Unconscious Bias

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CONTENTS

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It is useless to attempt to reason a man out of a thing he was never reasoned into.

Jonathan Swift

Preface

Unconscious biases are the biases that everyone has, that live in the dark recesses of the human brain. These biases are grown in each individual and can greatly influence the day to day decision that are made both at home and at work.

This eBook will introduce to you the ideas and techniques for defining different unconscious biases that are very common today. It will also show the effects of these biases on the work culture and the business practices of a company. And finally, the workshop will cover the steps to introducing a successful unconscious bias training in the workplace.

NOTES

The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.

Chapter One: What is Unconscious Bias?

What is it and how does it affect our day to day lives? To be able to discuss the unconscious bias that everyone possesses, the basic idea must first be defined. From there, the causes, the effects, and the possible necessary changes can be better addressed.

There are different types of biases, and most importantly, it must be remembered that biases are not limited to just race or gender biases. The subject of unconscious bias is detailed and needs to be fully understood. Unconscious biases are collected over a lifetime, and often affect decision making, especially in the moment that a snap decision needs to be made.

Definition

There are two categories of bias in studies today: conscious or explicit biases and unconscious or implicit biases. Unconscious bias is usually thought of as social stereotypes, and is more common than conscious bias. Here are some quick facts about unconscious bias:

- Unconscious bias is more common than the conscious or explicit bias.
- Unconscious bias may not concur with the conscious bias of an individual.
- Unconscious bias may be triggered by an event or situation.

How Does it Work?

Unconscious biases are deeply rooted in the human brain. The brain is constantly collecting data and categorizes it. One of the categories that is automatically made is between good and bad.   Think about caveman, who had to judge between a good situation and a bad situation, in a moment's notice. As humans have evolved, this type of decision making has been engrained in us.

Today, these assumptions, or biases are often the result of social conditioning; life experiences. Some researchers believe that these biases often began in early childhood. These judgements or biases can affect both our personal and work lives. They can hinder decision making, which can greatly affect our lives. In the business world, unconscious biases can affect an organization from the top executive to the last hired employee.

Triggers

What triggers the type of decisions we make so often every day?   In a word: history. Here is a partial list of experiences that may play into the development of our unconscious biases:

- Past experience.
- The environment in which a child is raised.
- The culture in which a child is raised.
- Educational systems.

This list does not include all the ways data and information have been absorbed throughout our lives. This information and the biases we have developed, affect most of the decisions we make in our lives.

Impact

Unconscious bias impacts how we engage with others. A recruiter or hiring manager may look at hundreds of resumes for one open position; they must decide simply by looking at the information provided who to interview. Often, based on an applicant's skill set, work ethics, their name, their degree, or affiliation, unconscious bias will have an effect on the interview/hiring process. Hiring practices based on unconscious bias may result in a workplace that is narrow minded, lacking diversity, and likely lacking creative and innovative new ideas. The work culture in organizations that allows bias to influence business can be negative and toxic. The work force is aware of the lack of diversity and forward movement and may soon move on to healthier companies.

Practical Illustration

Stacy is sifting through a stack of resumes at her desk. She has to hire someone for the opening in accounting. She calls Janna in and asks her to assist in sorting through resumes for possible candidates. Janna sits down and starts reading her pile of paper. After a while, Stacy notices that Janna has two piles sorted out. She asks Janna what the qualification standards were of the possible candidates. Janna responds, "Well, I took out everyone that lives outside of Metro. And then I took out anyone who didn't have an Ivy League degree."

Stacy asks, "Is that how you think I hired you Janna?" Stacy continues by saying that she didn't just judge Janna according to her hometown or because of a school that she attended. "Let's go through that reject pile again, Janna, and see if we can find some applicants that have different skills and talents." Janna agrees and they sit down together to reread the applications with a more open mind. When the ladies complete their task, they have a hefty stack of resumes full of people with different educations and skills from which to choose their perfect candidate.

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Chapter Two: Types of Unconscious Bias (I)

Dr. Phil, the television doctor often says, "We can't fix what we don't admit." Problems that are hidden or not identified cannot be productively changed. Biases work the same way. Different biases in different situations must first be identified. Only then can the error in judgement or thinking be identified and changed.

There are many different types of biases that a person can possess. Unconscious biases can be based on a wide variety of attributes that are sourced from many different experiences. The first four categories of unconscious bias to examine are: affinity, halo effect, attribution, and confirmation.

Affinity Bias

If you have ever heard the statement, "This employee was hired because he/she was a better fit with the company," then you have been exposed to an affinity bias. What this statement really says is that the new employee shares the same interests as the hiring manager/team.

