What is unconscious bias?

You might be surprised to learn that everyone is affected by [unconscious bias](#). It is a term that is used to describe the feelings and thoughts that we hold that sit beyond our conscious awareness. As a result, the brian makes rapid judgments automatically and these are influenced by many things such as our background, stereotypes and even cultures. What this means is that it can have an impact on the way in which we behave as well as our attitude towards others and that means that it can have an impact on decisions made in the workplace.

Why is it important?

[Unconscious bias](#) is important as it can have a negative impact on decisions made in the [workplace](#). Therefore, it is vital to recognise what it means and what it is as a way of understanding how to take the right steps to prevent bias impacting any decisions that are made.

How to tackle unconscious biases?

The first thing to recognise is that this is something that affects everyone and it is a part of being human. However, unconscious bias forces us to make quick, snap decisions so it is important to not follow these instant decisions and take a step back. It can also help people to widen their social circle to include more people as this will help to enhance understanding. Finally, it can help to monitor behavior and understand first impressions and reactions to individuals before reflecting on these decisions.

12 Examples of Unconscious Bias

There are a number of different types of unconscious bias and it can help to understand what they are.

Accent bias

Accent bias is known as a form of discrimination against people who speak a certain language with a certain accent. This can include people from different countries with a different language or from a different part of the country who have a certain dialect. Accent bias is a problem in the workplace and is something that can be made worse depending on the

industry, especially in roles where people are customer facing and have to interact with the public.

Affinity bias

Some companies will hire individuals based on their culture to ensure that they fit; this is known as affinity bias. When businesses look for new employees, they can often meet with those who share similar characteristics, interests and backgrounds as those who already work for the company. This is not conclusive to a diverse workplace and that doesn't always mean that teams are growing in the right way.

Ageism bias

This form of bias is something that is experienced by older people more than younger people. It is believed that it becomes more apparent with those who are aged over 50 which can mean that it becomes more difficult to change careers or jobs. Employers seem more likely to favour those who are younger and have a more diverse range of skills, even though they might not have the right experience for the role they are applying for.

Attribution Bias

Humans have a habit of forming judgements and thoughts on people based on their first impression instead of getting to know them better. This might be based on observations that have been seen previously or interactions that you have had but still, you can make a decision based on these perceptions. In the workplace, employers might determine that a candidate is not the right fit because of something on their CV without getting to know more about them or what it means. Instead of assuming, it can help to delve into these apparent issues to find out more about them as things might become clearer.

Authority bias

This is a common form of bias in the workplace as it refers to an opinion or perhaps an idea that is considered more meaningful as it was given by someone who holds a position of authority. As hierarchies are already in place in the workplace, this is simple to find because employees will follow their managers or leaders, even if what they say is not correct. This can often be difficult to overcome, especially where there might be a certain workplace culture in place.

Confirmation bias

Confirmation bias is the tendency to search for or interpret information in a way that confirms or supports one's prior held beliefs or values. Confirmation bias is often seen when hiring new employees as it is something that comes into play at the start of the process. You might read their CV and then have an opinion on the individual based on certain pieces of information such as where they studied. As a result, the opinion or view can be taken into the interview process and cause you to ask questions that confirm your initial thoughts on the individuals.

Conformity bias

This type of bias is much like peer pressure as it can cause people to behave or think in the same way as those around them, regardless of what they think of themselves. In the workplace, this can be seen when hiring as teams can connect to discuss an application only for the majority to sway the opinion of an individual. In many cases, the majority do not get every decision right which could mean missing out on the perfect candidate. This can also be seen in other areas of the workplace whereby decisions have to be made on policies or processes.

Gender bias

It is a known fact that men have often been seen to be the higher power in the workplace although a change is taking place as perceptions and thoughts are evolving. However, gender bias is still seen in the workplace and again. This can be worse in certain industries, especially where roles are considered to be more suited for men. What might surprise you is that studies have found that women and men both prefer those candidates who are male which means that men are 1.5 times more likely to be employed, even when a woman matches their skills, abilities and experience.

Halo effect bias

In the workplace, this form of bias can be seen in many places but it is often seen during the hiring process. This is down to the fact that it is possible to form an opinion on a candidate based on something that impresses on their CV such as a well known company or they might have studied at a prestigious school or university. As a result, they are highly regarded even though they should not necessarily be merited based on these things, even though they are important.

Horn effect bias

This is the opposite end of the scale to halo effect bias. The reason for this is because people have a tendency to form negative opinions about someone based on something negative or unpleasant that they have learned about them. This means that teams might not hire individuals because they have a trait that doesn't necessarily align with the preferences of the team, even though they might possess the necessary skills. It could include candidates working for certain companies that you dislike or they might have a mannerism that you dislike during the interview. As a result, it is common for perceptions on the candidate to be influenced by these things, even though they are considered irrelevant and don't indicate that they are incapable of taking on the role.

Perception bias

Perception bias is something that we all have but in the workplace, the perception of an individual is changed because of the way in which we perceive certain groups or stereotypes. An individual might have a glowing CV but they might not be successful because of their culture and how teams perceive them to fit in with their company. Our perceptions can be governed by many different things but these all play into the reasoning behind perception bias. What this means is that candidates who are more than qualified for roles might not be successful while current employees might also have ideas dismissed for the same reasons.

Visual social identity

Individuals can find that they are influenced by social identity as this leaves them feeling they are influenced by the groups that they are a member of. As a result, in the workplace, certain members of management might experience this based on those around them as they seek to fit in and follow the crowd. In recruitment, this can also play a part as the decision on whether a candidate is the right fit might be made based on what the group might think is right but not on whether the candidate is good for the role.