

EQUITABLE HIRING

Case Study

with

Storyroot

and

NATANIA MALIN GAZEK

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Consulting

What's inside?

Read through to learn about the goals, engagement, and impact of our work together.

“Natania helped me create an equitable hiring process for my first hire. **As a result, I found and hired an amazing candidate in a way that was aligned with my values.**

Not only do I now have the tools to use the process again in the future, but also the **knowledge to lead an equitable hiring process AND create a more equitable workplace** for the people I do hire.”



Katie James
Founder, Storyroot

NATANIA MALIN GAZEK

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Consulting

“I’ve always had very clear values driving my decision-making process, but I wasn't sure how to act upon those values when hiring and creating internal company policies.”



Katie James
Founder, Storyroot

The Goal:

Hire the company’s first employee using an equitable process to help (a) build a demographically diverse team, and (b) set the foundation to operationalize values through all internal infrastructure.

After starting Storyroot in 2019, the founder, Katie James, was ready to scale the business by bringing on her first employee. Katie wanted to make sure the company’s hiring processes reflected Storyroot’s values from the very start, to make sure they help drive the company’s DNA as it scales.

“When Katie first reached out, her concerns felt very familiar; both because they’re the kinds of things I’ve kept in mind as I’ve run my own values-driven small business, and because many of my past clients had come to me in similar situations. Katie talked about how important it felt to her to build a demographically diverse team, and that as a white, straight, cisgender founder this meant she especially wanted to make sure that team members of color and queer staff would feel included and confident that they were being treated equitably. **She was mindful that just because she valued these things, that didn’t mean they’d come to fruition unless she operationalized them intentionally.** And of course, we knew we had to do so in efficient, strategic ways that used the team’s time and budget wisely.”



Natania Malin Gazek,
Founder & Principal, NMGazek Consulting

“Katie jumped right into learning our equitable hiring process. **She saw clearly the ways it would help her hire a stronger team and mitigate the negative impacts of otherwise unavoidable unconscious biases.** We then ran the process together to bring on Storyroot’s first hire and I saw Katie quickly gain comfort and take ownership of the process. In the years since, I’ve watched her run it fully on her own, checking in only when trickier situations arose or she wanted to train new staff to use it. Plus, she’s been really smart about bringing us back to leverage this foundational work to make Storyroot’s other systems more efficient and consistent, too.”



Natania Malin Gazek,
Founder & Principal, NMGazek Consulting

The Engagement:

Storyroot retained Natania as their diversity, equity, and inclusion advisor to build an equitable hiring process for bringing on their first employee.

“This work has helped us do things a bit differently than others in the space because we were able to pause and question the things that are traditionally done in a hiring process. Not only do **I now have clear answers to tricky questions that can come up in the hiring process,** but I also had a trusted partner by my side to help me be most efficient with my time.”

Katie James
Founder, Storyroot



Since then, **Storyroot has replicated the hiring process to bring on several new staff members.** One of the core pieces of their hiring process is the values alignment interview that every new hire completes.

“There is great expectation setting from the jump about our values and how they show up. They're also well integrated into our policies and practices. That means there’s a strong dedication to our values and values alignment amongst team members. **I literally love every single person I work with. I’m stoked when I get on a call with them.** That’s only possible because of the intentionality in the kind of folks we’re bringing on.”



Talia Vicars
Former Impact Associate, Storyroot

The Ongoing Engagement

Natania has continued working with the Storyroot team to operationalize their DEI values through their routine feedback, performance evaluation, salary leveling systems, and more.

“Having Natania’s support has allowed us to grow the team sustainably because all of our policies and practices consistently and intentionally speak to our values. In fact, one of the critical pieces of our hiring process was a third-round interview specifically focused on values alignment. Now, everyone goes through that interview, including part-time staff and freelancers, because **we want it to be clear from the start that everyone has a role in creating the type of work environment that will best serve them individually and in showing up in a way that serves our collective team** – because that’s the value we’ve instituted. The (values alignment interview) lets us acknowledge when and how bias will be showing up so that we can make an intentional choice around it.”



