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Unconscious bias

10 Examples Of Unconscious Bias In The Workplace And How to Avoid Them

Unconscious bias in the workplace is a subconscious preference that may have an effect on your opinion based on facts or experiences from your past. These [biases can negatively affect companies](#) such as during the hiring process when managers are considering different candidates or treating certain employees differently than others just to name a few.

Unconscious biases are not illegal like how employment discrimination is against the law. However, unconscious bias in the workplace is still frowned upon.

The good news is, there are ways to avoid unconscious bias in the workplace and recognize how to correct them. Below, we will look at different types of unconscious bias and what you can do to keep it out of your workplace.

EasyLlama's online training program includes examples of unconscious bias in the workplace as well as how to avoid it. See how EasyLlama's [diversity and inclusion training](#) can help you!

What is Unconscious Bias?

Unconscious bias, also known as implicit bias, refers to a person's attitude or beliefs about others that happen without the person being aware of it. These biases are based on common facts or your past experiences that may affect how you think of things now.

Human brains create a prejudice that affects our decision-making. Typically, this is meant to help us familiarize ourselves with things that are either good, bad or just patterns of behavior. However, sometimes in our conscious state, our brains are exposed to misinformation and stereotypes.

Misinformation and stereotypes can have a negative effect on our attitudes. This could lead to a human discriminating or treating other people unfairly without them realizing it. For leaders in management positions, this could pose as a big problem since companies are prohibited from discriminating during the recruitment process or when considering an employee for a promotion.

Implicit bias can be hard to address because they happen without you realizing it, hence the name "unconscious" bias. By understanding the various unconscious biases, a company manager can raise awareness in the workplace to be more inclusive of members to create a more diverse work environment.

Why is Unconscious Bias Important?

Recognizing [unconscious bias in the workplace](#) is important. But why is it important? Below, let's take a look at why a business should acknowledge that unconscious bias should be avoided in the workplace.

Is Unconscious Bias in the Workplace Illegal?

As stated above, unconscious bias is different from employment discrimination, which is against the law. Unconscious biases happen without us being aware of it, and so our actions are sometimes not ill-intended. On the other hand, employment discrimination happens in our conscious state. This means that we are aware of our decision-making. Therefore, it is easier to recognize and address if a person is treating others unfairly with bad intentions.

Unconscious Biases Can Create Unfair Disadvantages



certain employees will receive this unfair treatment despite not having any of their work performance taken into consideration. This can hurt team morale and push employees away from the business.

Biases Prevent Diversity and Culture in the Workplace

Leaders of the business are in charge of creating a healthy, productive workplace. Part of the development of a healthy workplace is including diversity and culture. Unconscious biases influence people's actions which can prevent diverse cultures from entering the workplace. It is important to remember that all people are different and different minds offer unique and fresh perspectives in a productive work environment.

When Do Unconscious Biases Happen Most?

Unconscious biases can take place at any time. It can influence a person at any point without the person realizing it. However, there are two common times when unconscious biases happen frequently.

In the hiring process, when managers conduct an interview, they can unknowingly fall victim to a bias that they may have. This can affect whether the managers decided to hire the candidates or not based on the manager's subconscious attitude towards that person during the interview.

When considering people for promotions, managers can be affected by an unconscious bias. Rather than considering a person's work performance or contribution to a team, a manager can base a promotion off of a bias that they may have about certain people.

10 Examples of Unconscious Biases in the Workplace

Now that we understand what an unconscious bias is and why they are not wanted in the workplace, let's take a look at different examples and how you can [tackle unconscious bias in the workplace](#).

1 - Ageism

Age discrimination is based on the belief that older employees aren't as competent or capable of performing a job as younger employees. This idea could be a result of a person's belief that a person's age is related to their work abilities, knowledge, or skill. The bias tends to favor young driven employees.

While ageism affects everyone since everyone grows older by the day, there are certain groups that are affected more than others. Women and minority groups are particularly affected as they already face multiple biases against them.

How to Avoid: Management can combat ageism by including younger and older employees together in a group to have them interact and form positive relationships. This allows the value of the experience and know-how of the older employees to be observed by the younger employees.

2 - Conformity Bias

Remember the peer pressure that your teachers warned you about on the playground? Well, conformity bias is the same thing but in the workplace. Conformity bias is similar to peer pressure in the sense that a group's opinion can affect the opinion or decision-making of another person.

This unconscious bias is most common during meetings and other team gatherings. For example, members of a team can sway the opinion of another person which can affect the behavior or actions of the team as a whole.

How to Avoid: The best way to avoid conformity bias in the workplace is by using various group meeting techniques. For example, companies can use methods such as making opinions anonymous, perhaps through writing, which can reduce or eliminate this unconscious bias in group settings.

3 - Weight Bias

Weight bias is the judgment of another person because they are heavier or lighter than average weight. Weight bias affects people of all backgrounds, both male and female employees, regardless of the person's workability.



