

To have a diverse team, you need to create an inclusive environment and treat people without bias. Unfortunately, unconscious bias affects many of us, whether we intend it to or not. Our biases are the preconceived ideas we have about people and situations. This can cause us to make illogical conclusions or poor decisions that lead us to miss out on hearing great ideas and getting to know good people. We can avoid missing out by understanding and interrupting bias where we can.



Common Biases To Interrupt

Affinity bias: When we hire and select candidates who are most similar to us in interests and background, regardless of whether they're objectively the best candidate.

Confirmation bias: Our tendency to seek out information that confirms our prior beliefs about a person or situation.

Attribution bias: When we jump to conclusions, in spite of not knowing the full story.

Conformity bias: When individuals allow themselves to be swayed towards majority decisions.

To interrupt it, note the similarities between you and the candidate and differentiate these from their skills and experiences. Look for someone who can add to your team rather than who fits in.

To interrupt it in an interview setting, ask standardised questions to avoid seeking out answers that fit a preconceived idea.

To interrupt it, when you feel you've come to a conclusion about a person or situation, make sure you ask a few more 'how' and 'why' questions. These will help show you the full story.

To interrupt it, when it comes to making decisions, have everyone write their decision down *before* anyone shares their conclusions.

Why Does Diversity Matter?

Fact: Diverse teams are smarter. Research has proven that diverse teams think differently to homogenous teams. As a result, they are more objective and considerate in their decision-making, tend to be more innovative, and improve a business's overall success.

Interrupting Bias

While preventing bias is a great goal to have, it's often not the most practical. Instead, it would help if you began by interrupting bias when you recognise it.

1. Reflect on the decisions you make and ask yourself how and why you made those decisions.
2. Standardise your approaches to eliminate any leading questions or thought paths that can lead to biased conclusions.
3. Measure results and answers objectively. Examine both the practical conclusion and the intuitive one with equal weight.

The three areas where bias affects us the most is:

1. During the hiring process
2. During day-to-day housekeeping and relationships
3. During team management and project delegation.



Reflection

Can you think of a time when you made a biased decision?

How could you have standardised your approach to avoid bias?

How could you have made your decision more objectively?