

QUICK TIPS REDUCING BIAS IN THE INTERVIEW

Your Department or Agency may be missing out on some highly talented potential employees. Without intending it, our preconceived ideas or personal biases can erroneously influence our hiring decisions.

WE ALL HAVE BIAS

HERE ARE SOME Common Interviewing Biases THAT YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF ...

Stereotyping: Forming an opinion about how people of a given gender, religion, race, appearance, or other characteristic think, act, respond, or would perform the job - without any evidence that this is the case.

First impressions: An interviewer might make a snap judgment about someone based on their first impression - positive or negative - that clouds the entire interview. For example, letting the fact that the candidate is wearing out-of-the-ordinary clothing or has a heavy regional accent take precedence over the applicant's knowledge, skills, or abilities.

Negative emphasis: This involves rejection of a candidate based on a small amount of negative information - a common occurrence. Research indicates that interviewers give unfavorable information about twice the weight of favorable information.

Halo/horn effect: The "halo" effect occurs when an interviewer allows one strong point about the candidate to overshadow or have an effect on everything else. For instance, knowing someone went to a particular university might be looked upon favorably. Everything the applicant says during the interview is seen in this light. ("Well, she left out an important part of the answer to that question, but, she must know it, she went to XYZ University). The "horn" effect is just the opposite - allowing one weak point to influence everything else.

Nonverbal bias: Undue emphasis might be placed on nonverbal cues that have nothing to do with the job, such as loudness or softness of voice, or the type of handshake given.

Contrast effect: Strong(er) candidates who interview after weak(er) ones may appear more qualified than they are because of the contrast between the two. Note taking during the interview and a reasonable period of time between interviews may alleviate this.

*** Adapted from Society for Human Resource Management, 1998

SOME STRATEGIES TO MINIMIZE BIAS

1. Be Aware of your own Personal Preferences.
2. Consider Pre-Interview Briefings for Candidates.
3. Ensure Diversity on Selection Panels.

4. Use BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWING.
5. Provide List of Question Prior to the Interview.
6. Be flexible in the Manner of questioning.
7. Be Flexible in timing.

BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWING

Behavioral interviewing is one way to remedy the negative impact of interviewer bias.

Behavioral interviewing is a structured process that helps interviewers identify targeted technical and interpersonal competencies in the candidates they interview. It draws out relevant facts from actual past experience of job applicants that can serve as predictors of their future performance. Because it focuses on demonstrated capabilities rather than documentation or descriptions of hypothetical situations it is considered an objective method. As a result, it is valuable for reducing bias in hiring decisions. Behavioral interviewing allows interviewers to effectively delve into resume items while providing a comfortable situation for the candidate to speak about himself or herself.

The behavioral interviewing method allows you to:

- Get as clear a picture as possible of an applicant's capabilities and fit for a job opening;
- Verify that the applicant has the competencies needed for the job;
- Identify discrepancies in the person's story before doing a reference check; and
- Reduce interviewer bias.

1. Review the job description to identify the key skills and knowledge necessary to carry out the job. The job description should be the result of a job analysis for that position.

2. Ask people who know the job well to identify the unique skills and knowledge that contribute to successful execution of the job by people who perform the job well.

3. Develop questions that will produce behavioral answers about technical, interpersonal and thinking skills of the candidates.

4. Develop open-ended behavioural interview questions to give candidates the opportunity to describe actual experience they have with particular kinds of situations.

EG: this position requires the incumbent to be well organized. Tell us about a time in your work or volunteer experience when you had to juggle competing priorities. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the result?

DON'T FORGET THE "PLEASE" AND "THANK YOU"

P: Patience: We all have our own ways of communicating our views - be patient!

L: Listening: Active listening is a crucial element in reducing bias in the interview - listening allows you to probe for detail that you may miss!

E: Empathy: Have some empathy for the candidates - the interview process is stressful for everyone!

A: acceptance without judgement: Keep an open mind - don't pre-judge candidates based on your own norms of behaviour in an interview!

S: statement of qualifications: Be sure the candidates are being tested on the qualifications for the position!

E: extra effort: Put a little extra effort - it will be worth the effort!

and a big Thank You for ensuring bias is minimized in the hiring process!

