



Managing bias in recruitment

...Be alert for subconscious bias that can damage the interview process

by Charlotte Garner

We have all developed a set of values, perspectives and preferences that represent much of who we are today. Our experience, education and upbringing often influence the decisions or judgements we now make. So what do we need to look out for during the interview process?

Many of our decisions can be made unconsciously and if you are not alert to your own or someone else's biases, they may distract you from selecting the best candidate. This is particularly true if you are part of an interview panel. With multiple interviewers and differing biases, the process can become overly subjective.

This article looks at what some of those biases may be and are important to pay attention to. After all, most of us would never admit we are biased.

Interview biases to avoid

- **Halo effect:** One good comment or favourable impression at the beginning of an interview can impress us, blinding us to flaws that present themselves during the rest of the interview. Keep an objective approach all through the assessment.
- **Stereotyping:** on the basis of gender, age, national origin, ethnicity, education, work experience, etc. We have deeply held belief systems and often are unable to recognise when the things we believe are true and when they are based on inaccurate information. The belief does not have to be negative to be a stereotype. Stereotyping can be both positive and negative, (we may believe certain types of people are good, have a skill or competences, can be trusted etc.) but either way they may lead us to make inaccurate decisions based on false or insufficient information.
- **Cloning:** The 'similar to me' effect occurs when the interviewer identifies with the candidate on a personal level, rather than evaluates the candidate on job-related criteria.
- **Non-verbal behaviour:** incorrect assumptions can be made based on the candidate's non-verbal behaviour.
- **Leniency or Stringency:** Not differentiating and rating all candidates favourably or unfavourably.
- **Personal attraction:** usually related to age, gender, physical features, dress style and first impressions. Because we like the applicant or do not like the applicant, based upon extraneous factors, we may come to the conclusion that they will or will not 'fit'.

Organisations must design the right processes to overcome biases during the interview process

Designing the right processes to overcome biases in the interview process

To avoid biases negatively influencing your hiring process, it's critical to design the right processes.

The job profile should be accurate and comprehensive

The more accurate the job profile, the more objective the interviewers can be. Interviewers will not have to rely on personal biases, but on factual data. So make sure you have a comprehensive job profile and it is provided to the interviewers.

Construct behavioural questions that are job relevant

We've all heard of behavioural questions, but how many times do you attend an interview unprepared? Inexperienced interviewers often use the interview to merely verify the data in the resume. For greater success, interviewers should construct behavioural questions with care and that allows them to measure each candidate objectively. Questions should go beyond 'yes' or 'no' answers and if there are multiple screening processes (eg. phone screen, assessment, face-to-face meeting), be designed to dig deeper at every stage of the interview process.

Verify and measure the data

How do we know if a candidate is exaggerating (or lying) during the interview process? We need to verify the information provided to further assist in mitigating the risks of a 'bad hire'.

Rate the candidate's competencies against your notes soon after the interview. This will provide some measurable data in order to make the best hire.

An interview process that identifies the highest quality candidates

By developing a structured, objective hiring process that supports a probing interview and a rigorous process, that assesses candidates based on a detailed job profile, organisations can proactively manage the negative influence of 'gut instinct'.



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For further information about Dixon Appointments, call Charlotte Garner on 03 9629 9999 or email cgarner@dixonappointments.com.au