Affinity bias, also known as the similarity bias, can cause a team to become stagnant. There are limited new ideas, new approaches, etc. because everyone is the same. Affinity bias can cause a person to gravitate more towards people that share their interests, reside in the same neighborhood, or attended the same school. This can create a group of people whose thinking and working styles are practically identical.

Halo Effect

The "halo effect" bias is best described as a bias that involves preferring

individuals that appear to have achieved more than others. Judging an individual's talents or skills based on unrelated qualities is the halo effect bias. The person appears better than he/she may really be. The person has a "halo" that makes him/her appear fantastic.

A good example of the halo effect bias is when an employer only hires graduates from specific schools. This employer assumes that only those graduates are qualified to work in the organization. The real truth is that graduates from other schools, public universities and colleges, are sometimes more qualified to perform the job. Often, the life experience necessary to be successful has not been learned at an Ivy League institution.

Attribution Bias

The attribution bias is judging another person before knowing the facts; forming an opinion before having all of the information. An example may be the person that gets to the parking space first. The person that was waiting assumes that this person is rude and impolite, whereas they may have an elderly or ill person waiting for a prescription from the store. The first driver may not have seen the second driver.

Attribution bias was first studied in the 50's and 60's. Researchers determined that often people judge others on their actions. Most attribute these actions to the other person's personality. Most do not take into account the particular situation or environment. Take for example a grouchy customer: Is that customer grouchy because of a previous negative encounter with the staff? Or is their mood based on the fact that they recently suffered a loss in the family, their car was in the garage, or their order was wrong for the second time? This customer may usually be very friendly, but is now labeled as "grouchy."

Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias is best defined as using one's own beliefs or ideas to judge another person or a situation; instead of using the facts or proven merits. This type of bias can occur in the workplace when a manager forms an opinion of an applicant based on that person's name. This type of bias often occurs before the manager has even met or spoken to the applicant. For example: Bob has a prominent last name. The recruiter automatically interviewed him for the manager position, instead of the forklift position that Bob had applied for. When questioned at the interview, the recruiter told Bob that he had all the qualifications and could catch up in training; the manager's position is the one that he should apply for.

Why is confirmation bias useful? This type of thinking bolsters our egos, and protects our self-esteem. Processing information in a way that supports our personal beliefs or ideas increases our feeling of being "right." During decision making, the human brain gives special attention to data that is favorable and tends to ignore the data that is unfavorable. People tend to look for reasons that support their ideas, but have a hard time believing in an idea that they do not support.

Practical Illustration

Scott is reviewing the interviewed applicants for the manager position. Several of the applicants are seasoned employees that Scott has known for years. A couple of the applicants are fresh out of college. Scott is unsure who to offer the position to. Not everyone will be happy with Scott's decision, but he can't worry about this.

Bob would be a good hire as he would fit in well with the other managers. He plays golf and would enjoy the comradery of the yearly golf outing. Angie would be a good candidate also because she graduated this year from the best university in the state. Claire is also in the pool of potential hires. Her father was a manager for the company for twenty years and although Scott has never met her personally, he is sure she would be great as a manager. Finally, Scott is considering hiring the company's owner's son, who is graduating next week from a local college. He is qualified, but the owner's son. Scott must ensure that he does not use any of his unconscious biases when he chooses this new manager for the company. He is sure that since he has identified the biases that he has for each applicant, he can now make a better decision.

It's human nature to make the complex manageable & determine things that fit your conclusions. That's bias.

Richard Burr

Chapter Three: Types of Unconscious Bias (II)

Often, biases go unnoticed, especially when they are not blatant racial or gender biases. The biases that we encounter every day in the news and in current events are easily noticeable and can be confronted and challenged. Unconscious biases are part of our decision making. They involve personal feelings and past experiences. There are various types of biases that are much less obvious. This module highlights four more types of unconscious biases that occur.

Horns Effect

The bias that is referred to as the "horns effect" bias is the habit of judging a person without ever having met this individual; having a negative opinion, based on a negative report or rumor. This bias is the opposite of the halo effect discussed earlier, where one's abilities are over inflated.

Everyone can remember the kid in class that was judged because of his name. Before the teacher started the first day of class, he anticipated trouble. This kid's dad was a problem, his brother was a problem, etc. Because of this the teacher is on guard. This is a bias; unfair to this child. The same thing goes on in businesses today; a candidate's reputation may precede them, resulting in missed opportunities.

