Managing Bias in the Recruitment Process

To succeed in attracting and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce, recruiters must first work to identify and manage bias as a team.

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In partnership with Hiretual

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[ABOUT THIS EBOOK]

The greatest challenge for organizations to effectively recruit, retain, and advance a diverse and inclusive workforce is the ability for all employees and stakeholders to effectively manage bias. Effectively managing bias is the gateway for success for modern organizations who aim to maximize revenue and employee satisfaction while shaping a professional environment that supports the growth of talent from all walks of life.

Managing bias is crucial for the entire talent management process. In this document, we will be emphasizing on Managing Bias in the Recruiting Process (Talent Acquisition).

There will be three primary questions answered in this eBook:

1 **Why is managing bias in the recruitment process important?**

2 **Who are the organizational influencers that ultimately drives the success of managing bias in the recruitment process?**

3 **How do the primary organizational influencers become successful in managing bias in the recruitment process?**

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There are two critical points about bias that must be made clear before we proceed:

Firstly, to be human is to be biased.
Bias is human nature.

Cognitive bias is a process that our human brain undergoes to process information by developing shortcuts in our thinking to navigate daily activities. The brain can only make sense of so much information at a time, and cognitive biases are systematic errors hardwired into our brain as we interpret that information. If you have the ability to think and make decisions for yourself, it is impossible for you to not have cognitive bias.

The intention of this discussion is not to erase bias completely. That is not possible.

Our goal is to prevent these biases from manifesting into harmful social biases that affect the way we treat people around us. By understanding how they take shape in our daily lives through our actions and choices, the easier it is to identify and manage bias at both a professional and personal level.

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Secondly, managing bias is not a destination.
It's a journey.

To successfully drive change in an organization's way of thinking, all individuals must be actively involved in this process of shifting their mindset. It takes time and setbacks are bound to happen, especially as external influences begin to exert social pressure on the emotions of employees and stakeholders.

However, individuals have to be willing to be introspective and take the time to continuously manage their bias and be willing to search for continued awareness.

This eBook aims to guide individuals through this journey of realizing the internal factors needed for diversity and inclusion (D&I) to be practiced at an organizational level.

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[BREAKING IT DOWN: THE WHY, THE WHO & THE HOW]

WHY

Why is managing bias in the recruitment process important?

Great organizations know WHY they're doing what they're doing and use that as their guiding principle. In the book, Start With Why by Simon Sinek, he covers three aspects of WHY:

- Defining the WHY
- Understanding how the WHY affects an organization at all levels
- Making sure all members of an organization are focused on the WHY in the long term

It is going to be difficult to manage bias if individuals don't know why they should be working this hard to manage bias in the first place. McKinsey and Company has published multiple research papers on the correlation between having a diverse workforce at the leadership level and the financial performance for some of the largest companies in the world.

In their 2018 paper, Delivering through Diversity, results showed that D&I enhanced business performance in 5 ways:

- Winning the war for talent
- Improving the quality of decision making
- Increasing Innovation and customer insight
- Increasing employee satisfaction
- Improving global image

