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How to:

Increase Diversity through Improved Recruitment & Hiring Processes

In this exclusive guide we'll take you through everything you need to know about diversity hiring including; why it's so important, how it can benefit your organisation, what unconscious bias is and how it affects the recruitment process, and 5 ways you can improve diversity hiring practices in your organisation right now!

Introduction

The issue of diversity in recruitment and hiring practices is one of the biggest being faced by our industry in 2016 – particularly for those of us recruiting and hiring within technical industries. But why is diversity hiring so important these days? Well, there are a number of reasons.

The first is legal. In most countries around the world, there is anti-discrimination legislation in place, which says that an organisation has to give equal opportunity to all individuals, regardless of their gender, race, age, physical ability, ethnicity or religious beliefs. But while we strongly advise you to comply with any and all legal regulations in your country, you should be hiring for diversity due to the exceptional business case for it!

There are a number of great business reasons for hiring for diversity:

- **Increased Profitability** – Most studies surrounding diversity in the workplace have found that for every 1% increase in gender diversity, company revenue increases by 3%. While high levels of ethnic diversity increases revenue by a whopping 15%. Why? The thinking is that when you have a more diverse group representing an organisation, you have more opinions, backgrounds, experience and perspectives on how to run a business, which means it can respond to a wider range of customer needs, which in turn leads to higher profitability.

- **Better Candidate Attraction** – According to Glassdoor, 67% of active and passive job seekers say that when evaluating companies and job offers, it is important to them that the company has a diverse workforce. In fact, it's particularly important to minority groups – the survey found that 72% of women consider workforce diversity important (versus 62% of men), while 89% of black respondents, 80% of Asians, 70% of Latinos and 65% of military veterans, said it was important to them. What's more, a significant majority of white respondents say workforce diversity is important.

- **More Engaged Employees** – More research from CEB Global and Talent Innovation, also shows that diverse and more inclusive workforces demonstrate:

      - 1.57x more collaboration among teams
      - 1.42x greater team commitment
      - 1.19x greater intent to stay with the company
      - 1.12x more discretionary effort
      - 60% of employees are more likely to see their ideas developed or prototyped
      - 75 % of employees are more likely to see their innovation implemented
      - 70% of employees are more likely to have captured a new market in the past year
      - 45% of employees are more likely to have improved market share in past year

Now that we know how important and beneficial hiring for diversity is, let's explore the forces that hold us back from making truly equal hiring decisions during the recruitment process.

You and Your Unconscious Bias

A father and son were involved in a car accident in which the father was killed and the son seriously injured. The father was pronounced dead at the scene of the accident and his body taken to the local morgue. The son was taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital and immediately wheeled into an emergency room. A surgeon was called. Upon arrival, and seeing the patient, the attending surgeon exclaimed, "Oh my God, it's my son!".

My question to you is, who is the surgeon?

Did you work it out? If not, have a think about it and maybe read the piece over again, because about 40% of people usually get this wrong.

Answer: The surgeon is the boy's mother. Yes, many of the people who come into contact with this story (maybe you too were included) don't realise that the surgeon could be the son's mother. They read the story, they picture the surgeon, and they automatically picture a man.

This is an example of how bias, and in this case gender bias specifically, plays out in our minds and in our thought process. But what is bias and why did it case many of us to automatically assume that the surgeon would a man?

What is Bias?

Bias is an inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group. In other words, bias are unconscious feelings we have towards other people – unconscious feelings that play a strong part in influencing our judgement of certain people and groups, away from being balanced or even-handed, in many different areas of life.

One of the most prominent areas of life where bias can play out is the workplace. In fact, one of the strongest bias we have in the workplace is gender bias. Why? Well, our feelings about

gender and the stereotypes we've all associated with gender are something we've developed throughout our whole lives. How we've been brought up, where we've been brought up, how we've been socialised, our socialisation experiences, our exposure to other social identities and social groups, who our friends are/were, and media influences, all affect how we think and feel about certain types of people – and especially about what makes a man a man and what makes a woman a woman.

It's important to mention however, that most bias stereotypes, do not come from a place of bad intent. Just because you didn't guess that the surgeon was a woman doesn't make you a bad person with a hatred of women. It's just a deep seated, unconscious stereotype that's been formed in our brains through years of different influences we often had no control over. For example, just think about of all the phrases you've heard associated with women in the workplace over the years, like "The Glass Ceiling", "The Maternal Wall" and the "Gender Pay Gap".

How Does Bias Affect Our Actions?

