



Mitigating Unconscious Bias

What is unconscious bias?

Next time you board a train and are deciding where to sit, listen to your **unconscious bias**. As you cast your eyes around the carriage, you'll be making split second decisions about the people who are sitting there. Decisions based on your own values and beliefs, your previous experiences, the life you have lead, the people you have interacted with. Your brain filters this information, thin-slices the data and helps you make decisions. Without you even realising it. This is your unconscious bias in action.

Unconscious bias sits in the subconscious. It consists of the stories we tell ourselves, the 'facts' we have built up over our lifetime. Unconscious bias is there to help us process information, make decisions, and take actions in a world where we're faced with millions of pieces of information every day.

Carl Jung said, **"As the man is, so will be his ultimate truth." We are what we think.**

In 1995 two professors at Harvard University made the decision to test a theory that our social behaviour is not completely under our conscious control. The Implicit Association Test was born and has gone on to create thousands of pieces of evidence that our social behaviour is often driven by our unconscious bias.



An MIT-University of Chicago study discovered that names can unconsciously impact people's decision making. In sending out a series of CVs, the names were changed to either be 'typically white' or 'typically black'; the 'typically white' CVs received 50% more requests for interviews than those with 'typically black' names.

Why does it matter?

As humans, we are naturally drawn to 'people like us' (this is known as the PLU factor). We tend to have friends like us, work with people like us, and even live in the same streets as people like us. Though the familiarity brings us comfort and helps reduce the feeling of risk, it also means we miss out on the value that difference brings.

In New York, the Center for Talent Innovation carried out a study looking at the impact of diversity in teams. They noted that teams exhibiting both gender and race diversity were 45% more likely to expand their market share over a twelve-month period.

Columbia University studied the effect of gender diversity in top management teams and discovered that where there was female representation in a top team there was an increase of £42 million on average in firm value.

With diversity comes richer thinking, innovation and higher performance. When we spend too much time with 'people like us', we take the risk that we might all start to think along the same lines, and that could be limiting.

How can you mitigate it?

Raise personal awareness of how unconscious bias influences what you say and do.

Think about how you treat people differently and question why that is. For example, in America 60% of corporate CEOs are over six feet tall, but only 15% of the American male population are over six feet tall. Does this reflect the unconscious attributions we give to tall people?

Ask your teams to call each other out when they see unconscious bias in action. It is often easier to observe unconscious bias in others than see it in ourselves. Whose comments in team meetings get overlooked? Who always gets the juicy projects?

If you want to change things as a result of increased awareness, decide how to act differently.

Research from the Chartered Management Institute found that the difference in pay, between men and women doing the same job, ranged from £500 to £10,546 across a range of professions.

