

Bias Book

ALL ABOUT UNCONSCIOUS BIAS
AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT





What's inside

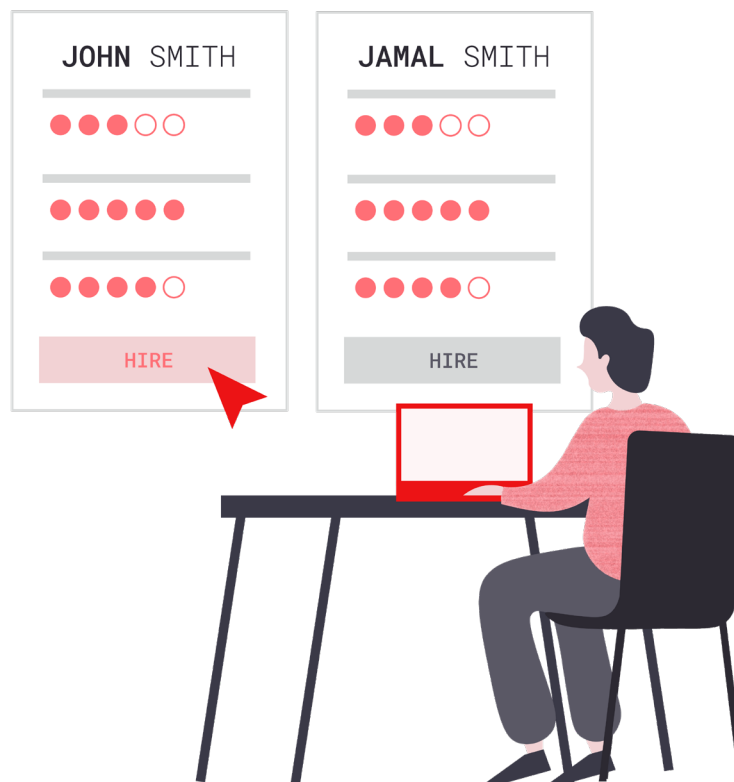
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Introduction

Each of us is exposed to Unconscious Bias. Therefore, we should not ask ourselves IF I HAVE ANY UNCONSCIOUS BIAS, but rather ask ourselves WHICH OF THEM?

There is no doubt about it here. Unconscious bias and the resulting unconscious discrimination are common in the workplace. This is confirmed by numerous studies conducted for many years in the field of psychology and psychology of work.





1. What is Unconscious Bias?

Unconscious biases are generated by a function in our brain that allows us to make decisions faster through a series of mental shortcuts. This shapes our view of the world and other people and can lead to questionable decisions being made. This means that we often treat people and situations through the prism of unconscious generalizations and preconceived judgments rather than using a set of objective qualitative and quantitative criteria. That is why unconscious bias is so dangerous. They can lead to discrimination and end exclusion.

TRAINING IS AN IMPORTANT CONVERSATION STARTER. THEY ARE USED TO ENSURE THAT EVERY LEADER AND EMPLOYEE OF THE COMPANY UNDERSTANDS WHAT THE PHENOMENON OF UNCONSCIOUS PREJUDICES IS AND WHY IT IS WORTH FACING.

THEY CAN BECOME THE STARTING POINT FOR UNDERTAKING VARIOUS ACTIVITIES ON MANY LEVELS OF THE COMPANY

One way to become aware of the prejudices I succumb to is to take the unconscious bias test. It's available in many languages: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>. The test results indicate that even people who are very aware of a phenomenon (racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, etc.), and even belong to the group that is the target of such prejudices, may have negative, unconscious bias against this group. Begin to watch out for your biased behavior. Consider what sources you get your information from. Make a list of the social groups you come into contact with. Try it!