Our bias affects us and our decision-making processes in a number of different ways:

· **Perception** – how we see people and perceive reality.
· **Attitude** – how we react towards certain people.
· **Behaviours** – how receptive/friendly we are towards certain people.
· **Attention** – which aspects of a person we pay most attention to.
· **Listening** – how much we actively listen to what certain people say.
· **Micro-affirmations** – how much or how little we comfort certain people in certain situations.

Whether we are aware of it or not, each and every one of these things will affect who we select for interview, how we interview them, who we hire and our reasons for hiring them. Which brings me to my next point – how our bias affect the way we recruit.

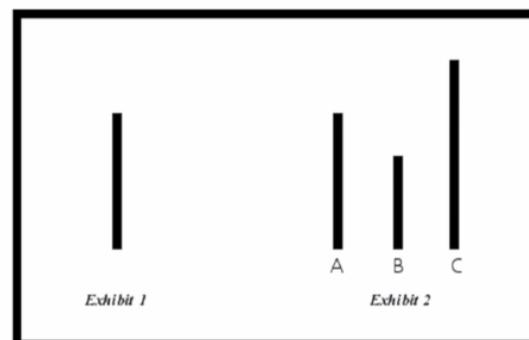## How Do Our Bias Affect the Recruitment Process?

In recruitment, the following types of bias are all very common:

Conformity Bias
Based on a famous study that's been around for decades, conformity bias relates to bias caused by group peer pressure. In the study, a group of people are asked to look at the following picture and say which line in Exhibit 2 matches the line in Exhibit 1.

One individual is told to say what they think. The rest of the group is told to give the wrong answer. We can see that line A of Exhibit 2 matches the line in Exhibit 1, but when the individual who doesn't know this is a test is gives the correct answer only to be informed the rest of the group has said Line B, the individual decides to scrap their own opinion in favour of the groups' opinion. A phenomenon that occurs in 75% of cases.

Just think how this may play out in a panel talking about a candidate. If an individual feels the majority of the group are leaning towards/away from a certain candidate, they will tend to go along with the group think rather than voice their own opinions.

Beauty Bias
This is the view that we tend to think that the most handsome individual will be the most successful. But this can also play out in terms of other physical attributes a person may have. For example, while 60% of CEOs in the US are over 6 foot, only 15% of the total population is over 6 foot tall. And while 36% of US CEOs are over 6.2 feet, only 4% of the US population is over 6.2 feet tall. So again, this shows some bias in terms of how we perceive a CEO should look like.

In recruitment, it's common that recruiters will look to fill a role with someone who shares similar physical attributes to the person who held that role before or who they believe looks like the kind of person who should have the role based on their preconceived bias.

Affinity Bias

This plays out a lot in terms of recruitment! Affinity bias occurs when we see someone we feel we have an affinity with e.g. we attended the same college, we grew up in the same town, or they remind us of someone we know and like.

For example, when we interview someone we feel we have some affinity with, our micro-affirmations play out a bit more than they usually would with someone we felt we didn't share an affinity with. For instance, if they tell us they're a little nervous we may smile at them more, offer more words of encouragement etc. Whereas, if a person we shared no affinity with told us the same thing, we wouldn't be quite as warm towards them as we had been to the candidate we felt we shared a connection with. After the interview, you'd then speak in much higher terms of the first candidate and how much you feel they'd "fit in" over and above the second candidate.

Halo Effect

Halo is when we see one great thing about a person and we let the halo glow of that significant thing affect our opinions of everything else about that person. We are in awe of them due to one thing.

For example, when looking through someone's CV/resume we may see they went to a particularly highly regarded college where they received a certain high grade, or they had undertaken some very sought after work experience program. Upon seeing that, we tend to see everything else about that person surrounded by the glow of that achievement.

The opposite of this is the "Horns" effect, where we see one bad thing about a person and let it cloud our opinions of their other attributes.

Similarity Bias

Naturally we want to surround ourselves with people we feel are similar to us. And as a result we tend to want to work more with people who are like us.

In terms of recruitment that may mean that we are more open to hiring individuals we see parts of ourselves in.

Contrast Effect

This plays out regularly in recruitment, particularly amongst recruiters who spend large amounts of time sifting through CV after CV or conducting interview after interview. If we're looking at a number of CVs/interviews in a row, one after the other, we tend to compare each CV/interview to the one that came before it.

We judge whether or not the person in front of us did as well as the person that came before them. When really, the only thing we should be comparing are the skills and attributes each individual has, to the skills and attributes required in the job, not those of the person that came directly before them.

Attribution Bias

This is the most common form of bias in the recruitment process as it affects how we access other people. When we do something well we tend to think it's down to our own merit and personality. When we do something badly we tend to believe that our failing is down to external factors like other people that adversely affected us and prevented us from doing our best.

