

Unconscious or Implicit Bias

Combating Bias in the Hiring Process



Unconscious or Implicit Bias are stereotypes we all form about people without realizing it. This process of filtering, generalizing, and focusing on certain pieces of information, allows us to make quick decisions. These thoughts can be positive or negative in nature and lead us to gravitate towards or retreat away from candidates in the recruitment process.

From Unconscious Bias to Discrimination: What happens when bias goes unchecked?

- ★ STEREOTYPE-common preconceived and oversimplified images or ideas about a person, group, or thing. Over time these stereotypes can harden into an unconscious or implicit bias.
- ★ UNCONSCIOUS BIAS-association or attitude about a particular group. Operates without our awareness. Can influence decision making in the hiring process.
- ★ PRE-JUDGING- attitude about a person or group that is based on a belief or stereotype.
- ★ BEHAVIOR- Based on preconceptions and assumptions. Can create a grouping that results in favoring one group or excluding another.
- ★ DISCRIMINATION- An action that is based on prejudicial attitudes or thoughts. Unequal treatment or favoritism in the selection process when hiring.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS:

- Influenced by stereotypes, socialization, culture, media, family, friends, etc.
- It can happen without us being aware
- Combination of attitudes, stereotypes, and beliefs
- It is the brain making judgments and decisions quickly
- The subtle cognitive process that starts in the amygdala of the brain
- There are over 100 different types of bias
- Take the Harvard Implicit Bias Test:
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

A Few Examples:

Identifying unconscious bias



Affinity Bias

Hiring people who have characteristics similar to their own.



Confirmation Bias

Searching for evidence to back up the first impression that has already been formed.



Conformity Bias

Changing opinions to conform with the group or making decisions to keep group harmony and avoid conflict.



Gender Bias

Influence of gender on the assessment of candidate ability.



Reduce the Effect of Bias

Tactics to Reduce bias in the Recruitment

Process

➤ Be proactive

Use inclusive, gender neutral language in job postings and advertisements to ensure the widest possible candidate pool. Create diverse search committees and interview panels. Diversity should include the diversity of gender, ethnicity, ability, and perspective. Ensure that the panel reduces affinity bias.

➤ Educate yourself and others

Take the time to learn about unconscious/implicit biases. Invite Talent Acquisition and/or the Office of Institutional Equity to the initial search committee meeting to learn techniques to reduce bias and ensure that the search process is legally compliant. Create a dept. search advocate who can be an objective voice in the search process. View the UCLA Implicit Bias video series at <https://equity.ucla.edu/know/implicit-bias/> or take the Harvard Implicit Bias test at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

➤ Use objective, defensible criteria

Before reviewing applications, take the time to determine objective criteria that will be utilized to review each applicant. The interview panel or search committee must be able to articulate, at each stage of the process, the decision to advance or eliminate an applicant based upon a fair evaluation of applicant qualifications, skills, and experiences. Don't rely on first impressions or snap judgments based on educational pedigree or current institutions until a holistic view of the candidate can be assessed.

➤ Encourage robust dialog

Create an environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas. Pay attention to panelist's or committee member's perspectives particularly when discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the various candidates. Consider that unconscious biases may be shaping opinions. Don't be afraid to think outside of the box.

➤ Challenge stereotypes

Challenge assumptions and challenge tradition. Consider whether unconscious or implicit biases are influencing your decisions or those of the search committee. Seek to ask questions that elicit and encourage alternate points of view. Don't be afraid to share or seek an alternate opinion. Make sure every assumption is based on fact. Beware of hiring based on "fit." Fit is more often used as a way to exclude people, as an out when we can't say, "We only want people who are like us working here."