Contrast Effect

Contrast effect bias occurs when individuals are compared based on their differences. Instead of comparing their similarities and skills, their differences are highlighted, usually as negatives. Four "A" students all have the same education; one is more verbal. Does this student appear to be smarter or more educated?

This bias is one of the most common biases in the recruiting or hiring industry. When a recruiter is interviewing applicants; an exceptional interview with a potential candidate may influence the recruiter's view of the next candidate to be interviewed.

Beauty Bias

The beauty bias has two sides to it: "Beautiful" or "good looking." people are considered smarter and more capable; pretty people go further in life and experience more success.

Then, there is the opposite side to the beauty bias: Beautiful people are considered more feminine, weaker, and not as capable. In some industries and businesses where strength is a component of the job, beauty can be seen as negative. Research has shown that attractive women are hired less often for jobs when appearance is less important, such as tow truck drivers or security guards.

Height Bias

Simply stated, the definition of a height bias is the preference of a specific height. People are sometimes untrusting of individuals that are shorter or taller than the social norm. The belief that someone who is taller or shorter in height is less educated, less able or qualified, or less trustworthy; is considered height bias. Studies have shown that men that are six foot and over earn more per year than men that are five foot tall. They are often the recipients of promotions and recognition over short men.

Consider these two phrases:

o   John is a pillar of the community; people look up to him.

o   Sally is worried about her reputation; she doesn't want people to look down on her.

Notice the references to direction. The word "up" has a positive connotation. The word "down" has a negative connotation. Does this way of thinking work into an unconscious bias? Possibly.

Practical Illustration

Trey and Alex are attending an anti-discrimination seminar for work. They meet for lunch and start to compare notes from the meetings they had both attended during the morning session.   "I had never heard of the horns effect or the contrast effect before," Trey said between bites of his sandwich. "I thought bias and discrimination were just against blacks or women." Trey went on to tell Alex how he learned about unconscious biases that cause us to judge others based on negative rumors. He also explained how we also have a contrast bias that makes good things look bad when compared to other good things.

"That's crazy Trey, "said Alex. "I learned a few new things too." Alex had attended the height bias class and the beauty bias class. "Did you know that taller men are more likely to earn more salary than short men? I am in big trouble," Alex said. He went on to tell Trey that pretty girls are sometimes thought to be too pretty to be useful or smart. "I wonder what we will learn this afternoon?" Trey asked. The two finished their lunches before hurrying off to the afternoon seminars.

NOTES

What a sad era when it is easier to smash an atom than a prejudice.

Albert Einstein

Chapter Four: Types of Unconscious Bias (III)

That covers just a few of the unconscious biases that people may possess. Although an individual may never intend to discriminate against another person, and may deny having any biases at all, we all have biases, deeply rooted within us. To identify these tendencies in decision making is the beginning of changing these biases.

This module examines the next four unconscious biases. These four biases are more common. Being aware of the issues, does not make the problems go away. Our unconscious biases stand in the way of complete unbiasedness. They can lead to behavior that may be considered "unfair." To be better decision makers, we must identify our unconscious biases and make the necessary changes.

Conformity Bias

Instead of being based on past experiences, Conformity Bias is defined as behaving in a manner that is similar to the people that are present, instead of acting on one's own judgements or decisions. These behaviors can change, based on the surrounding people or situations.

People are more comfortable following others. Mirroring the behaviors of others can become a hindrance. Behaviors such as bullying, cheating or stealing are contagious in the workplace. When one is breaking the rules, others will follow due to the conformity bias. Individuals that do not follow their own moral compass are destined to follow to the rule breakers many times.

Gender Bias

The preference of one gender over another is considered a gender bias. This bias is one that we are all aware of. There are news reports concerning equal pay, equal opportunity, and blatant cases of discrimination against one gender or another in recruiting and hiring. Women have been fighting to be viewed as equals for years. Those are the conscious biases that are encountered and are more easily identifiable. But what about the unconscious gender bias?

Unconscious biases cause us to ignore the skills and talents of someone due to their gender. How does this differ from the conscious bias? Studies have been done on the hiring data of orchestras. After the adoption of screens to shield the view of the applicants from the judges, the number of women hired greatly increased. Consider your reaction the last time a male nurse attended to you. Did you think that he was the doctor? Consider the reactions a female electrician might receive. That is the effect of a unconscious gender bias.

Name Bias

This bias is basically self-explanatory, it is a preference based on a person's name. Judging a person based on his or her name alone is a name bias. Name bias isn't always based on last name alone.