2. What can we do in the workplace with our biases?

- **Promotion and promotion processes** - Should be clear, and understandable to all employees
- **Remuneration system** - Promoting equal opportunities for employees.
- **Building awareness of your own behavior and way of thinking** - For example, by including criteria related to diversity and inclusion in the employee self-assessment sheet, which is regularly completed during periodic interviews.
- **Building a community** - focusing on selected aspects of diversity that are important to them.
- **Building the competencies of leaders in practice** - making it easier for them to manage a variety of teams. Competency building may, but does not have to be, carried out through classic training - as, in the case of an inclusive organizational culture, training may be the starting point for grinding competencies in practice.
- **Building internal communication** - should focus on dialogue with employees.
- **Linking D&I with the company's business strategy**



- **Reaching for benchmarks and alliances** - allowing for even better, the continuous building of the D&I culture in the organization.
- **Recruitment processes** - Unconscious bias plays a huge role there. By regulating recruitment processes in a way that would reduce unconscious bias, each organization would ensure that diversity is represented in the workplace.

How to avoid discrimination in the recruitment process?

Even if you are fully aware of D&I, the aforementioned indicators may appear unconsciously in interviews with applicants in the form of gestures, behavior, body language, eye contact, and non-verbal language. Recruiters may not even realize it. Therefore, it is worth:

- **Approach each candidate objectively**

The analysis of the CV and the results of the interviews should be the same for each candidate, regardless of the original preferences.

- **At the very beginning of the process, define the minimum requirements**

All those involved in the selection process will then be in agreement on the originally agreed requirements. We are then sure that the criteria will not change for any of the candidates.

- **Use a structured agenda for the interview**

Ask each candidate the same questions in the same order. As a result, all candidates are fairly assessed according to the same criteria.



- **Ask for specific examples from work experience**

This will help reduce assumptions that may be wrong.

- **Consider competency preferences and „cultural fit” carefully**

Define how both aspects fit the job. Assess preferred candidates and their cultural fit as you would any other skill to ensure consistency. Consider thinking about “cultural add” rather than “cultural fit”.

- **Be clear about your reasons for making decisions about each candidate**

Focus here on specific examples. Don’t focus on gut feelings or „instinct.”





3. What kind of unconscious bias can occur at work?

Unconscious Biases Can Create Unfair Disadvantages. We often make decisions in an erroneous and simplified way. This applies to recruitment decisions related to the selection of certain people for a project or for specific tasks. Why does this need to be addressed? First of all, we are very often unaware of it, and secondly, our decisions may be automatically wrong very often. Below are some of the biases that can guide us in making decisions in the workplace.

Conformity Bias

This is similar to group thinking syndrome. It occurs when we change our opinions or behavior to accommodate a larger group, even when it does not reflect our actual beliefs. This can happen under pressure from colleagues or when trying to fit in with a certain social group or work environment.



EXAMPLE OF THE SITUATION

The team is considering two offers. One person thinks A's bid is better, and the rest of the team goes with B's bid. This person gives in to the majority's opinion and votes for B's bid because the rest of the team decided so.



**HOW TO AVOID CONFORMITY BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE:**

1. Conduct anonymous polls or surveys: Being able to share opinions anonymously supports the freedom to express opinions without worrying about the preferences of others.

2. Ask for feedback in advance: Before you go to a meeting, have a private chat and get the opinion of each team member. This will give everyone adequate time to think about the topic and freely express their opinion without the fear of speaking out in a public forum.



Confirmation effect

The confirmation effect is the tendency to seek information and rely on facts that support views and expectations. In other words, it is a subjective selection of information aimed at confirming certain beliefs. This affects critical and objective thinking, which can lead to misinterpretation of information and omission of information that goes against your views.

EXAMPLE OF THE SITUATION

A product designer has an idea for a sports product. Although market research shows little interest, he is asking for support from his fellow athletes.



**HOW TO AVOID CONFIRMATION BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE:**

1. Use Multiple Sources: When testing a thesis or researching, rely on multiple sources to provide a balanced perspective.
2. If you are recruiting new employees, make a list of standard recruitment questions to avoid straying from the topic and asking questions that may or may not confirm your beliefs about the candidate.