Katie James
Founder, Storyroot

“As a candidate, it can sometimes feel like you have to check a certain box to be seen as the right fit. Learning about the Storyroot values, and experiencing firsthand the thoughtfulness of the interview process, clarified for me that this business seeks out diversity of thought. **I knew then, and still know now, that I am valued for my own perspective and personal and professional experiences.** It was refreshing to not only feel fully seen by my prospective employer, but also be given the space to ask questions about whether they were the right fit for me, and not just the other way around.”



Jillian Spratt
Impact Strategist, Storyroot

“Late stage capitalism is often characterized by transactional relationships and operating practices.

Fortunately, my experience with Storyroot has been the exact opposite; **from my very first conversation with Katie, the founder, every interaction has felt relational and reciprocal.** I know Katie has developed a team that functions this way due to her commitment to values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, which have been integrated intentionally and fluidly due to the collaboration with Natania. **As a Black, queer woman, I feel safety, belonging, and appreciation in this workspace** because I can count on being seen and heard, and I can bring my full self to work without being diminished or exploited. In fact, my experience at Storyroot has been so positive that **I would gladly represent the company at a job fair or other networking event, and feel comfortable telling other people of color or queer people that Storyroot is a safe, regenerative workplace** - something that I definitely could not say for every other job I’ve had.”



Cassie Bingham

Junior Impact Strategist, Storyroot

The Impact:

Several hires later, Storyroot now has a more diverse staff that has included multiple queer staff and staff of color, per Katie’s original goals, as well as staff from other marginalized demographic groups. Through our ongoing partnership, we’ve built upon the foundation of this hiring process to establish other strong processes that operationalize Storyroot’s values throughout the entire employee lifecycle.

“We’ve made DEI a continued focus for Storyroot and because of this ongoing work, **our hiring process, salary bands, and performance review processes are all a manifestation of our values.** My biggest point of pride as a founder is knowing that I’ve effectively invested in creating an environment in which there are no points of dissonance. Our culture actually feels to our staff the way we describe it during our interviews...not a lot of people can say that and actually mean it – it’s not just lip service. And **my experienced staff tell me that we are a very young, small business that operates more efficiently than a lot of more established businesses because of the maturity of our systems.**”

Katie James

Founder, Storyroot



“I always look forward to my work with Storyroot. **Katie set down such a strong foundation with this hiring process, and we’ve built on that as Storyroot has grown.** At each stage of Storyroot’s growth, Katie has been eager to learn about the equitable best practices she can leverage to make sure Storyroot is maintaining its strong values while expanding its culture so that staff feel a sense of belonging. **They now have exceptionally strong systems and policies in place that help them operationalize their values in their day-to-day work.** It’s an honor to help them as they come across new areas where they see an opportunity to weave in DEI subject matter expertise into their infrastructural fabric.”



Natania Malin Gazek,
Founder & Principal, NMGazek Consulting

The Impact

“At Storyroot, I developed confidence in my abilities. I'm proud of my work product and how it’s received by our clients, and I attribute that to being in a positive environment of people who want to build each other up and have a high standard of excellence.”

Talia Vicars
Former Impact Associate, Storyroot



"I've grown a lot as a person in this role, figuring out a lot of my gender identity during my time at Storyroot (including through conversations with Natania). That has been celebrated in the workplace. I really appreciate that Katie -- as a cis, straight person -- intentionally creates that environment. Storyroot was the first place I started using they/them pronouns besides with my friends. That’s huge. Katie cares deeply about folks feeling good and being able to show up as themselves at work."

Anonymous
Team Member, Storyroot

And that's the power of operationalizing your DEI values!

We customized Storyroot's hiring process just for them, but the framework is one Natania has implemented with clients across all sectors and sizes, including non-profits, tech startups, client services companies, consumer packaged goods companies, B Corps, and more.

Wondering how to implement these kinds of hiring, feedback, performance review, salary leveling, and other systems in your organization to operationalize your DEI values?

Reach out to learn more!



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