Their most recent 2020 study, Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters, outlines evidence that the business case for D&I has further strengthened over the past two years.
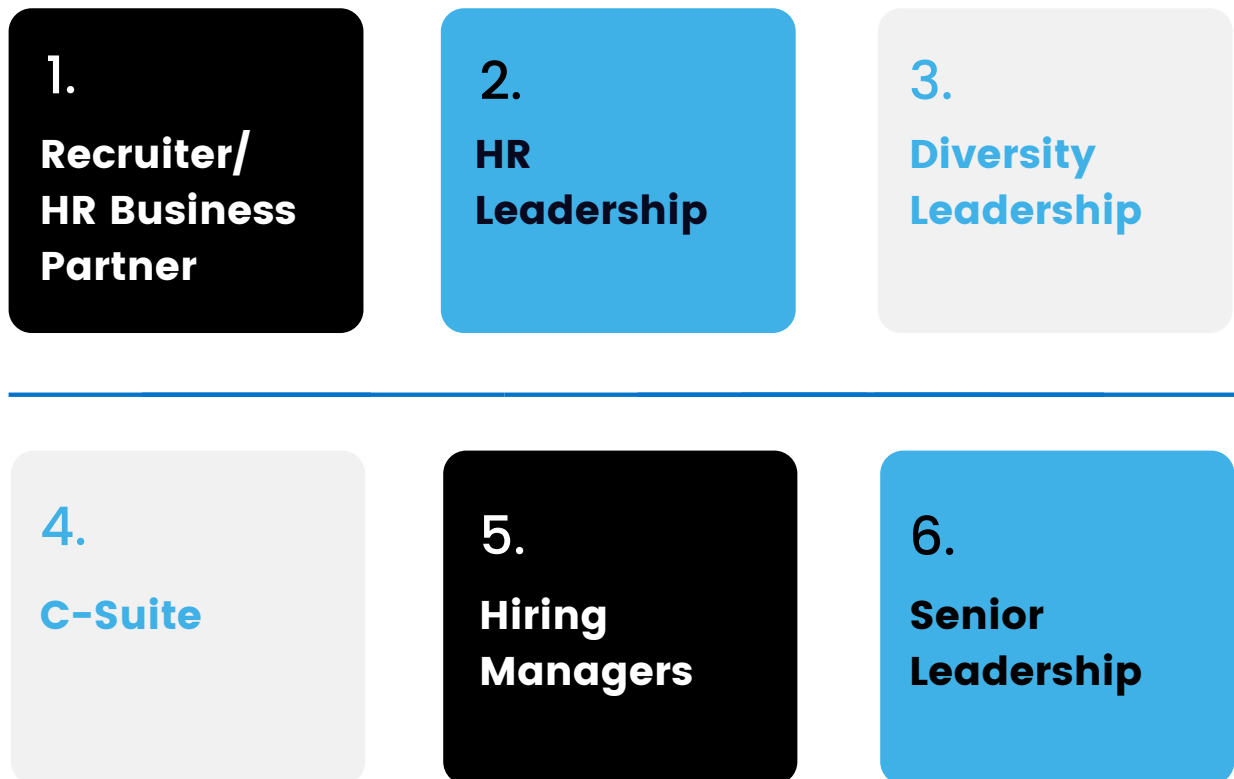
Equally as important for the organization, if not more important, is what's in it for the individual.   Also known as WIIFM (What's In It For Me). In Leading with Cultural Intelligence by David Livermore, he highlights that when culturally intelligent leaders are able to effectively manage their biases, they are able to count the following personal perks:

- **Career Advancement**
- **Creativity and Innovation**
- **Global Networks**
- **Salary, Profitability, Cost Savings**

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WHO

Who are the organizational influencers that ultimately drives the success of managing bias in the recruitment process?

In order of ranking, they are as follows:

1.

Recruiter/ HR Business Partner

2.

HR Leadership

3.

Diversity Leadership

4.

C-Suite

5.

Hiring Managers

6.

Senior Leadership

This ranking is debatable, but here is why I stand to make this point. The execution of managing bias in the recruiting process starts with who has day to day responsibility for the talent acquisition function. There needs to be congruence between all influencers, but the primary two that drives success is the hiring manager and recruiter. They are the first points of contact and ultimately where decisions are made on who to source, who to interview, and ultimately who is hired.

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HOW

How do the primary organizational influencers become successful in managing bias in the recruitment process?

For an organization to be effective in creating impactful change, it begins with the individual. Organizational influencers need a defined and structured plan to encourage guidance that motivates and drives individual change.

The ADKAR Model is a framework for managing individual change, thus perfectly suited to help an organization begin their journey of managing bias from ground up. ADKAR is an acronym that represents 5 outcomes an individual must achieve for change to be successfully manifested: awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement. Listed below are the 5 outcomes that help individuals effectively manage bias.

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VIEW ON DEMAND

How to drive intentional DE&I efforts by understanding the why, who, and how.