Name Bias

Tendency to prefer a certain type of name, usually, one that sounds like native names. Name bias is most common in recruiting. If the recruiter offers an interview to people with native-sounding names rather than the same qualified candidates with foreign-sounding names, there is a bias.

**EXAMPLE OF THE SITUATION**

Jan Nowak, James Smith, Shalini Gupta, and Adam Kowalski applied for the recruitment process. They are all equally qualified to work in the position and have similar financial expectations, and availability. They all live in Warsaw. Everyone can start working immediately. The manager invites two people to the recruitment process: Jan and Adam. What bias might have been activated?



**HOW TO AVOID BEING PREJUDICED BY NAME:**

A simple way to counteract name bias is to bypass applicants' names in the initial recruitment process. For this purpose:



1. Use the software: Use software that hides personal information in candidates' CVs.
2. Do it manually: Designate a team member to remove personal information from resumes before handing it over to the hiring team.



Gender Bias

Gender bias is the tendency to prefer one gender over another. It is a form of unconscious bias, or implicit bias, which occurs when one individual unconsciously attributes certain attitudes and stereotypes to another person or group of people. These ascribed behaviors affect how the individual understands and engages with others

EXAMPLE OF THE SITUATION

Your team overlooks a woman for a high-profile, career-changing project because they think it would be too much responsibility after recently having a baby. Suggest that it's better to let the new mom decide for herself whether or not she wants to take the project.





HOW TO AVOID GENDER BIAS:

1. Identify Gender bias in your recruiting process

To reduce gender bias in your recruiting process, start by looking at the language you use. Utilize this gender decoder to identify the biased language in your job descriptions. You could also plug in recruitment content from emails, interview questions, and employer branding materials for social media and your careers page.



2. Blind Evaluations and standardized hiring process

One way to help reduce gender bias in issues like wage gaps and the lack of women in senior-level positions is to standardize hiring processes, and in some cases, remove the individual's name from the evaluation process entirely (such as when reviewing resumes of potential candidates.) When performing interviews, whether, for a new hire or an internal promotion, all candidates should be asked the same questions, with responses assigned numerical ratings based on predetermined criteria. Defining clear thresholds for performance management helps standardize expectations across the organization as well.



Attribution Bias

Attribution bias is the tendency to explain a person's behavior by referring to their character rather than any situational factor. In essence, it leads us to



overestimate the weight of someone's personality traits, and underestimate the influence of their individual circumstances.



EXAMPLE OF THE SITUATION

The candidate was late for the recruitment meeting by 10 minutes. Due to traffic jams in the city, he could not reach the company's headquarters at the specified time. Before the meeting, he called the recruiter to inform him about the situation and to apologize. After the interview, the Hiring Manager wrote in feedback: The candidate is lagger and disorganized.



HOW TO AVOID ATTRIBUTION BIAS:

1. You should keep this bias in mind when judging others, and use techniques such as considering relevant past situations, coming up with multiple explanations for people's behavior, and explaining the rationale behind your judgment. You can also use general debiasing techniques, such as slowing down your reasoning process.
2. When you become resentful at someone for a bad „quality“ they demonstrate, try to make a list of five positive qualities the person also exhibits. This will help balance out your perspective and can help you view your co-worker as a whole person instead of through the lens of a single negative quality





Affinity Bias

Also known as similarity bias, is the tendency people have to connect with others who share similar interests, experiences, and backgrounds. When companies hire for “culture fit,” they are likely to fall prey to affinity bias. When hiring teams meet someone they like and who they know will get along with the team, it’s more often than not because that person shares similar interests, experiences, and backgrounds, which is not helping your team grow and diversify. While similarities shouldn’t automatically disqualify a candidate, they should never be the deciding factor, either.



EXAMPLE OF THE SITUATION


During the interview process, a hiring manager is likely to feel a sense of rapport with a candidate if they feel as though they have certain things in common. Here are some examples that you may have encountered, either as a prospective candidate or someone tasked with making a hiring decision:

- Viewing someone as particularly intelligent because you attended the same university.
- Thinking that someone is qualified for a role because you share the same professional qualifications, or have worked at similar companies.
- Believe that someone is a ‘good fit’ for your team because you are of a similar age or socio-economic background.