A certain name may bring to mind an image: Elizabeth, Mohammad, Zachary, Alejandra. Laquisha. When recruiters are faced with hundreds of applications for one position, does a person's name come into play in the decision making of that recruiter? It shouldn't, but does it? Picture a hiring manager desperate for an English speaking hostess. Which applications would get first consideration?

Ageism Bias

The preference of a specific age over another is the Ageism Bias; the most commonly discussed of the biases. Ageism bias is felt most often by older people. Seniors can feel lost with new innovations and technology, especially in the workplace. Statistics show that by the age of fifty more than half of older employees have felt some sort of ageism in the workplace.

Sometimes a younger person is not given the credit he/she deserves. An example is a profession that may usually contain seasoned workers. When a younger qualified worker is hired, he/she is not thought to be competent because of their lack of experience.

Practical Illustration

Amanda is presenting an anti-discrimination training course. She is explaining unconscious biases to the class. As she is explaining the conformity bias, a student asks, "Is that like bullying?" Amanda replies, "Yes, bullying can be a result of the conformity bias. People tend follow the actions of others in a group. It's more comfortable."

Amanda then explains some of the other biases including gender, name, and age. She explains that often there is more than one way a bias can affect our decisions. The class learns a lot about their own biases and is prepared to make some necessary changes.

A gentleman can see a question from all sides without bias. The small man is biased and can see a question only from one side.

Confucius

Chapter Five: Effects on Company

Unconscious biases affect a company or business on every level, and can affect some of the most important decisions made. From hiring to firing, benefits and promotions; unconscious biases are ever present in business. These biases can cause extremely negative effects in the workplace, such as lack of creativity, lack of diversity, and lack of growth.

Recruitment

Recruitment of employees is the first step in hiring a successful group of people who are focused on the success and profitability of the organization. If this first step is tainted with unconscious biases, the result can be a narrow applicant pool.

Think about a stack of applications and how a manager might begin to trim the list down to just a few interviewees. How are the applicants judged? If the hiring manager is focused on specific attributes like their name or school, and not on the applicant's true skills and talents, the work place begins to become very one sided. All of the employees begin to resemble the boss.

Employee Turnover & Low Morale

Some of the biases examined today relate to the choice to stay within one's group or comfort zone. One might believe that a workplace lacking diversity would have good morale and low turnover. However, the opposite is true. The effect of unconscious biases may result in a workplace that is filled with animosity, distrust, and bullying. Employees that do not fit into the "expected norm" are soon isolated from the rest of the employees, eventually they will leave the company.

Decreased Productivity

Unconscious biases not only affect the hiring processes, morale and culture of the workplace, it also has a large effect on the productivity of the employees. When an employee doesn't feel like he/she fits in well with co-workers, that individual does not have the initiative and drive to excel at their job. Individuals that feel disconnected from the rest of the workforce tend to do the work asked of them, and no more.

These biases are often based on race, gender, age or ethnicity and can cause a sense of inequality. This disrupts the workplace and affects how employees and departments work together. A lack of cooperation on projects or business activities lowers the overall production of the company and lowers profitability.

Reputation

In today's world of technology, social media, and online reviews, the reputation of a business is almost worth more than money in the bank. It does not take a very long time for bad reviews to begin to circulate.

There are websites available for employees to voice their opinions about an employer. Glassdoor, Indeed, and LinkedIn are just a few of the very well-known websites focusing on employment. An employer that is biased may develop a bad reputation. Soon, only applicants that "fit the mold" will apply, and all of the excellent opportunities that the company would benefited from with a more diverse work force, are gone.

Practical Illustration

Stacy is explaining to her assistant, Trish, the effects that unconscious biases can have on the company. "There are so many ways that these unseen biases can negatively affect my company. I had no idea that one wrong decision could cause so many negative results. This isn't like sending the wrong order, or forgetting to ship to an event." Trish asks, "It can't be that bad, can it, Stacy?"

Stacy explained to Trish that if unconscious biases aren't identified and stopped, the company could lose a lot more than just a few dollars. The first area that biases become obvious is in hiring. Then the company starts to lose employees and has to hire more people. After that, the company with a bad work culture develops a reputation for things like discrimination and a negative work environment. "Oh!" Trish says, "We have to make sure that all of the employees know about these biases. I do not want the company to develop a negative reputation.

NOTES

Chapter Six: Mitigating Unconscious Bias

The responsibility for mitigating these biases and creating a healthy and productive work culture, lies strictly with the organization's management teams. A positive work culture starts at the top and is taught to the employees that follow this leadership. And although unconscious biases will never disappear, their affects can be lessened with the correct approach.

