

Know your unconscious bias

There are several cognitive or unconscious types of bias that can affect recruiters. Here are just a few. :

Halo effect

This refers to the tendency to let an interviewee's good qualities (or those that we approve of) influence our perception. For example, one brilliant answer in an interview can cause us to overlook other less well answered questions.

Horns effect

This is another type of 'first impression' bias. If our first impression of the interviewee is negative, such as a poor answer to a first question, the rest of the interview can be perceived poorly.

Confirmation bias

We have a tendency to search for, interpret, favour and recall information in a way that confirms our pre-existing beliefs. For example, if we have a strong personal belief that tattoos aren't professional, when interviewing a heavily tattooed candidate we might unconsciously seek out other information that suggests they aren't professional to back up those beliefs.

Groupthink

If a group of people need to make a decision, such as who to offer a job to, groupthink can cause them to follow someone else in the group for the sake of maintaining harmony. If a strong personality in the group insists their preferred candidate is the right one, other panel members can be persuaded to agree with them.

Successive contrasting bias

This situation occurs when a great candidate causes the interviewers to judge subsequent candidates more harshly by comparison.

Stereotyping

Expecting a candidate to have characteristics that are believed to apply to a particular group, without any actual evidence or information. For example, assuming that a female candidate will want to have children.