HOW TO AVOID AFFINITY BIAS:

1. Actively take note of the similarities you share with the candidate so that you can differentiate between attributes that may cloud your judgment and the concrete skills, experiences, and unique qualities that would contribute to your team as a “culture add” rather than a “culture fit.”
 2. Have a diverse group of people conduct the interviews. Different perspectives and affinities should help to balance the hiring discussion.
 3. Create inclusive job descriptions that attract diverse candidates. You want those descriptions to be fair and unbiased.
 4. Create hiring questions that remove bias and create a system whereby you can assess candidates on the exact skills and attributes you require for the role.
- 



4. Biased? Who, Me?

Even the most open mind of man has a plethora of unconscious prejudices. Most of us believe that we are ethical and unbiased. We imagine that we make good decisions, that we are able to objectively evaluate a candidate or a contract proposal, draw a fair, rational conclusion in the interest of our company and ourselves.

What can I do?

- Take a look at the bias research and take an online bias test
- Collaborate with different people
- Make a list of your own positive stereotypes
- Make a list of the social groups you come into contact with
- Begin to watch out for your biased behavior
- Consider what sources you get your information from
- Think on the basis of what information you make decisions in your work





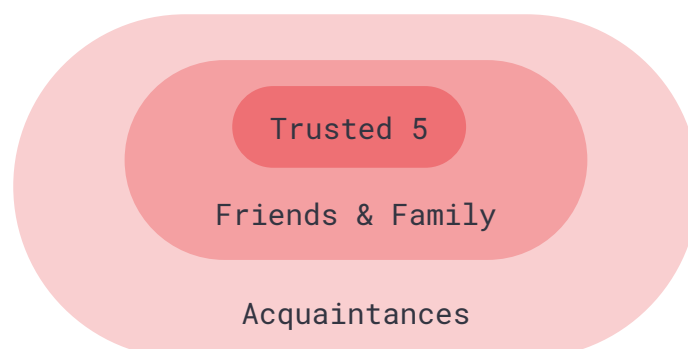
5. Exercise - try it by yourself or with your team!

Raising awareness of Affinity bias by podojo.com

Here's a 40-minute exercise you can do with your teams to begin to raise awareness of what affinity bias is, and how it might affect the workplace – beginning with the team itself.

- On the left margin of an A4-sized piece of paper, ask your team members to write down the initials of 5 people they trust deeply. (Timebox 5 minutes.)
- Next, across the top of the page, ask people to list the following columns: (Timebox 2 minutes, or you can prep this A4 in advance, saving the 2 minutes.) Gender, Age, Education, Sexual Orientation, Disability (Y/N), Marital Status, Ethnicity/Race, (and please feel free to add any additional columnar headings reflecting a point of diversity that may help your ability to empathize with the customer.)
- Now ask them to codify their Trusted 5 by the dimensions of diversity across the columns. Let your team come up with their own codes (F for Female, for example) and ask them to quietly notice what they notice as they are going through the process. (Timebox 10 minutes.)

Where are your customers?





- Quiet reflection time next, triggered by key questions: (Timebox 13 minutes)

- What is the relationship between your Trusted 5 and inclusive diversity?
- If you had a high profile, high-risk, sexy product development effort coming down the pike, and if your Trusted 5 were your co-workers, would you be more likely to look for someone in the Trusted 5 to help with this? And if you did this time after time, how would that affect the team, or change the diversity or inclusion?
- Over time, folks wind their way into our Trusted 5 as we get to know them. Are these folks more diverse or less diverse than the general population?
- If you chose to, how would you make your Trusted 5 more diverse? And why?

Final question with an open discussion: (Timebox 10 minutes)

Looking at diversity and inclusion as a business strategy versus a problem to solve, how would embracing diversity and inclusion, i.e. embracing diverse perspectives, have an impact on:



- Customer empathy?
- the worldview of markets?
- potential customers?
- opportunities?
- possibilities....?