Real change that impacts the bottom line starts by aligning the intentions and goals of recruiters on your team so they are prepared for such an important responsibility.

Take a look at Darrell James' best practices to managing bias as a first step.

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[Exploring The ADKAR Model]

AWARENESS

All individuals must not only be aware of the **why** behind managing bias, they must also be aware of how often they submit themselves to unconscious bias and stereotyping. There are three aspects to achieving this awareness. The first is leveraging empathy. According to The Laws of Human Nature by Robert Greene, empathy is a tool for all human beings to connect with each other and attain social power.

Through empathy, individuals can overcome the emotionally charged barriers that prevent each other from understanding different points of views and experiences. "When cultivated and properly used, it can allow us to see the moods and minds of others, giving us the power to anticipate people's actions and gently lower their resistance," Greene says.

The second is by taking the highly popular Implicit Association Test (IAT). The IAT consists of a total of 15 tests that measure the strength of associations and evaluations or stereotypes.

Given that each person may be at various points in their personal D&I journey, the following are recommendations on how to take the test and process results afterwards:

- Take all 15 of the IAT tests over a period of 10 – 20 days.
- After each test, jot down personal notes about your thoughts and observations.
- Do not immediately join group discussions about your results. Process your results and begin to self-examine the biases you may or may not be aware of.
- If comfortable, have discussions with your immediate circle of trust (family and friends).

The third driver of awareness is the need to proactively seek and create conversations and experiences that assist with identifying the bias of yourself and others.

Of the three options for building awareness, this one may be the most difficult.

However, there is no better way to understand someone else's reality than to have direct communication with that person about them.

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DESIRE

Once an individual has become aware of why managing bias is necessary, the second step would be to actively desire making change. In the second step of building desire, an individual will start connecting the value of managing bias to themselves and to their organization.

Individual benefits of managing bias:
- Career Advancement
- Creativity and Innovation
- Global Networks
- Salary, Profitability, Cost Savings

Once an individual has become aware of why managing bias is necessary, the second step would be to actively desire making change. In the second step of building desire, an individual will start connecting the value of managing bias to themselves and to their organization.

An individual's desire to bring about better outcomes for their professional and personal life will influence how much they want to actively participate in change. Fostering diversity and inclusion does not only benefit individuals from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. All members of an organization and hiring team must be trained to understand how diversity and inclusion benefits everyone as a collective.

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Organizational benefits of managing bias:
- Win the war for talent
- Improve the quality of decision making
- Increase Innovation and customer insight
- Increase employee satisfaction
- Improve global image

Team leaders and managers must be vocal about the need for change in an organization, only then will employees show commitment to the cause. Leaders must show what they want their teams to practice, whether it be through directly addressing common biases seen in the recruitment process or sharing success stories that resonate with team members.

KNOWLEDGE

The third outcome to be achieved is knowledge. In particular, knowledge of the two types of bias that all humans experience:

Explicit (Conscious) Bias, which refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level.

[Implicit (Subconscious) Bias,](#) which refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

During the course of sourcing, screening and interviewing candidates, there are a variety of biases in the recruiter or hiring manager that could potentially prohibit some candidates from advancing as far as they should in the recruitment process.

Teams will be able to take the necessary steps for change only when they have knowledge on the different ways bias can manifest itself.

Listed below is an overview of the types of biases that recruiters and hiring managers may use consciously or subconsciously:

1. Gender:

A preference or prejudice toward one gender over the other.

2. Racial:

A preference or prejudice toward a person based on race.

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3. Age:

A preference or prejudice toward a person based on age affinity: Occurs when we see someone we feel we have an affinity with e.g. we attended the same college, we grew up in the same town, or they remind us of someone we know and like.

4. Disability:

Viewing disability as a challenge that needs to be overcome and feeling pity for a person with a mental or physical impairment.

5. Sexual Orientation:

A preference or prejudice based on a person's sexual orientation.

6. Religion:

A preference or prejudice to an individual based on their religion, spiritual beliefs (or lack there of).