When it comes to other people, we tend to think the opposite. If someone else has done something well we consider them lucky, and if they've done something badly we tend to think its due to their personality or bad behaviour.

Conformation Bias

This is one recruiters have to be extremely careful about! When we make a judgement about another person, we subconsciously look for evidence to back up our own opinions of that person. We do this because we want to believe we're right and that we've made the right assessment of a person. The danger of conformity bias in recruitment, is that our own judgement could be very, very wrong and could cause us to lose a great candidate for the job.

5 Ways to Improve Diversity Hiring Practices in Your Organisation RIGHT NOW!

So, now that you know why it's so important to start hiring for diversity in your organisation, and you know what bias is and how it can affect the recruitment process, what can you start doing RIGHT NOW in order to improve diversity hiring within your organisation?

Well, here are a number of suggestions taken directly from our Black Belt in Diversity and Inclusion Certification:

Take an Implicit Association Test

The most important first step you can take towards improving diversity hiring in your organisation is to take an Implicit Association test in order to find out where you own personal biases lay. By discovering and acknowledging your own biases, you'll develop an awareness of them and hopefully, open yourself up to change.
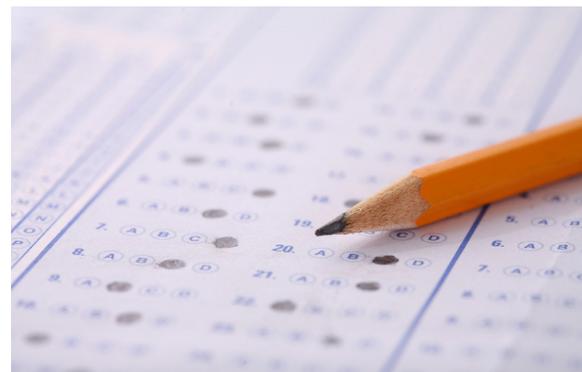
Don't worry, we all have biases. You have them, I have them, your mum has them, and your next door neighbour has them. Bias is an inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group. In other words, bias are unconscious feelings we have towards other people – unconscious feelings that play a strong part in influencing our judgement of certain people and groups, away from being balanced or even-handed, in many different areas of life. Bias is a fact of life.

The Harvard University website has a number of really interesting tests you can take in order to establish where your biases lay from gender to race to age. Take the tests, learn about yourself, acknowledge your biases, then open yourself up to change.

Standardise in Advance

The most common form of bias is Performance Bias, which tends to manifest itself in two ways

– gender and race. When it comes to gender, relative to females, male performance is often overestimated. This is especially true in traditionally male-dominated industries such as technology and engineering.

For example, when 2 identical resumes were presented to recruiters – one with a man's name, the other with a woman's – both male and female recruiters found 79% of applicants with the male name and only 49% of applicants with the female name to be "worthy of hire". A similar result also occurred when recruiters were presented with 2 more identical resumes – one with a white sounding name, the other with a black sounding name. The resume with the white-sounding name received 50% more calls for interviews than those with black-sounding names.

In order to combat this in your organisation, standardisation is key:

*   Limit performance bias by setting out a standardised set of objectives to do with hiring i.e. the skills needed/desired, in advance of candidate search. Determine what skills, attributes etc. are needed and stick to them. Doing so will go a long way to ensuring that each and every one of your hiring decisions is gender and race blind e.g. the gender or race of the candidate has absolutely nothing to do with the hire, just their skills.

*   When submitting shortlists to hiring managers be sure to standardise all resumes to remove any possible bias triggers. These triggers include things like candidate's name which may signal their ethnicity or religious beliefs, the candidate's gender, the name of university the candidate attended which may be the same as the hiring manager thus creating a bias towards them etc.

I repeat: the hiring decision should be based purely on the person's ability to do the job, not their gender, their race or where they went to college.

Use Positive Images and Cues

Research proves that job seekers from minority groups are more likely to disengage from employers without any diversity-related cues than those with cues, thus reducing the potential for a diverse pool of talent. For example, does your job ad state that they company is an equal opportunities employer? Does it give a link back to the company's diversity policy?

What about your website and your recruitment collateral? If you are trying to encourage more Hispanic women to join your company, why are the only images of employees on your site white males? The BBC made this mistake in their latest recruitment video which can be seen here.

The recruitment video, which features various members of staff including presenter Evan Davis and editor Ian Katz, is meant to show what it's like working for the BBC behind the scenes of Newsnight, and portrays staff members going about their day attending editorial meetings and the like. There's just one problem, all the people in the recruitment video are white – a fact the Campaign for Broadcasting Equality is using to attack the BBC's record on diversity.

