



Mitigating Personal Bias During the Interview Process

Personal bias is an individual's belief about a specific group of people. Our biases can be positive or negative, they are largely subconscious, and they can cause us to make incorrect assumptions about others. Biases can form from our life experiences, such as favouring a candidate who attended the same university we did. Or sometimes they're based on our cultural norms. For example, in Canada direct eye contact is associated with a high level of engagement, confidence, and respect, whereas in some countries, averting one's eyes is a sign of respect.

Recognizing our preconceived notions about a candidate is a necessary step to ensuring a fair hiring process. During an interview, it's important to be open-minded, slow down our decision-making, and focus on the content. The following self-assessment tool will help you determine whether you're considering a candidate as an individual, or if unconscious assumptions about the candidate's race, ethnicity, gender, or religion are affecting your assessment.

Check Yourself

Your expectations of qualities you believe show “professionalism” such as appearance, tone of voice, and body language:

- How do you react when a candidate's characteristics or demeanor doesn't meet your expectations?
- Does your perception of these qualities (positive or negative) change your view of their abilities?

Your perception of animated versus reserved individuals:

- Do you believe outgoing candidates are less professional, or more engaged and eager for the role?
- Do you believe reserved candidates are less interested, or more professional and polite?

Your initial reaction to an overseas or regional accent:

- Do you associate accents with a person's proficiency in the English language?
- Do you feel more comfortable speaking to people who sound like you?
- Do you make assumptions about a candidate's skills and experience based on the way they speak?

Your initial reaction to a candidate with a racial or ethnic background different from your own:

- Do you associate their racial or ethnic group with a negative interaction you or others have had?
- Do you feel more comfortable working with individuals who share the same background as yours?
- Are you concerned how they'll fit into the organization if their background is different from the majority's?