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Office of Equity & Inclusion

Building Inclusive Teams & Work Environments: Mitigating Implicit Bias

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Learning Outcomes

We seek to.....

- **Introduce and promote understanding of bias**
- **Identify the benefits of building high performing teams – and the impact if we do not**
- **Discuss strategies to impact trust and support the promotion of productive teams and organizations**

Common Language

“When we listen and celebrate what is both common and different, we become a wiser, more inclusive, and better organization.”

— Pat Wadors

Introductory Definitions

- **Diversity** encompasses acceptance and respect. It is understanding that each individual is unique, and our individual differences need to be recognized. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical/mental ability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.
- **Inclusion** is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing (accepting) and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

Introductory Definitions

- **Equity** is the proportional distribution of desirable outcomes across groups. Sometimes confused with equality, equity refers to outcomes while equality connotes equal treatment. Where individuals or groups are dissimilarly situated, equal treatment may be insufficient for, or even detrimental to, equitable outcomes.
- More directly, equity is when an individual's race, gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, etc. do not determine their educational, economic, social, or political opportunities.

Section 1: Understanding Bias

Bias....

We all have bias....

Bias is not positive or negative, it just is....

- At times, it can save our lives



Key Definitions

- **Bias** is a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, individuals, or groups when compared with others. These typically are usually in ways that are considered to be unfair.
- Biases may be held by an individual, group, or institution and can have negative or positive consequences.
- There are varying types of biases
 - **Conscious bias** (also known as **explicit bias**) and
 - **Unconscious bias** (also known as **implicit bias**)

Bias Is Rooted in the Brain

Scientists have determined that bias is found in the same region of the brain (the amygdala) associated with fear and threat. It can also be found in other areas of the brain.

For instance, stereotyping, a form of bias, is associated with the temporal and frontal lobes. The left temporal lobe of the brain stores general information about people and objects and is the storage place for social stereotypes. The frontal cortex is associated with forming impressions of others, empathy, and reasoning (Henneman, 2014).

