**Guidelines for Reducing Bias in Hiring**

You like to think that you’re an objective professional who can judge people on their credentials and achievements; however, we know that each of us has a lifetime of experiences and cultural contexts that shape our ability to review applications with an objective lens. We all have biases, many of them unconscious, which can impact the recruitment, retention an**d development of our employees.**

Following are 5 simple things you can do to reduce bias in the hiring process:

1. **Make sure that you are aligned with the recruiter on the job description and selection criteria.** Job descriptions play a critical role in creating a diverse and inclusive workforce. Bias (unconsciously) often shows up in job announcements and job descriptions. For example, research shows that some words have a male or female connotation.

Ensure your job description has a mix of both types of these words:

* **Male connotation**: determined, lead, challenging, superior, decisive
* **Female connotation**: committed, connected, dependable, loyal, trust, and interpersonal.

Also, evaluate what aspects of the job are actually required versus a nice to have.

Ask yourself the following questions:

* Is a particular type of degree required as part of the job or is a nice to have?
* Is prior experience required or skill *absolutely* needed on the job?
* Does the job have to be based in a certain city?

1. **Become aware of your own biases.** When we are aware of our biases (both explicit and unconscious) and watch out for them, they are less likely to dictate our behavior and decisions.
   * Take 3 minutes to watch this video on Understanding Unconscious Bias to get a foundation of how unconscious bias works.
   * One way to become aware of your biases is by taking one of the Implicit Association Tests (IAT) developed by Harvard researchers. We recommend starting off with this anonymous IAT focused on race and gender.
2. **Spend sufficient time evaluating each candidate.** Bias is more likely to impact candidates when application reviewers are distracted by other tasks and under time pressure. The impact of bias is reduced when more time is taken in reviewing applications.
3. **Have a diverse interview panel and educate the panel on bias.** When composing your interview panel consider the diversity of your panel. Diversity (including demographic diversity and diversity of thought) on an interview panel will help mitigate the impacts of unconscious bias and will show the company’s commitment to diversity.

Additionally, reduce the risk that your interview panel brings bias to the process by ensuring they have taken the Understanding Unconscious Bias video, and that they understand the hiring criteria (job description and knowledge, skills and competencies) for the role before participating in the interviews.

1. **Make sure you are making your hiring decision on knowledge and competencies as opposed to “fit.”** Interviewers and candidate reviewers often use “fit” as a way to express intangible vibes. These “vibes” are generally a reflection of unconscious bias.

“Fit” should be excluded from the selection process. Instead interviewers should focus on the specific needs of the job (knowledge, skills and competencies) and the knowledge, skills and competencies of the candidate. If someone on an interview panel suggests that the candidate is not the right “fit” ask for specific examples to be expressed as knowledge, skills and competencies.