7. Veteran Status:

Assumptions based on a person's military experience including political views, character, skills and capacity.

8. Affinity:

Occurs when we see someone we feel we have an affinity with e.g. we attended the same college, we grew up in the same town, or they remind us of someone we know and like.

9. Lifestyle:

Judgement is made based on a person's material possession and/or experience. Additionally, this could include a person's sexual orientation.

10. Similarity:

We want to surround ourselves with people we feel are similar to us. And as a result, we tend to want to work more with people who are like us.

11. Conformity:

Relates to bias caused by group peer pressure. If an individual feels the majority of the group are leaning towards/away from a certain candidate, they will tend to go along with the group rather than voice their own opinions.

12. Beauty:

This is the view that we tend to think that the most handsome individual will be the most successful. In recruitment, it's common that recruiters will look to fill a role with someone who shares similar physical attributes to the person who held that role before, or who they believe looks like the kind of person who should have the role based on their preconceived bias.

13. Halo:

When we see one great thing about a person and we let the halo glow of that significant thing affect our opinions of everything else about that person. We are in awe of them due to one thing.

14. Horns:

Direct opposite of the Halo effect. The Horns effect is when we see one bad thing about a person, and we let it cloud our opinions of their other attributes.

15. Contrast:

If we're looking at a number of CVs/interviews in a row, one after the other, we tend to compare each CV/interview to the one that came before it. We judge whether or not the person in front of us did as well as the person that came before them. When really, the only thing we should be comparing are the skills and attributes each individual has, to the skills and attributes required for the job, not those of the person that came directly before them.

16. Attribution (Part 1):

Most common form of bias in the recruitment process as it affects how we access other people. When we do something well, we tend to think it's down to our own merit and personality. When we do something badly, we tend to believe that our failing is down to external factors like other people that adversely affected us and prevented us from doing our best.

17. Attribution (Part 2):

When it comes to other people, we tend to think the opposite. If someone else has done something well we consider them lucky, and if they've done something badly, we tend to think it's due to their personality or bad behavior.

18. Confirmation:

When we make a judgement about another person, we subconsciously look for evidence to back up our own opinions of that person. We do this because we want to believe we're right and that we've made the right assessment of a person.

19. Recency:

Recent events tend to weigh more heavily on our decisions than events in the past.

20. Anchoring:

Causes us to give more weight to the first bit of information we gather. Once that anchor has been thrown out, any movement away from that anchor is readily apparent and we can tend to interpret all new information in light of the original anchor.

21. Intuition:

Focuses on the nature of people's anticipated negative counterfactual thoughts if their decisions were to turn out badly

Download Bias List in PDF

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ABILITY

Once teams have gathered the knowledge to identify the steps needed to manage bias, they must then have the ability to carry out those steps. Ability represents the demonstrated capability to implement the change and achieve the desired performance level.

Listed below are opportunities to how ability comes into play in the recruiting process:

- Being able to identify and correct bias in the process of sourcing, screening, recruiting, and interviewing candidates.
- Being able to actively stop bias behaviors and/or microaggressions from clouding your own judgement and that of others.
- Being able to strategically inform others of their bias behaviors and/or microaggressions without hesitation
- Being able to inform direct supervisors, leadership or HR about egregious behaviors and/or microaggressions

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ABILITY

For management to effectively build this ability, there needs to be an understanding of a team's bandwidth. A lack of time and an abundance of priorities can hinder hiring teams from participating in a cause with energy that they do not have. D&I initiatives are a long-term process that require constant effort. Identify gaps in existing workflows to see how additional resources could further equip hiring teams to do more higher volumes of higher quality work.

For example, it takes up a recruiter's time to search through specific job boards and websites to widen their search for candidates from underrepresented groups. Recruiters who are already short on time may burn out from having more responsibilities, thus leaving D&I objectives inactive or even disliked.