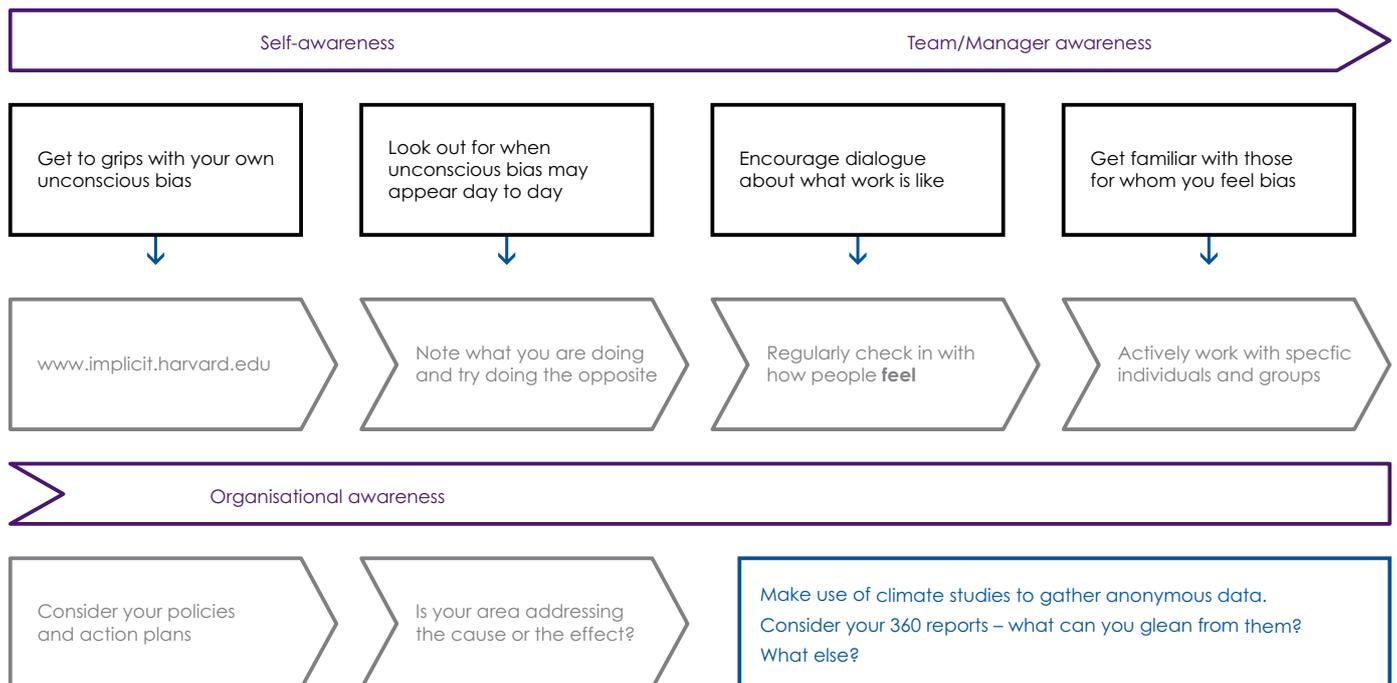


How can we help?

We offer a number of workshops and webinars to help employees become aware of their unconscious bias. We work with teams to help them think through the implications of unconscious bias on day-to-day decision making. We support key policy makers who are responsible for creating change and making it stick. Here are some examples:

Employee education workshops	What is unconscious bias and how can you identify it in yourselves and others? What can you do differently going forward?
Line manager (leadership) workshops	These are similar to employee education workshops but place more focus on specific business risks and issues.
Top team unconscious bias strategy workshops	How does unconscious bias impact your organisational culture? How can you create greater inclusivity, innovate, and improve performance?
Recruitment process review	How does unconscious bias show up in your recruitment process, from advertising through to selection? What can you change and how?

The talentsmoothie Unconscious Bias Approach



A Columbia University study found that in the “college classroom”, instructors call on male students more frequently than female students, ask male students more abstract questions and female students more factual questions, and are less likely to elaborate upon points made by female students.



Find out more

For more information on unconscious bias and how we can help you understand and mitigate it, please contact Justine James on +44 (0)20 7127 4741.



We are talentsmoothie, organisational development consultants

We are experts in Employee Value Proposition (EVP), Employee Engagement, Effective Leadership, Employer Brand and Recruitment, and creating Innovative Workplaces (the changing world of work). Sometimes our work fits into one of these areas. Other projects span them all. From one-off reviews, assessments and workshops to global strategies and large-scale implementations, the talentsmoothie team is ready to tackle any challenge to get you the results you need.

For more detail about how we help organisations succeed, please visit the talentsmoothie website at www.talentsmoothie.com where you can learn more about our work, read client case studies, download our other free Factsheets, Action Sheets and Position Papers, join our mailing list of valued contacts, and get copies of our research reports.

Or if you'd like to talk through anything you've read in this Action Sheet, or any business challenge you're facing right now, please email hey@talentsmoothie.com or phone +44 (0)20 7127 4741. We'd love to hear from you.



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