The campaign notes that the film which provides "information for young entrants into the television and media industry shows not one single BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) person in the entire production team or visible in any role" – a huge oversight on the BBC's part I think you'll agree, especially when you consider that by 2017, the BBC say they aim to increase BAME portrayal on air from 10.4% to 15%.

So, do yourself and your company a favour. Put yourself in the candidate's position. What would they like to see? How would they like to see it? Are there similar stock photography images plastered around your recruitment website? Are they in need of updating? Find out.

Assess Where You Recruit

If you aren't finding the more diverse candidates you need to hire, it may be time to assess where you are advertising/featuring your open roles. For example, if you're trying to encourage more

African-American graduates to join your company, there's not much point in attending career fairs at universities with a primarily white demographic. Check out university diversity ranking sites like this US one or check individual university website's like the University College London, for their specialised breakdown of their student demographics.

Similarly, if you are trying to recruit more women and all of your job advertisements are being placed on job sites and social sites with a typically high male audience, your advert will not do it's job. Be sure to check Alexa.com to determine the demographic usage associated with various job sites and social sites. Check out the demographics Alexa.com provided us with for Instagram.com, for example:
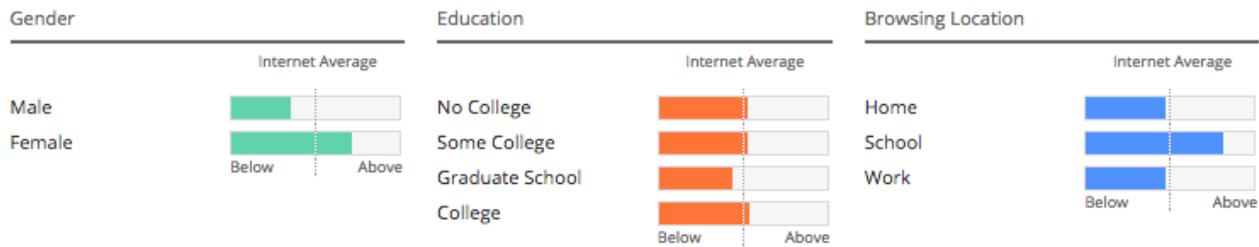
Test Your Job Ads

Find a digital copy of the last job ad you wrote. Highlight the text, right-click and copy it in its entirety. Now, go to a website called gender-decoder.katmatfield.com. When you're there, right click and paste your job ad into the text box provided. The Gender Decoder will then tell you whether your job ad is feminine-coded (i.e. if your job is written with more of a leaning towards a female candidate), masculine-coded (i.e. if your job is written with more of a leaning towards a male candidate) or neutral (i.e. if your job has no leaning towards male or female candidates), based on the language you've used to construct it. In this example we copied and pasted a random job ad from Indeed for an Online Channel Content and Project Executive:

According to the Gender Decoder, this ad is feminine-coded i.e. has too many stereotypically feminine words used in its description:

Gender Decoder for Job Ads

Results

This advert is feminine-coded

This job ad uses more words that are stereotypically feminine than words that are stereotypically masculine. Fortunately, the research suggests this will have only a slight effect on how appealing the job is to men, and will encourage women applicants.

Of course, there are plenty of other factors that affect the diversity of applicants for this role, and of the people who end up being hired. These include the company's reputation for inclusiveness, its culture, and the behaviour and prejudices (both conscious and unconscious) of the interviewers.

Masculine-coded words in this ad

- analytics
- lead
- ambitious
- challenge
- objectively
- analysis
- independently
- ambitious

See the full list of masculine-coded words

Feminine-coded words in this ad

- support
- support
- responsible
- understanding
- understanding
- understand
- responsive
- understanding

Fortunately, according to the Gender Decoder, the research suggests that this will have only a slight effect on how appealing the job advertised is to men, and will encourage women applicants. However, ads that have more stereotypically masculine words will risk putting women off applying. So test your job ads and see whether or not your particular gender bias has affected how you've written your job ads. You might be surprised at the results!

Conclusion

It is important to note that there will NEVER be a "one size fits all" approach to an organisation's diversity hiring needs. Every organisation will require a different approach. But what we can say is that if you take on board these tips it will take you a long way towards improving diversity within your organisation.

By taking an implicit association test, you will be able to acknowledge your own biases which may affect your judgement in the recruitment process. By standardising various aspects of the recruitment process, you will minimise the effect of performance bias on the final hiring decision. By selecting diversity rich images for your website and ensuring your company's diversity policy is highlighted and easy for all to find, you will attract minority groups to your business. By actively sourcing minority candidates in places they hang out, you will have a better chance of finding them. And finally, by testing your own job adverts for gender bias, you can see if you need to make any improvements to the way yo write your job ads in order to attract particular candidates in the future.

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