



MASTERING
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

90-Minute Training Outline
Unconscious Bias

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Session Overview:

This training will provide HR and other leaders with tools to identify and address unconscious bias in their organizations.

Participants will engage in reflection, group discussions, and activities to understand bias, its impact on decision-making, and how to apply inclusive practices in their workplace.

Agenda Breakdown

0:00-0:10 – Welcome & Introduction (10 minutes)

Objective: Set the stage for understanding unconscious bias.

Activity: Introduce yourself and the purpose of the training.

Discussion: Using the questions below, ask participants to reflect and share what they know or think unconscious bias is. **Make sure to set a judgment-free, open-minded atmosphere.**

Possible Reflection Questions:

1. **What are some assumptions you tend to make about people based on their appearance, background, or communication style? How might these assumptions impact your behavior toward them?**
 - *This question encourages participants to explore the unconscious judgments they may form and consider how they influence their interactions with others.*
2. **Can you think of a recent situation where you may have treated someone differently because of your unconscious biases? How did this affect your relationship or communication with that person?**
 - *Reflecting on a specific scenario can help individuals recognize the real-life effects of their biases on personal and professional relationships.*



0:10-0:30 – Unconscious Bias: Definition and Impact (20 minutes)

- Objective:** Provide a foundational understanding of unconscious bias and how it affects workplace culture, hiring, and performance evaluations.
- Content Delivery:** Define unconscious bias and present examples of how it manifests in decision-making processes, recruitment, promotions, and daily interactions. *(See reference materials)*
- Group Activity:** “Bias in Action” scenario analysis *(See reference materials)*
- Split participants into small groups.
 - Provide workplace scenarios where unconscious bias impacted the decision-making process.
 - Have them identify where biases may have influenced the decision.

0:30-0:50 – Identifying Your Own Biases (20 minutes)

Objective: Encourage self-awareness and introspection.

Self-Reflection Activity:

Ask participants to reflect on their own experiences and biases. Use the prompts below:

1. ***Think of a time when you made a snap judgment about someone. What led you to that conclusion?***
2. ***What patterns do you notice in your decisions regarding promotions, hiring, or team composition?***

Group Discussion:

- Invite a few volunteers to share insights from their reflections (only those who feel comfortable in sharing).
- Encourage participants to reflect on the potential sources of their biases, such as individual experiences, media influence, societal norms, family, etc.

0:50-1:10 – Strategies to Address and Mitigate Bias (20 minutes)

Objective: Equip participants with actionable strategies to recognize and reduce bias in the organization.

Content Delivery: *(See reference materials)*

Present strategies such as

- Blind recruitment practices.
- Structured interviews to minimize subjective decisions.
- Implementing checklists to ensure equity in performance reviews.
- Regular bias training for all staff.

Group Activity: Action Plan Discussion

- Divide participants into small groups again.
- Task each group to identify an unconscious bias they have observed in their workplace.
- Work together to develop a concrete strategy that could mitigate this bias (e.g., using anonymized resumes in hiring processes).

Reflection Question:

- ***What is one immediate change I can make in my work to reduce bias?***



1:10-1:25 – Applying What You’ve Learned (15 minutes)

Objective: Bridge the gap between theory and practice by identifying opportunities for immediate application in the workplace.

Group Activity: Bias Interruption Challenge

- Ask participants to select one specific area where they can start interrupting bias (e.g., in recruiting, performance reviews, team dynamics).
- Each group should identify one short-term and one long-term action they can take back to their organization.

Reflection Question:

1. *What steps can you take to become more aware of your biases and actively challenge them when interacting with others, especially those from different cultural or social backgrounds?*
2. *Where can I start applying this knowledge in my day-to-day tasks?*

1:25-1:30 – Closing and Commitments (5 minutes)

Objective: Wrap-up with a summary and set intentions for follow-up action.

Activity: Ask each participant to write down a personal commitment they will make to reduce bias in their work.

Call to Action: Set a follow-up meeting or check-in after 3 months to discuss progress and challenges in applying these strategies.

Final Reflection:

- *What will you do differently tomorrow to create a more inclusive workplace?*



Reference Materials

Unconscious Bias: Definition and Impact

Unconscious bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which may favor or disfavor certain groups, operate automatically and without conscious awareness. Unconscious biases are often the result of learned associations from experiences, media, and societal influences.

Examples of Unconscious Bias in Decision-Making:

1. Recruitment:

- During the hiring process, a recruiter may unconsciously favor candidates whose names sound familiar or who come from similar educational or cultural backgrounds. This can result in homogeneity in hiring, where diverse talents are overlooked.
- The "similarity bias" often leads decision-makers to prefer candidates who remind them of themselves, making it harder for diverse applicants to succeed.

2. Promotions:

- In promotion decisions, unconscious bias can manifest as the "affinity bias," where individuals who share common interests or background with decision-makers are more likely to be promoted, regardless of merit.
- Women and minority groups are often unfairly assessed based on stereotypes rather than their actual performance, impacting their advancement opportunities.