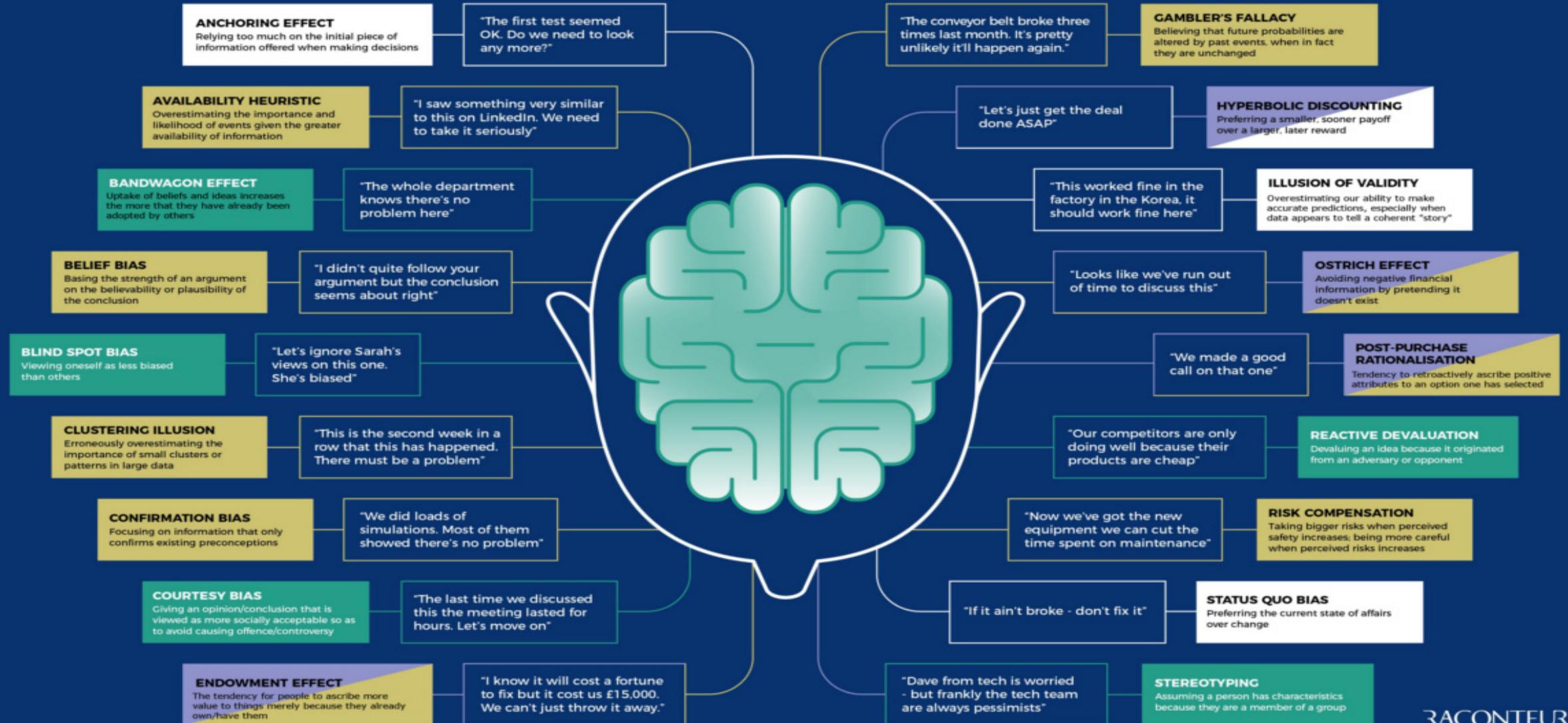
Cognitive bias

● Social ● Financial ● Failure to estimate ● Short-termism

When it comes to assessing risk, humans often fail to make rational decisions because our brains take mental shortcuts that prevent us making the correct choice. Since the 1960s behavioural scientists and psychologists have been researching these failings, and have identified and labelled dozens of them. Here are some that can cause havoc when it comes to assessing risks in business

ORIGIN

The notion of cognitive biases was first introduced by psychologists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman in the early-1970s. Their research paper, 'Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases', in the Science journal has provided the basis of almost all current theories of decision-making and heuristics. Professor Kahneman was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2002 after further developing the ideas and applying them to economics.



Unconscious Bias

An unconscious bias relates to the attitudes, beliefs and opinions about people that operate outside our awareness, yet have a significant impact in determining our judgement and our behavior towards others. Biases are formed through culture, personality, and individual and work experiences.

While a bias is not necessarily a problem, it can become one if it prevents individuals/leader from behaving in impartial ways.

Similar or related terms: implicit bias, hidden bias, cognitive bias

What is Unconscious Bias?

- Unconscious Bias is also referred to as **Implicit Bias**
- Social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own consciousness
- Patterns based on small bits of information
- Often incompatible with our conscious values
- Unconscious biases as “being automatic, products of our upbringing and experiences that influence our decision making even though they may or may not be rationalized or justified by facts.”

Unconscious biases are prejudices we have but are unaware of. They are “mental shortcuts based on social norms and stereotypes.” (Guynn, 2015).

Testing Your Own Unconscious Bias

An effective tool available for testing individual unconscious bias is the [Implicit Association Test](#) (IAT). Created and maintained by Project Implicit, a consortium made up of researchers from Harvard University, the University of Virginia, and the University of Washington. The IAT was created more than 10 years ago and has now been used by millions of people in over 20 countries.

Conditional Learning

Unconscious bias can be caused by conditional learning. For example, if a person has a bad experience with someone they categorize as belonging to a particular group, they often associate that entire group with that bad experience.

(Venosa, 2015).

A Few Types of Unconscious Bias

Affinity bias: The tendency to warm up to people like ourselves.

Halo effect: The tendency to think everything about a person is good because you like that person.

Perception bias: The tendency to form stereotypes and assumptions about certain groups that make it impossible to make an objective judgement about members of those groups.

Confirmation bias: The tendency for people to seek information that confirms pre-existing beliefs or assumptions.

Group think: This bias occurs when people try too hard to fit into a particular group by mimicking others or holding back thoughts and opinions. This causes them to lose part of their identities and causes organizations to lose out on creativity and innovation (Price, 2014).

Examples....

What is the impact?

Unconscious biases may have an impact on....

- **Business decisions**
- **Who we bring in for interviews**
- **Who we hire**
- **Who we promote**
- **Who we put on teams**
- **Who we do serve and/or do business with**

Facilitated question: What else might be impacted?

Section 2: The Team

Dynamics of a Strong Team

Reflect on a successful or highly productive team you were a part of....

- What made it such a great team?
- Who was the leader/manager/coach?
- What did they do to make it such a great team?
- What qualities made the team great?
- What did you do to make the team great?

Establishing a Culture of Trust

A Key for trust is.....Truth

“An HR poll designed to garner feedback on the most important elements of a positive workplace indicated that 89% of all employees stated that being a part of a team where coworkers were honest was #1 on their list of most important satisfactory work elements.”

(Forbes, 2017)

Environments Conducive to a Strong Team

- Positive communication strategies
- Diverse perspective
- Respect and civility
- Access to opportunity and growth

Positive Team Communication Strategies

Do's

- Engage in difficult conversations in person
- Show genuine concern for others—not just those you need something from
- Recognize the contributions of others *even when they are not there*
- Speak respectfully about team members and do not disparage
- Speak about people as though they *are present*

Don'ts

- Exclusively use electronic communication to have *“difficult conversations”*
- Say *“Nothing personal, but...”*
- Take credit for work or ideas that are *not your own*
- Degrade colleagues in a public setting
- *Avoid difficult conversations*
- Wait until it is too late to address an issue

Impacts of Unconscious Bias on Team Performance

- Team member composition and involvement
- Lower performance and decreased productivity
- Impact on morale
- “Group Think”
- Increased turnover

Section 3: Action

Can Unconscious (Implicit) Bias be Controlled?

