

# Unconscious Bias

## *Tips for Conducting a Successful Interview Process*

### What is Unconscious Bias?

Unconscious bias refers to bias that we are unaware of, and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.

#### **These assumptions are examples of unconscious bias:**

- A person is of a certain race based on his/her name, voice, and/or accent
- People of certain ethnic groups have specific interests
- Women are always primary caregivers
- A woman doesn't want the job because she has kids or wouldn't want to move
- A husband's job was the reason for relocating
- A person is gay based on a certain haircut or way of dressing
- An overweight person is unmotivated
- All older adults are forgetful and frail

### How can I keep Unconscious Bias in check during the interview process?

- Ensure all interviews last the same amount of time
- Ensure that the criteria desired by the department are clear
- Standardize interview questions
- Immediately write down thoughts about the candidate after the interview
- Articulate concrete examples- explain 'gut feelings' (positive and negative)

#### **And Remember. . .**

Time and again, the research shows that interviews are poor predictors of job performance because **we tend to hire people we think are similar to us rather than those who are objectively going to do a good job.**

*-Ori Brafman, quoted in "Overcoming the 'Sway' in Professional Life". The New York Times. July 15, 2008.*



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## Additional Considerations

**Begin by recognizing that you** – and everyone else – have unconscious biases. Examine whether there are differences in the types of questions you ask different types of individuals. Take the Harvard Implicit Association Tests at [implicit.harvard.edu](http://implicit.harvard.edu) to learn more about your conscious and unconscious preferences.

Where you find unconscious bias, **make the effort to learn more** about members of that group. Unconscious bias tends to thrive on a lack of information.

Keep in mind that, unconscious bias is more likely to play a role in your decision making when you are under pressure or when there is a great deal of uncertainty. If you are under pressure, try taking a break or using another mechanism to **reduce your stress**.

When taking or recommending personnel actions, **look at the basis for your decisions** and ask yourself if there is objective data to support your action or if unconscious bias is at work.

*Did that person you just interviewed remind you of a childhood friend and did that lead you to be slightly more supportive in the interview than you would have been otherwise?*

## More Resources and Tools:

AAMC Unconscious Bias Learning Lab

30 minute interview with Howard Ross on unconscious bias

[www.aamc.org/initiatives/diversity/learningseries/346528/howardrossinterview.html](http://www.aamc.org/initiatives/diversity/learningseries/346528/howardrossinterview.html)

Harvard Implicit Association Tests

[implicit.harvard.edu](http://implicit.harvard.edu)

Blink by Malcolm Gladwell

The Evolving Language of Diversity

[www.isr.umich.edu/home/diversity/resources/diversitylanguage.pdf](http://www.isr.umich.edu/home/diversity/resources/diversitylanguage.pdf)

Overcoming the 'Sway' in Professional Life

[www.nytimes.com/2008/07/15/jobs/15shift.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/15/jobs/15shift.html?_r=0)

How To Fight Racial Bias When It's Silent And Subtle

[www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/07/19/203306999/How-To-Fight-Racial-Bias-When-Its-Silent-And-Subtle](http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/07/19/203306999/How-To-Fight-Racial-Bias-When-Its-Silent-And-Subtle)

## Source Material:

Unconscious Bias: Are you guilty of blocking the talent pipeline? - HR Zone

[www.hrzone.com/feature/people/unconscious-bias-are-you-guilty-blocking-talent-pipeline/140641](http://www.hrzone.com/feature/people/unconscious-bias-are-you-guilty-blocking-talent-pipeline/140641)

Unconscious Bias on Cook Ross

[www.cookross.com/services/unconsciousbias.asp](http://www.cookross.com/services/unconsciousbias.asp)

AAMC Diversity and Inclusion

[www.aamc.org/initiatives/diversity/](http://www.aamc.org/initiatives/diversity/)

Tip Sheet Prepared by:

BWH Center for Faculty Development & Diversity

[cfdd.brighamandwomens.org](http://cfdd.brighamandwomens.org) • [BWHCFDD@partners.org](mailto:BWHCFDD@partners.org) • (617) 525-7646