An owner or employer cannot just state that any type of bias will not be tolerated. This statement must be followed up with processes and policies that echo these sentiments. The workplace must supply training and education for the employees to combat unconscious biases. There must be a safe place to report suspected unconscious biases in the decision making department of the company. All these things must be utilized to mitigate unconscious bias in any workplace.

Set Expectations

The first step to mitigating unconscious biases in the work culture of a company, is to firmly and clearly state that this type of behavior will not be tolerated, outline what training will be offered to employees, and that violations will have consequences. A quick, brief statement to the employees and shareholders of the company is the first step of the process. This position must be stated firmly, without any waiver.

This statement should also state the training program and policies that will be included. The mandatory requirements should also be included in the expectations for this program. Encourage participation through marketing the program as pro-diversity, rather than anti-bias. Highlight the positive effects of this training in the opening statements for the program.

Get Feedback

The next step to implementing the anti-bias training program is to gather feedback from the employees. After the statement is released to the company and shareholders, the management can then begin to collect data based on the feelings of the employees. This information can be used in the planning of the training and the presentation of the information later in time.

The easiest way to get a genuine reaction to the anti-bias policies and programs from the employees is via a survey. This survey can be on paper ballots, via the email, or any other company wide communication that the organization uses. Every employee must be given the opportunity to participate in the data collection. These surveys not only gather information, they also increase the employee interest and participation. The survey that is easiest to use is the sliding scale from one extreme to another. Here is a list of some of the questions that the survey could include:

- Do you feel like you can voice your opinion in this workplace?
- Do you feel like you are fairly evaluated by your superiors?
- Do you feel like there are biases in the workplace?
- Would you be willing to participate in a diversity training seminar?

Encourage Participation

Let's be honest, ever since childhood, we have hated to be told what to do and when to do it. It sets off a little rebellion in our minds that causes some people to put up walls and fences in defiance. Mandatory meetings and training are everyone's least favorite thing to do during the workday. Anti-bias training needs to be mandatory for all employees, but how can an employer encourage participation, without causing employees to feel forced to attend.

Invitations should state that all management will be present for the event. Maybe provide a lunch and snacks for meeting. Speak to the employees' desires and what would make it worth their time to attend. Include the question in a survey to the employees. An important step to a successful unconscious bias training seminar for the employees is encouraging participation, not only in the meeting itself, but also in creating updated workplace policies.

Train Employees

Training employees is so much more than reading and presenting a slide presentation at a day-long meeting. Employees have to not only accept the information presented, but use this information. The first tip is to know the audience and which training materials will work best for this particular group. This training needs to be interactive and informative. It should have clear goals.

One way to begin this session is to administer one of the many implicit biases tests that are available to all the employees. The Harvard Implicit Awareness Test assists in identifying fourteen unconscious biases that the employees possess and inadvertently allow to affect their daily decisions. Even though it is not comfortable, this test highlights the biases that each employee can then move forward and change.

Allowing employees an open forum to discuss and explore these biases is important. It is also important that everyone, from management down to the most recently hired employee, participate. This assists in the realization that everyone has these biases, and now the goal is to stop letting biases affect us.

Practical Illustration

Tam has just received an email from the top executives. She has been asked to design and institute a new anti-discrimination program that includes a focus on unconscious biases. Tam calls Bob into the office to ask for his assistance in coming up with a game plan by the next day.

Bob meets with Tam the next day and reports his findings. Tam tells Bob that the executives are going to release a statement of intent to the employees. This statement is going to announce the new program and the expectations and goals of the program. Bob tells Tam that he has completed his research and that he discovered that after the announcement the company needs to circulate a survey asking the employees their feelings about the program and the work culture in general. Bob continues to tell her that they need to attempt to encourage the employees to attend the training. He adds that the training needs to be designed properly to be effective. Tam says that Bob did a great job. And then assigns him the task of designing the training. Lucky Bob!

We all see only that which we are trained to see.

Robert Anton Wilson

Chapter Seven: Training

Unconscious biases are not learned, they are unintentional, and everyone has these biases within their thought processes. Without identifying the biases; without training, individuals are unaware of the biases that they carry. Training and education are critical to making positive changes, in the workplace and in our personal lives. Unconscious bias training teaches skills that are useful in every aspect of our lives, but how is someone educated and trained on avoiding unconscious biases?

What to Include?

The strategy of the Human Resources department in training employees about unconscious biases must be well planned and designed. Just handing out pamphlets with the pay checks does not constitute effective training. A well-designed education program must include a form of awareness training that identifies biases employees may possess, discuss how biases are created, and how to avoid these biases in the future

After identifying these biases, training should also include discussions about personal experiences and ways to confront biases in the workplace. Life examples and hypothetical questions are one of the proven techniques used for this type of training.

