



ELEVEN ELEVEN TALENT COLLECTIVE

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN YOUR INTERVIEW

HOW TO IDENTIFY IT AND WHAT TO DO NEXT



HOW TO IDENTIFY UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

WHAT IS IT AND HOW DO WE MINIMIZE IT?

What is Unconscious Bias?

Unconscious bias, also known as implicit bias, is a prejudice towards someone based on an opinion formed by our own experience, without us being consciously aware of it. The brain uses our lived experience, along with societal stereotypes, to categorize the world in such a way that develops implicit bias, whether we intend it or not. Often, these biases have to do with age, race, gender, and even weight.

Studies on unconscious bias have uncovered that the human brain creates categories to make sense of the world around us, and each of these groupings has 'expected traits' that become deeply wired into human cognition.

Unconscious bias is specifically detrimental in the interview process, since it skews judgement and therefore creates an unfair and unequal opportunity for the candidate pool.

How do we Minimize it in the Interview Process?

The first step to eradicating unconscious bias is determining what it looks like and confronting it within ourselves—head on.

There are practical tools that employers can utilize to train their hiring team on how to hire objectively, including sensitivity training and diversity and inclusion workshops. Some key first steps are:

Educate your team on what unconscious bias looks like (this document is a great resource to help get you started).

Diversify your candidate pool as much as possible. Your candidates should not all look the same, nor should they have similar backgrounds.

Take your time. Read that again. Snap judgements are a breeding ground for unconscious bias. Taking your time and sharing your learnings with your team will bring fresh perspective and make the process more objective.

Write down your thoughts and impressions. Taking a look at your notes with fresh eyes and some space from the moment can provide clarity around your biases (we all have them).

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TYPES OF IMPLICIT BIASES THAT SHOW UP IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Gender Bias

Gender bias occurs most commonly when self-identified men are valued above all other genders. A brand new 2020 report from the United Nations Development Program found that globally, 40% think men make better business executives. This makes the work of equal opportunity challenging, but necessary for every workplace. (Source: UNDP)

Racial Bias

One study found that candidates with "white sounding names" were 50% more likely to receive a follow up interview than those with "black sounding names". Names are just one type of subtle cue that causes the brain to trigger stereotyping, but are often then first thing hiring managers see in the interview process.

Source: National Bureau of Economic Research

Affinity Bias

This type of bias occurs when we prefer someone who is similar to us, leading to favourable outcomes for that person, such as hiring, promotions, etc. Our brains register this relatability and see the person as non-threatening. This type of bias is especially prevalent when someone is hired for "culture-fit," because they seem to share similar interests and lifestyle choices. Affinity bias is one of the biggest threats to diversity.

Source: Built In

Attribution Bias

Attribution bias is a cognitive bias that occurs when we try to make sense of someone else's behaviour. When we assess ourselves, we think about the whole picture, and often cut ourselves a break. But with attribution bias, we tend to think that others are fundamentally flawed. For example, if a candidate comes in late and flustered, we assume they are lazy and unprofessional—but that person could have faced some kind of unavoidable situation and is in fact a highly professional individual.

(Source: Harvard Business School).

The Halo Effect

When we see one great thing about a candidate, we let the glow of that achievement influence our opinion about everything else they do or have done. Examples of positive attributes that might fall into the halo effect are what school they went to, or whether they received high grades, awards, publications, and titles. (Source: Edward Thorndike, The Law Of Effect Principle)

The Horns Effect

This phenomenon is the opposite of the Halo effect, but it works the same way. This occurs when one negative trait taints our entire perception of the individual. For example, if someone is dressed in a way we don't like, we'll assume they are unprofessional and lazy, even though attire and competence aren't related.

Source: (HR Source)

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