

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



As you conduct an interview and selection process, it is essential that you understand and mitigate the impact of unconscious bias. We all have biases, but we cannot allow our biases to get in the way of making the best hiring decisions when evaluating candidates. Let's explore this further.

Unconscious Biases are learned perceptions, images, and stereotypes that operate automatically and involuntarily, affecting both our perceptions and behaviors. Biases stem from our natural tendency to make associations through our prior experience and stereotypes that may affect objectivity and sway our decisions.

In the busy world of work, we are more likely to stereotype and rely on biases to save time and filter information. This can become a barrier to workplace equity. Left unmitigated, unconscious bias can have serious impact on the hiring process – before, during, and even after candidate interviews.

We are more prone to unconscious biases:

- When there is lack of clarity, or we have incomplete information.
- When we feel rushed or pressured.
- When we are emotionally or cognitively overloaded, stressed, angry, or frustrated.

Types of Unconscious Bias

Everyone has biases, but they cannot be left unchecked. The first step in mitigating your own unconscious bias is understanding the different types and building self-awareness of when and where you might be letting your guard down.

Continue reading to discover just a few of the biases that may unfairly impact our decision-making, if they aren't kept in check.

As you read on, consider how and when you might be experiencing these biases and reflect on how you can prevent them from influencing your decisions.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



Affinity Bias

We unconsciously prefer people who share qualities with us (such as social/economic or cultural background) or people that we like. This bias can have a big impact when we hire someone who we assume will be a “cultural fit” to the organization.

Example: *You favor a candidate from the same town, who went to the same university, and/or who knows the same people as you.*



Confirmation Bias

We tend search for evidence that backs up our pre-existing opinions, perceptions, stereotypes or images. It leads to selective observation, meaning we focus only on things that fit our original viewpoint.

Example: *This can manifest in an interview process when the interviewer asks irrelevant questions, trying to elicit answers that support their initial assumptions about the candidate.*



Conformity Bias / Groupthink

We tend to adapt our behaviors to those around us, rather than using our own personal judgement. This bias occurs because we want to hold opinions and views that our community accepts.

Example: *You’re on a panel and you’re the only one who thinks a particular candidate did well. Instead of speaking your views, you just agree with the rest of the panel.*

For more on Unconscious Bias, visit the [Interview and Selection Skills – Resource Guide](#).

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



Contrast Effect

We assess two or more similar things and compare them with one another, rather than looking at each based on their own merits.

Example: Comparing candidates to each other instead of looking at each candidate's merits against the requirements for the role.



Halo / Horns Effect

Long-lasting positive or negative first impressions. Both cloud views of other qualities.

Halo: We focus on one specific positive feature of a person and let that influence how we see everything else about them.

- **Example:** We notice that someone went to a prestigious law school, and we assume they are a great fit for the company. Other candidates may match the job profile better but graduated from public universities, so we unfairly pass them over.

Horns: We focus on one specific negative feature. This also clouds our views of other more critical job-related qualities that we seek in filling the role.

- **Example:** If we do not like the way someone dresses, we might assume they are also lazy and unprofessional, even though professionalism and competence are not related to attire.



Higher Bar

We unknowingly apply a higher bar or pass rate to those to whom we believe are dissimilar to us. This bias can also significantly impact your candidate pool, even before interviewing, potentially excluding diverse applicants in the initial screening process.

Example: Holding a female, racially diverse, or LGBTQIA+ candidate to a higher standard than other candidates, before, during or after an interview.

For more on Unconscious Bias, visit the [Interview and Selection Skills – Resource Guide](#).