4 - Affinity Bias

Affinity bias is based on the idea that people are naturally drawn to like other people who are similar to themselves. These similarities can be based on criteria such as age, race, gender, and more.

Affinity bias is most common during interviews. This unconscious bias can lead to a less diverse workplace if it has an influence on whether certain candidates are hired or not.

How to Avoid: Affinity bias can be avoided by ensuring that the workplace is a diverse environment. This means that during the hiring process, companies should aim to hire a diverse staff to promote diversity.

5 - Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias happens when a person wants to confirm information or ideas that they made prior to a situation. This means that they are simply looking to feel like they are right, even if that means ignoring the truth or good ideas.

Confirmation bias can negatively affect people's decision-making. For example, if you think that your business has been doing well in the past, you may think that the company is ready for success in the future. This can blind you to the fact that you may need to adjust your business strategies if you want your company to survive and continue to grow.

How to Avoid: To avoid this unconscious bias, an employee can build awareness of this bias and recognize that they should keep an open mind to new and different ideas. It helps to sometimes play "devil's advocate" by offering new ways of thinking.

6 - Beauty Bias

Beauty bias is an unconscious bias where a person judges another person based on how attractive they seem to be. This can have a negative effect on a company as it ignores the work capabilities of an employee for their attractiveness. This affects both male and female employees.

How to Avoid: Beauty bias, like weight bias, can be avoided in the workplace by looking solely at the person's work performance rather than their physical appearance. In the hiring stage, candidates should be considered based on their qualifications and not their attractiveness.

7 - Gender Bias

Gender bias is slightly different from sexual harassment, which includes [verbal, physical, and visual harassment](#). Individuals are protected from gender discrimination and sexual harassment under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

Gender bias is when one particular sex is treated more favorably than the other sex. This means that a person can receive better treatment in the form of hiring, getting promotions, or other work perks without involving harassment like [quid pro quo](#). Gender bias notably affects women more than men. Despite having the same capabilities, women are typically treated less favorably resulting in an imbalance in the workforce.

How to Avoid: Gender bias can be avoided by determining whether a gender swap would matter in that role. For example, if employees are being considered for a promotion, an employer should think about whether it would make a difference if a male or female were in those positions.

8 - Attribution Bias

Attribution bias is an unconscious bias where a person tries to evaluate or try to understand why another person behaves the way that they do. This means that a person will try to make attributions or assumptions about certain people based on their actions.

This can be toxic to the work culture in a company since it allows employees to belittle other employees by downplaying their accomplishments and inflating their mistakes. An example would be if a person thinks of a coworker as lazy or disinterested if they are sometimes late to work. This can hurt workplace morale because the person will then only see that coworker in that light regardless of their positive performances.



How to Avoid: Attribution bias can be avoided by maintaining a neutral approach on the grounds of gender during reviews and for feedback.

9 - Name Bias

Name bias happens when a person forms prejudgments about another person based solely on their name. A person's name can give unconscious hints to another about their race or gender. This can negatively affect the hiring process since it introduces other biases from a person's name.

Name bias occurs most during the hiring stage when going through resumes. For example, if an employer sees the names Tyler Smith and Alejandro Rodríguez, the employer may be more willing to interview Tyler Smith if the name Alejandro Rodríguez gives hints of the person's race which can trigger a bias the employer may have against people of that background.

How to Avoid: Name bias can be avoided by blocking out the names of applicants when reviewing resumes. This allows you to focus on if they are the best person for the job based on qualifications and experience.

10 - Height Bias

Height bias is an unconscious bias where a person judges others who are significantly shorter or taller than average height. Similar to the weight and beauty biases, this focuses entirely on the appearance of an employee or candidates for a job rather than their potential to contribute to the business.

How to Avoid: Since it is based on physical appearances like weight and beauty biases, height bias can be avoided by looking solely at the person's work performance and his or her fit to the business, rather than physical appearance.

General Tips on How to Avoid Unconscious Biases

Each bias is fairly unique in its own way. However, there are a few things that managers can do to lead an effective workforce free from these biases.

Business owners can provide resources to their employees that can raise awareness of unconscious biases. By recognizing that these biases should be eliminated and prevented from entering the workplace, business owners can take a step in the right direction for creating a diverse work environment.

These resources for knowledge can include things such as posting a visible sign in the workplace or even an online site for employees to reference. By making this information easy to access, it allows employees to familiarize themselves with unconscious biases and how they can avoid them.

Another effective method to combat unconscious biases would be to provide training for employees. This method includes a bit more engagement since employees will directly receive information in a more formal fashion.

An Effective Training Program to Combat Unconscious Bias

EasyLlama is an online training program that helps you be compliant with government training requirements. Not only does EasyLlama help you be compliant with these laws, but it also educates your employees about various topics, such as unconscious bias in the workplace.

EasyLlama's training conveniently provides interactive bite-sized episodes to properly inform and train employees at the click of a button. These benefits business owners such as yourself since it can save you time and effort from coordinating training hours.

Through our online training, business owners can easily monitor and track employee's individual training. Check out our [training site](#) to learn more!



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