Who Should Be Trained?

Anyone who communicates and interacts with other people in the workplace will benefit from this training. It will help to cultivate a positive workplace culture, every single employee, vendor, sub-contractor, and shareholder needs to be trained on identifying and stopping unconscious biases. Regardless of the level of the employee, biases such as these affect the hiring, the firing, the promotions, every aspect of the workplace culture.

Why do the top executives and owners of the company need to also attend these types of trainings? The leaders and managers of the company have an even greater responsibility to the employees to provide a healthy workplace. The top leaders are the ones that must insist on the workplace culture that the company follows, and be the examples to the rest of the business.

How to Conduct?

This information must be presented via a practical process. When personal shortcomings are disclosed, people tend to reject the information if it cannot be supported by strategies to combat them.

The first step is to choose an effective presenter/trainer for the seminar. This needs to be someone who is educated in the background and inner workings of unconscious biases. This presenter needs to be a great communicator and experienced in the education of employees in a workplace situation. The trainer needs to be aligned with the same beliefs and ethics of the company.

Check for Understanding

We have all been in a seminar or training session, where the speaker looked at the team and asked if there were any questions. Did anyone answer? More than likely, no. Even if there were misunderstandings or questions to be asked, most employees do not voice these questions. Maybe it is the fear of looking dumb; it could be for many reasons. Because of this lack of "speaking up" in a group setting, the presenter must check for comprehension using other methods. Just asking the group if they understood is not sufficient. Here is just a short list of ideas for checking the employees' understanding of the information that is being presented:

o   Oral quiz at the end of each module.

o   Worksheets.

o   Small group discussions.

Practical Illustration

Casey is preparing the schedule for the training sessions next week. He was about to finish the list of biases to be covered, when Liza called to remind him that the email invitations need to be sent out Monday to everyone in the company. She is going to make some information posters for the breakroom for the employees who do not have email addresses. Confirmation from the training presenter has just arrived in Casey's email. He replies to the trainer and requests the format that will be used to in the training. The trainer sends Casey the quizzes and worksheets.

Casey calls his supervisor to ask, "What can we do to encourage employees to attend? His supervisor informs Casey that management has arranged for snacks and lunch to be provided for all attendees. Casey sends the information to Liza to include in the posters. Casey closes the files, and sighs in relief.

There's no bias when it comes to facts, and there's no bias when it comes to decency.

Jake Tapper

Chapter Eight: Promote Inclusion

Designing and implementing a training program for the company is not the only step to combating unconscious biases in the workplace. This is a great first step, but the fight against biases is an ongoing battle. Employees come and go, but the work culture must remain positive, healthy, and free of biases. The business must implement policies and processes that ensure every employee feels valued.

Educate

Educating the employees of the company must start at the top of the organizational chain. The entire work culture starts at the top. The executives and management are the leaders of the company and the moral standards to which the employees must hold themselves. Once the management is trained and knowledgeable with the information that was presented on unconscious biases, they can then assist in the training of the employees that they manage. After the leaders of the company are trained, they can then identify possible biases in the workplace, and assist with necessary changes.

Celebrate Differences

One way of establishing and continuing a diverse and inclusive work force is for management to celebrate the differences in people. By highlighting these differences and encouraging participation, employers can also encourage employees to become more involved with other departments and groups.

There are hundreds of ways for an employer to reinforce the positive work culture that the company portrays. Here are just a few ideas:

- Celebrate holidays and other important days for all groups of employees. Recognize the important days for religions such as Islam, Hinduism, etc.

- Give visible recognition for going above and beyond regular duties. Reward the people that wash the dishes in the breakroom to encourage all to participate.

- Check that the reading materials in the lobby are not geared toward a single group of people.

- Schedule international foods day potlucks.

Listen to Employees

Real inclusivity includes listening. Employers that truly listen to the employees are inclusive. Implementing a well-designed anti-discrimination policy is not enough to create a positive work culture. Employers must listen to and understand the behaviors and feelings of the employees. A good starting place is to ask questions of employees, nothing important, just conversation. Listening to the responses and engaging will open the door of communication between management and employees. If an employee feels that the manager listens, they will be more likely to report any workplace issues or violations.

Fortify Anti-Discrimination Policies

Creating policies and programs that encourage anti-biased behavior is a great way to further cement the management's policy maintaining a discrimination free workplace. Here is a list that has been proven effective in the business world today:

- Mentorship programs.

- Rewrite all policies to be non-gendered.

