

Transforming Hiring & Diversifying Talent Tear the Paper Ceiling Campaign Overview

Campaign Background

In September 2022, the Ad Council and Opportunity@Work, in collaboration with nearly 50 national organizations and companies, launched the Transforming Hiring and Diversifying Talent – [Tear the Paper Ceiling](#) campaign. Uniting both workers and employers, the campaign gave a name to the invisible barrier that comes at every turn for [STARs](#), workers **S**killed **T**hrough **A**lternative **R**outes rather than a bachelor’s degree. STARs are the 50% of the workforce that have developed valuable skills through alternative routes like military service, community college, training programs, partial college completion, or – most commonly – on-the-job experience.

The [paper ceiling](#) – comprised of degree screens, biased algorithms, lack of alumni networks, stereotypes, misperceptions, and more – holds STARs back from opportunities for upward mobility and limits employers from finding qualified, skilled talent.

Campaign [PSAs](#) raise awareness of this barrier and encourage employers & STARs to tear the paper ceiling and visit [TearThePaperCeiling.org](#) to learn more.

Impact

The first phase of the campaign is to raise awareness of the paper ceiling and raise awareness of STARs as a skilled pool of talent.

Since the campaign’s launch, we’ve seen strong awareness in just the first year, along with impressive adoption of the term “paper ceiling.” Positive movement among our audiences and supporters of this issue includes the following:

- **3.3B impressions** of campaign creative
- **1.7M sessions** to the campaign’s website
- **34% of employers and 18% of STARs** have heard of the idea of “tearing the paper ceiling” (27% to 34% as of Wave 3 Employers tracking survey; 14% to 18% as of Wave 5 STARs tracking survey)
- **Ad aware employers** are more likely to have taken key actions to tear the paper ceiling, including helping change company policy to encourage hiring STARs (31% not ad aware vs. 50% ad aware) and speaking to others at their company about hiring STARs (36% not ad aware vs. 52% ad aware)
- **Ad aware STARs** are more likely to have taken key actions to tear the paper ceiling, including describing themselves as a STAR (11% not ad aware vs. 25% ad aware) or going online to learn more about STARs (7% not ad aware vs. 26% ad aware)
- Since the campaign launch, **14 states have issued executive orders or passed legislation to remove degree requirements from some jobs**, opening up more than 435,000 state jobs to STARs. Three states (Colorado, Maryland, Tennessee) had removed degree requirements from some jobs prior to the campaign launch.
- The “paper ceiling” has **taken off as a term in culture**, cited as a business “buzzword” in both [Bloomberg](#) and [Entrepreneur](#)

About STARs

- STARs are defined as individuals at least 25 years old, currently active in the workforce, and having a high school diploma but not a bachelor’s degree.
- STARs are half the workforce at over **70 million strong**
- STARs are all around us and can be found in **every sector of the workforce**
- STARs also reflect our nation’s racial and cultural diversity. STARs are **61%** of Black workers, **55%** of Latinx workers, **50%** of white workers, **66%** of rural workers, and **61%** of Veterans
- The paper ceiling has severely impacted STARs’ economic mobility. **Over the last 30 years, the wage gap between STARs and workers with bachelor’s degrees has doubled.**



Campaign Recognition

