

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY &amp; INCLUSION

## Unconscious Bias in Recruiting

Unconscious bias is the brain's tendency to take mental shortcuts, relying on observed patterns—including cultural stereotypes—to process information quickly and subconsciously.

There are numerous forms of unconscious biases, any one of which can tilt the selection process and lead to a less diverse workforce. Two of the most common forms of biases in recruiting are:

1. **Affinity group/in-group bias**, which is the tendency to favor members of your own group or people who share a common affinity such as race/ethnicity, gender, school affiliation or background; and
2. **Confirmation bias**, which is the tendency to pay attention to, remember, and seek out information that confirms preexisting views as well as the tendency to ignore, explain away, or forget information that conflicts with it.

**Unconscious biases are most likely to be activated by stress, time constraints, multitasking, and need for closure.**

### TIPS TO MINIMIZE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN RECRUITING

**Take the Implicit Association Tests** to identify your implicit biases, and retake them to track progress in disrupting biases over time. Take a few of the tests, especially the race, gender-careers, and age tests.

**Use an icebreaker at the start of every interview.** Studies have found that impressions made in the

first 10 seconds of an interview could impact its outcome. Many interviewers pride themselves on putting the interviewee at ease. That's fine, but if you only do this for certain candidates, you do automatically give them an advantage. Select an ice breaker/ice breaker question/icebreaker statement to help every interviewee relax at the outset and perform to his/her best. For example: How was your summer?

**Use standard interview questions.** Structure and plan your interviews. Research has shown that structured interviews are more effective in reducing bias than unstructured interviews. Identify 1-2 behavioral interview questions to ask each interviewee.

**Use gender-neutral language.** Using words that assume heterosexual relationships create an environment where some people feel unwelcome. Using gender neutral words create a more inclusive work environment. For example, instead of saying husband, wife, girlfriend, or boyfriend, replace with spouse or significant other.

**Take a mindful pause.** Bias is most prevalent when we are under pressure and must make quick decisions, so take a deliberate, mindful pause before completing your evaluation form, and consider whether your judgment about an applicant is rooted in unconscious bias.