- Intergroup relationship activities.

- Committee to ensure accountability in personnel recruitment.

Departments tend to group together, and are often comprised with little diversity in employees. Programs and activities that are based on intermingling of departments and groups are recommended. It is also recommended to have a group to manage the diversity of the hiring processes, to raise the accountability for the decisions that are being made.

Practical Illustration

Jason has the task of promoting inclusion among the employees and between departments. He knows that this is related to the new anti-bias program and the unconscious bias training that is coming up. He calls Jamie to explain his task and ask her for assistance in brainstorming ideas. She tells him that some of the IT department and the administrative departments feel left out sometimes. This information was gained through an employee survey. Jason thanks Jamie and asks her to forward him a list of ideas later in the week.

Jason gets Jamie's email on Thursday afternoon. She included ideas like celebrating the holidays that are recognized each month. She also suggested a listening class for all management. Jason added these ideas to his list that already included the rewording all of company policy to be non-gender in its references. Jason is proud of the list he and Jamie have complied and forwards it to his manager for approval.

Prejudice wears a variety of hats, none of them becoming.

Kevin Ansbro

Chapter Nine: Benefits

The training has been designed, the program administered, and the non-bias policies are going into action. What are the benefits to these lessons? What differences can a company expect to see in the workplace? Is it worth all the work?

Yes. And not just in saving money in potential lawsuits and penalties for illegal practices in the workplace. The company is going to financially gain in ways that may not be apparent; through a better work culture, lower turnover rates, and more. There are no negative effects to adopting an anti-bias program, only positive outcomes.

Workplace Culture

The simple definition of "workplace culture" is the attitudes, personality, and behaviors of the company and its employees. It is evident in day to day interactions of the employees. It is evident in the policies and programs that the company adheres to. Positive work cultures are all inclusive; employees feel appreciated and listened to when they have concerns to voice.

The way an employer can create a positive work culture is to adopt and follow an anti-bias/anti-discrimination program. Employees are aware of the efforts management has put forth to ensure a safe workplace. A work culture with unconscious biases is full of distrust and negative feelings. However, a workplace culture that is positive and bias free is the ultimate goal for a profitable business.

Ethical

What are ethics? Ethics are defined as the fundamental understanding of the difference between right and wrong. The ethics of a company are based on a system of morals. This system is a combination of policies and programs that when combined is a positive, all-inclusive work culture that actively combats inequality. Policies that focus on technological etiquette, email etiquette, and implicit and explicit biases will enforce the strict ethical work culture that the company wants to broadcast to the world.

It is a well-known fact that bad ethics spread like a cancer through a work force. Once one person cheats on a timecard, another person tries to do it also. A positive work culture encourages good ethics for all employees. A positive work culture makes is easy for ethical employees to report unethical behavior so that is can be stopped.

Financial

Unconscious biases in a workplace can cost a company thousands of dollars. Research has been conducted on the cost of a negative work culture in American companies. Studies have shown that employees that feel that the workplace is biased are almost three times as likely to be disengaged. Estimates show that disengagement from the job costs American businesses over $450 billion per year.

An unbiased work culture can erase this type of disengagement and loss from lack of employee production. It can also attract innovation and forward thinking that can increase the productivity and profitability of a company.

Legal

Legally, there are many different reasons to actively combat biases in the workplaces. For all the unconscious biases that were discussed in this program, there is a regulation or federal provision that prohibits this type of thinking in relation to hiring, benefits, promotions, etc. Allowing unconscious biases to affect the decision making in the day to day operations of a company will result in a negative work culture, and can even lead to legal actions being filed by employees or potential employees. Here are some examples of the federal provisions that can be used against an employer when unconscious biases are involved:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

- Age Discrimination Act of 1967

- Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

- Equal Pay Act of 1963

Practical Illustration

James is the owner of the company and Steve has been his assistant for many years. James is upset over the cost of the Unconscious Bias training. He asks Steve," Why should I pay for the training, pay for the trainer, and give everyone the day off work with pay?" Steve responds, "Do you really want me to answer that? Do you not see the way that unconscious biases can affect your company?" James replies, "Yes, I know, but everything is going so well right now, why stir up trouble where there isn't trouble," Steve says, "Let me give you some examples of how this training can help improve the company, James."

Steve finds the research showing how much a company loses when employees are not engaged at work. He also shows James the many discrimination laws. Steve goes on to list other things like the ethical reasons for conducting this training for the employees. "It is just the right thing to do," Steve tells James. "You are right, as always," James replies.