Recent work suggests that we can reshape our implicit attitudes and beliefs or at least curb their effects on our behavior.

In particular, there are several strategies that appear to make a difference:

- Information – re: the psychological basis of bias
- Motivation - internal (vs. external) motivation to change
- Individuation – learning to see diverse others as individuals rather than as members of groups
- Direct contact with members of other groups
- Working together on teams, as equals, in pursuit of common goals
- Context/environment – images of leaders from diverse groups helps

Addressing Bias

** Key Thoughts **

While it can be easier to change processes, we must take action on individuals and agency to help mitigate bias.

- Leaders must address their biases and impact on actions
- Teams must review the impact on their actions

Work in both areas are required to impact change in systems!

Individual Reflections

Asking yourself....

Who do I tend to select for the lead roles?

Do I typically select team members like me?

Do I typically seek influence from the same type of people or those with a personality type like mine?

Do I use terms like “right fit” when thinking selecting my team? Is so, what do I mean?

Individual Reflections

Am I creating opportunities for those less extroverted to demonstrate their capabilities equally to clients or other colleagues?

Who do I like to assign to work on project teams?

Who do I encourage to lead or speak out at meetings?

Seven Steps to Identify and Address Unconscious Bias

1. Recognize and acknowledge that you have biases.
2. Identify what those biases are.
3. Dissect your biases for better understanding.
4. Decide which of your biases you will address first.
5. Expand your engagement beyond common interest groups.
6. Recognize this effort is ongoing. Continue to confront your biases.
7. Be mindful of bias kick back.

Battling Bias – Individual Actions

- Enhance your understanding of the psychological basis of bias.
- Replace negative mental images associated with certain groups with positive mental images.
- Increase positive contacts with socially dissimilar groups .
- Be intentional about working with inclusive groups members to achieve common tasks/goals.
- Replace behaviors that promote tolerance with behaviors that promote equity and appreciation.
- Get 360-degree diverse feedback from diverse members of your work-team.

Team Actions

- Offer general awareness training
- Label the types of bias that are likely to occur in your organization
- Conduct employee surveys to understand what specific issues of hidden bias and unfairness might exist at the organization
- Hold leaders accountable before others
- Engage in difficult team conversations in person
- Show genuine concern for others—(not just those in high profile roles)
- Recognize the contributions of others even when they are not present

Section 4: Organizational Strategies

Organizational Strategies

- All institutions should: Develop concrete, objective indicators & outcomes for hiring, evaluation, and promotion to reduce standard stereotypes (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Heilman, 2001; Bernat & Manis, 1994)
- Develop standardized criteria to assess the impact of individual contributions in performance evaluations (Heilman & Haynes, 2005)
- Develop and utilize structured interviews and develop objective evaluation criteria for hiring (Martell & Guzzo, 1991; Heilman, 2001)
- Provide unconscious bias training workshops for all constituents

Data

We must provide data!

When managers make decisions ad hoc, they may not be aware of the cumulative effect of those decisions. It also leaves open the door of the impact of unconscious bias.

Access to information about stakeholders, past decisions, and current demographic information can assist with addressing barriers grounded in bias.

Decision Rigor

Add rigor to subjective decisions. Subjective judgments are the most vulnerable to implicit bias.

The same goes for judgments under time pressure, and in ambiguous situations. Organizations must adopt their own objectives and behavior-based standards for when they will or won't take risks, excuse bad behavior, recognize employee potential, and commit to their mission in an equitable way.

Stakeholder Trajectory

Look for on ramps that lead to on and off to success.

Some paths of success are dependent on others. Where early judgments about performance determine access to future opportunities? How does your organization or team examine the impact of unconscious bias?

In these situations, review opportunity distribution at that initial stage to assess whether everyone has a chance to make it onto the track for success.

It's also worth looking for ramps available to some employees but not others.

Decisions

Identify and hidden decision-makers. Those employees who might via bias distribute scarce opportunities that may not be on your radar.

Reveal hidden decisions. Managers may not even recognize some of their most important decisions as such. A manager might unconsciously decide to take risks on employees who are similar to them or similar to successful employees in the past, without realizing other employees missed out on the chance.

Resource the Work

- Offer resources
- Communication channels and intentional messages are critical. This is where partnerships with Diversity and Inclusion and HR can help.
- As an organization, your employees/teams need training and development. Offer it to everyone who is interested, not just those who may be identified for training. Do not rely on managers exclusively or single outlets of communication to promote trainings.

Take-Away Points

- Implicit bias is distinct from conscious motivation
- We all have these biases due to cultural exposure
- They can affect behavior unless we override them
- They can be changed with education, exposure, and commitment from the organization

Questions and Discussion



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