3. Daily Interactions:

- Microaggressions in daily interactions, such as interrupting certain people more often or attributing their ideas to someone else, stem from unconscious bias.
- Unconscious bias can also shape how feedback is given, with some employees receiving more constructive criticism while others are judged more harshly due to preconceived notions.

In all these cases, unconscious bias undermines diversity, equity, and inclusion, impacting not just the individuals affected but the overall organizational culture and performance.



Workplace Scenarios

Here are two workplace scenarios that highlight the role of unconscious bias.

Scenario 1: The "Cultural Fit" Hiring Decision

Context:

A marketing company is hiring a new project manager to lead a diverse team. Two candidates have made it to the final round of interviews:

- **Candidate A** has a strong technical background and experience managing cross-functional teams but has a different communication style than the existing team—more reserved and formal. They are from a diverse cultural background and have worked in international markets.
- **Candidate B** has similar qualifications but shares common interests with the hiring manager (e.g., they both enjoy sports and attended the same college). Candidate B's communication style is more casual, mirroring that of the current team.

Decision:

The hiring manager recommends Candidate B for the position, citing "cultural fit" as the primary reason, expressing concern that Candidate A might not blend well with the team due to their more formal demeanor.

Reflection Question for Participants:

- How might the hiring manager's unconscious bias toward shared interests and communication style have influenced their decision?
 - How could this affect the diversity and inclusiveness of the team?
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Scenario 2: The "Shared Interests" Promotion

Context:

In a mid-sized tech company, a senior leadership position opens up. Two internal candidates are being considered for the promotion:

- **Employee X** has a proven track record, consistently exceeds performance targets, and is well respected by the team. However, they are quieter and do not engage in many informal social activities with leadership.
- **Employee Y** has solid performance but is more sociable, frequently participates in out-of-work activities with leadership, and shares hobbies with several members of senior management.

Decision:

The leadership team leans toward promoting Employee Y, citing their strong interpersonal relationships with leadership and "natural leadership qualities," despite Employee X having a stronger performance record.

Reflection Question for Participants:

- How might unconscious bias based on social engagement and shared hobbies impact the decision to promote Employee Y over Employee X? What could be the long-term effects on team morale and opportunities for others?
- *How could these biases negatively affect diversity and inclusion in the workplace?*

These scenarios are designed to highlight how unconscious bias, when left unchecked, can influence important decisions such as hiring and promotions, often to the detriment of inclusivity and fairness in the workplace.

Additional Reading

A Point of View: Want to bring diversity in? Stop looking for the “best fit”

Luiza Dreasher, December 6, 2018

<https://theinclusionsolution.me/point-view-want-bring-diversity-stop-looking-best-fit/>

Strategies to Address and Mitigate Bias

1. Blind Recruitment Practices

Description: Blind recruitment involves removing any personal identifiers from resumes or applications, such as name, gender, age, and educational institution, to focus solely on the candidate's skills, qualifications, and experience. This technique aims to reduce unconscious bias during the initial screening process.

By removing visual and identity cues, you eliminate the automatic biases that may influence decision-making. This encourages recruiters to rely on objective data, thus fostering a sense of fairness among candidates and within the organization.

2. Structured Interviews to Minimize Subjective Decisions

Description: Structured interviews ensure that each candidate is asked the same set of predefined questions, allowing interviewers to evaluate responses consistently across all applicants. This reduces the influence of personal biases, as decisions are based on uniform criteria rather than subjective impressions.

Structured interviews reduce cognitive load on interviewers, making them less likely to rely on stereotypes or "gut feelings" when evaluating candidates. This creates a transparent and trustworthy recruitment process, aligning with an organization's DEI goals.

3. Implementing Checklists to Ensure Equity in Performance Reviews

Description: Checklists standardize performance reviews by outlining specific, objective criteria that must be considered for every employee. This prevents managers from relying on biases, such as affinity bias (favoring those with similar backgrounds) or confirmation bias (focusing on factors that confirm pre-existing opinions).

Structured performance reviews reduce the influence of personal biases, making the process feel more equitable to employees. This approach enhances transparency, making employees feel that their contributions are assessed fairly, increasing engagement and trust.

4. Regular Bias Training for All Staff

Description: Bias training helps employees recognize and mitigate unconscious biases that can influence their behavior in the workplace. These training programs aim to increase awareness, reduce discriminatory actions, and create a more inclusive environment.

Bias training taps into the brain's plasticity—its ability to learn and adapt. By making employees aware of their unconscious biases, these trainings can help them adopt new mental models and behaviors that foster inclusion and equity.

These strategies not only help reduce biases but also signal to both employees and potential recruits that the organization is deeply committed to fairness, inclusion, and equity in every aspect of its operations.

Ready to foster a more inclusive, culturally competent workplace? Schedule your **free consultation** today and let's explore tailored DEI solutions that will empower your team, enhance collaboration, and drive lasting change. Take the first step toward a thriving, inclusive organization.

Book your session now by clicking on the calendar link below:

<https://calendly.com/chat-with-luiza/60-min>