

Understand and mitigate unconscious bias

Unconscious bias occurs when stereotypes affect our decision-making in our day-to-day issues such as hiring, mentoring, promoting and developing people, as well as engaging with clients. Here are a few steps to help understand and manage unconscious bias.

Step 1. Be aware of your own bias.

The first step is to turn your unconsciousness into consciousness. There are several free online assessments to help you assess where your bias may be most prevalent. Become aware of your own bias by taking implicit bias tests offered through Harvard University. The tests will help you discover your attitudes and beliefs about certain topics in comparison to other participants, leading to a greater understanding of your unconscious biases.



Project Implicit: implicit.harvard.edu/implicit
Click on "Social Attitudes". Take one or more of the Implicit Association Tests (IAT).

Explore different types of bias and think about how they show up in your day to day decisions.

Attracting diverse talent

Types of bias

Affinity bias

Overestimating the abilities and value of our immediate group at the expense of people we really do not know

Observation bias

The tendency to see what we expect to see, or what we want to see

Conformity bias

Behaving similarly to the others in a group, even if doing so goes against your own judgment

Confirmation bias

Having a preconceived judgement about a group of people or place, and looking for evidence to confirm your judgement

Halo effect bias

Seeing one great thing about a person and the "halo glow" affects our opinion of everything else about that person

Horns effect bias

Seeing one bad thing about a person and allowing it to cloud our opinions of their other attributes

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Step 2. Discuss your results.

In a small group or with a trusted colleague/friend discuss your results.

Which type of biases show up more often and why? The exploration of why we have certain biases helps us become more conscious of the occurrence and helps to ensure they aren't inaccurately guiding our decisions.

Step 3. Create an action plan.

Determine in advance how you will manage your biases and prevent their negative impact in the workplace. Consider the following questions when coming up with your plan.

How will you manage the bias from inaccurately guiding your decisions?

What will you do when you see bias playing out in others?



Remember

Bias is not bad! The utilization of bias (conscious and unconscious) is our brain's way of processing and reacting to familiar situations quickly and without exerting too much of our brain's energy. However, there are cases where bias can lead us to make snap decisions that would negatively impact others. Becoming aware of our own biases is the first step in mitigating their impact on your firm.