NOTES

Chapter Ten: Handling Complaints

The organization has a diversity program in place. Policies and processes have been carefully designed and published. All employees and newly hired employees are trained and there are regular educational workshops during the year. Everyone is on board for a more diverse workplace and improved culture to look forward to in the future.

Even if the company has a world class compliance program, there still must be processes in place, in case of a complaint against a company employee. Part of a great program is the knowledge that complaints are taken seriously and confidentially. There needs to be clear and easily understandable steps for handling any complaints involving biases, both for the employer and employee.

Gather Information

The first step to a successful bias investigation is in the information. Sufficient data to determine the path to take in a bias complaint is critical. These processes must be outlined in company policy and followed in each instance. Each complaint must be well documented. The following questions must be asked of the complaining party:

- Who: who is the complaint against?

- What: what occurred or what was said?

- When: when did this incident occur?

- Where: where did the incident occur?

- Witnesses: were there any witnesses?

Regardless of the manner of the interview, whether online, via hotline, or in person, all these questions must be asked as the basis of the case. Other questions could also be asked of the employee such as "Has this happened before?" This is by far not an all-inclusive set of questions for all bias complaints. But it is a list of the most critical questions that must be addressed in the first interview of the employee.

Evaluate Credibility of the Complaint

When the complaint is first received by the appropriate manager, the information must be reviewed for validity. Several questions must be asked of the information to determine if the claim is valid and needs to be further investigated or if other paths of investigation need to be followed. Not all claims can be taken at face value. Often times there are larger issues that need to be uncovered, or possibly no issue at all and this also needs to be properly dealt with, in accordance with company policies and procedures.

There are several tools that can be used to determine the validity of the complaint: Build a timeline of the event to determine if the people involved could have been present at the reported times. Ask an expert or mentor in the field, without disclosing confidential information. Play devil's advocate and try to find the accused's motives, or try and determine if an ulterior motive is possible. Would anyone benefit from a claim such as this one? This shouldn't be the grand inquisition, but it should be a thorough consideration of the claim and its truth.

Interview Those Involved

After the complaint has been reported and information collected and documented; the interviewer must then collect necessary information from all individuals involved in the reported incident. The person who is accused of the bias must be the first spoken to. At this time, the "accused" individual should be encouraged to report any witnesses or individuals present at the time of the incident, and provide any supporting documentation or information. This information should be documented for future review in the investigation.

The interviewer must also speak to each of the witnesses listed by both the victim of the bias and the abuser of the bias. During these interviews it is important to protect both the victim and the accused. Confidentiality is critical to the success of the reporting process.

Take Action Against Offender

The investigation at its conclusion will result in either the need for further action, or no action being taken.

When discipline is necessary, it is critical that the measures taken not be done so with an unconscious bias toward the offender. Favoritism should not be shown when a long time employee is involved, the disciplinary actions cannot be minimized. The same is true for other unconscious biases that were discussed earlier. There are several simple questions that can be asked in regard to the disciplinary actions and what actions are appropriate:

- Is the disciplinary action equal to the level of wrongdoing?

- Is the disciplinary action designed to prevent reoccurrence?

Many companies have policies in place that outline the disciplinary actions that are acceptable and for which offenses these actions are warranted. This however is never an all-inclusive policy for all cases. One way to determine the appropriate disciplinary action is to assign the offense a rating on a scale from one to ten. Then do the same for the disciplinary actions. If the offense was a two, the discipline should be equal, not an eight.

Practical Illustration

Sarah is a team lead and has been Mary's supervisor for many years. Mary came to Sarah with a concern that one of the managers had a bias when awarding a promotion to a co-worker. Sarah referred Mary to Bob, the human resources person that would handle the complaint. Bob collected all the necessary information from Mary: who, what, when, where, and made note of any witnesses to the offense. Bob evaluated the situation and decided that there was merit for concern, and began to investigate the situation.

The next day, Bob interviewed the manager and his assistant to gather the facts of the case. He determined that the person awarded the promotion had a better attendance record than Mary had. Since this was one of the considerations when awarding the promotion, there were no compliance violations, there was no need to discipline anyone.

Bias and impartiality is in the eye of the beholder.

Samuel Johnson

Closing Thoughts

Maria Konnikova - Be perfectly rational and impartial, bias is an inescapable part of what it means to be human.

Barbara Bush - Bias has to be taught. If you hear your parents downgrading women or people of different backgrounds, why, you are going to do that.

Kyle Hill - We tend to accept information that confirms our prior beliefs and ignore or discredit information that does not. This confirmation bias settles over our eyes like distorting spectacles for everything we look at.