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Reducing Unconscious Bias in the Hiring Process

Bias is **a normal cognitive pattern** and simply stated, it's **a preference**. Bias can feel like fact, even when it isn't. It's stubborn, so much so, that when confronted with information that challenges our beliefs, we often dismiss it and hold tightly to what supports what we already "know." This is confirmation bias at work.

Awareness of our bias means being willing to sit with the truth that what might feel like fact to us, is really simply a perspective; a perspective we can have strong feelings about. When we name and examine our biases, we create space for **clearer judgment, more open-minded discussion, and ultimately, better decisions**.

Strategies to reduce unconscious bias

Be aware of your own thinking and biases. Developing your awareness of when it might arise will encourage you to start challenging immediate assumptions. Train others in the same regard.

Challenge your assumptions. Challenge your assumptions by using curiosity. Curiosity can help identify unconscious bias and in turn, reduce the impact of unconscious bias.

Build the capacity to **hold multiple perspectives**. Create a culture where other points of view are encouraged and welcome. Make an effort to contemplate other perspectives before making decisions.

Create and maintain a **consistent interview process** for all candidates. Create a framework and ensure that all interviewers utilize it for all candidates.

Consider **structured interviews**. Creating a standard list of questions for each position will encourage consistent evaluation of all candidates.

Consider **a consistent way to evaluate** candidates. Include more than one person in the interview process. Hold a debrief at the conclusion of the interviews. Encourage different points of view and welcome questions.

Train everyone participating in the interview process.

Common Types of Unconscious Bias

Unconscious Bias	Definition	Example
Status Quo	You like it the way it is and want it to stay that way.	*We only look for past experience; searching for the exact same experience or if filling a position that was held by someone we liked, looking for a copy of that person. The hiring manager recommends hiring a candidate because they worked at the same company the previous person worked at prior.*
Halo	There is a focus on one positive characteristic while ignoring other factors which may make the individual not suitable for the role.	*During an interview, a candidate possesses exceptional communication skills, which is an essential function. However, they do not possess the other requisite skills. The hiring manager focuses only on the communication skills in the evaluation, despite the lack of other skills.*
Horn	There is a focus on one negative characteristic while ignoring all positive characteristics which may make the individual suitable for the role.	*The candidate arrives late. The hiring manager thinks that the candidate will be late all the time. A name on a resume can also impact the perceived qualification of a candidate.*

First Impression	Allows your initial judgment or first impression of a candidate; good or bad to influence feedback. The judgment is made within seconds.	*The candidate arrives at the interview in a wrinkled suit. The interviewer assumes that the person is not that interested in the position because of their appearance.*
Affinity	Leads us to favor a candidate who we feel we have a connection or similarity to.	*We learn that the candidate went to the same school we did and is a member of the same sorority. The assumption is that the candidate will "fit in" at the organization because of this.*
Conformity	Refers to our tendency to behave like others in a group, even if that behavior conflicts with our personal beliefs.	*During a panel interview, one of the panel members, a senior manager, remarks that they think that the person is not a good fit. More junior panel members hear this remark and are influenced by the remark.*