Let us know how this exercise works for your team if you try it!





6. Diversity at workplace

Diversity is nothing more than the fact that we attract different talents, and different ways of thinking to one team, in order to achieve the most innovative results. When introducing a diversity policy, we know that if this diversity is to actually show its effects, there must be equal opportunities. But also the ability to build a work environment in which we are less stereotyped in our thinking.

When we talk about working with people who are different from us, and this is what working in diverse teams is about, that you work with someone who thinks differently than you, we as humans really like something that is predictable. It gives us a sense of control and peace. Because if we think alike, it's fun and nice.

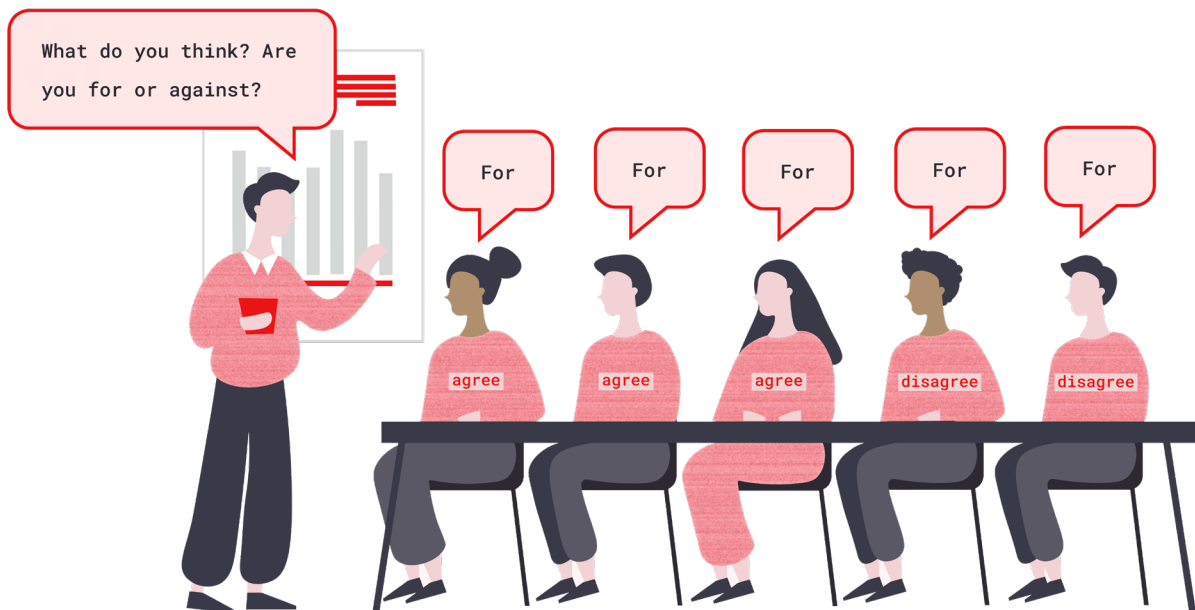
Working in a diversified environment that is not properly managed can cause conflicts and tensions. It is a good exercise to try to find commonalities.

When working in a team with people who have different styles of work, different needs, or communicate differently, try to identify common elements in opposing views.

- How do you feel about people who disagree with you?
- Do you consider them less than you?
- Can the other person share your concerns but express them differently?
- How can you find a way to really connect with them on a human level?
- Can you identify a base value that your opponent fears will be ignored if you put your own bet?

Unbiased what can be biased!

Though we might not be aware of our innate bias, we can take steps to counter it in the workplace, and ensure that we don't fall into the trap of discriminating without realizing we're doing it. We can't stop our subconscious minds from making snap decisions – but we can question those innate choices. We can even take away the opportunities for bias by assessing criteria for a role, a promotion, or recruitment by judging the skills and experience of each applicant without details of gender, name, or economic background. If you strip away all the other details which might influence your choice, would your decision be the same?





**diversity
&
inclusion**

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