latina" which may also help find them. Another way is to combine languages with the use of natural phrases like “native Spanish” to find people who are native Spanish speakers. Frequently people who are native speakers will instead state that they are fluent hence searching for “fluent Cantonese” or “fluent Korean” works well. Searching for both the words “Cantonese” and “Mandarin” is a great way to find Chinese candidates because typically only native speakers are going to list both on a resume. This also works well for other ethnicities where its common to speak multiple languages like for example “Hindi” and “Urdu.” Searching for the language in its native spelling can also be very useful. For example, try Español instead of Spanish.