Teams can improve their abilities by leveraging different D&I technology to help them overcome their challenges. If time and efficiency is a problem, recruiters can use tools like Hiretual for an AI-assisted search across the open web to find candidates from diverse backgrounds. Unconscious bias in the screening process can also be overcome by hiding names or pictures from resumes and candidate profiles.

Leaders and executives must provide teams with enough tools to carry out D&I initiatives and responsibilities to their best abilities. Only then will employees put all their knowledge to use in a way that can truly impact the bottom line.

Diversity Sourcing with Hiretual

With our AI-powered sourcing filters, market insights and performance reports, Hiretual supports your DE&I initiatives.

See why top recruiters use Hiretual to fill their pipelines with diverse and underrepresented candidates.

LEARN MORE

REINFORCEMENT

Finally, reinforcement refers to any action or event that strengthens and reinforces the change with an individual or organization. As the last step of the AKDAR model, it is also the most important. These actions or events sustain change at an individual and organizational level. Without reinforcement, change will revert back to its normal state and no progress will be made in fostering true diverse and inclusive workforces.

Recruiters and hiring managers must be able to reinforce their commitment to D&I programs by holding themselves accountable to reach hiring goals.

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Examples of reinforcement are as follows:

- Consistently review the different types of bias to check in on yourself and your team members
- Standardizing the interview process to provide a level playing field for hiring decisions to be made for any candidate
- Analyze recruiting data consistently to ensure that pipelines are supplemented with equal numbers of candidates from underrepresented backgrounds
- Take the Implicit Association Test periodically to ensure that your self-awareness is strong enough to make fair and informed recruiting decisions
- Leverage affinity groups for conversations that reflect the concerns and personal situations of all groups of individuals in your organization

[More to continue on next page]

- Hold networking or mentorship programs with affinity groups to provide underrepresented employees with role models that can motivate and guide them.
- Share knowledge and continuously hold conversations with recruiting peers and hiring managers about topics that matter to affinity groups.

Enforcing long-term change is the easiest step to miss in any organization's D&I journey.

 Remember, plans are only effective if they are properly executed and seen through until the end. It doesn't matter how robust a D&I program is or how many people are assigned to enforce it.

If reinforcement actions and events are not carried out in diligence, these initiatives will not bring about much difference.

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[IT'S TIME TO GET TO WORK!]

Despite major technological advances, diversity in the technology sector and in C-suites across the globe have barely improved over the last few years. By understanding that every individual at every level of an organization has a role to play, we will begin to see initiatives being implemented at a more efficient rate.

Through the ADKAR model, organizations will have a framework to begin their journey. However, a transformational leadership style will be needed to full implement this model into a workforce's daily mindset. Team leads and managers must lead in a way that enables teammates to embrace change and motivate themselves. This includes having a willingness to challenge existing processes, inspire a shared vision and encourage teams to act on important business priorities. Only then will recruiting teams be able to have conversations and experiences with peers to foster an attitude free of harmful bias.

Start Building Diverse and Inclusive Talent Pipelines

Hiretual helps you drive real change with a real search in the right places.

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[ABOUT THE AUTHOR]

Darrell James is the co-Founder of James & Jordan, a Boutique Executive Search and Diversity Consulting Firm.

With 25+ years of experience in corporate staffing, human resources, and workplace diversity, he is a leader at designing and implementing unique marketing, sourcing, and recruiting strategies that identifies "Inclusive" talent for Fortune 500 Corporations.

This talent ranges from recent college graduates, individual contributors, managers, and executives. Darrell is the author of Inclusion Recruiting: Secrets to Recruiting a Diverse Workforce and is also a host for the podcast, "The Influential Recruiter."

[ABOUT HIRETUAL]

Hiretual is the pioneer of AI Sourcing and the leading intelligence-driven solution for Talent Acquisition teams of all sizes. Recognized by top user review platforms as the best recruitment automation software, we empower and inform organizations to build unique state-of-the-art recruiting strategies that cannot be found anywhere else.

- 42% increase in hires per recruiter
- 5x more qualified talent in your pipeline
- 80% reduction in weekly sourcing time

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