



One of the most important things you'll do to become an effective leader is also one of the most challenging and that is confronting your biases and doing something about them.

This is really uncomfortable for a lot of people and I'm going to ask you to push through the discomfort because you won't get to the other side if you let that discomfort stop you.

We all like to pretend we don't have biases but we all have them. The first step is admitting it. The second step is becoming aware, and the third step is doing something about it.

We're going to talk about each of those steps in this session.

It's important to remember that bias works both in people's favor and against them. We can have bias for things and we can also have bias against things.

It can seem like if we have bias for something isn't that wonderful because that person gets some perk because of whatever the bias is.

But of course when it comes to bias if somebody gets an advantage that means somebody else is at a disadvantage.

There are different kinds of bias. Most are unconscious, though some of them are conscious and it's really hard to bring to consciousness what is unconscious.

We're going to talk about how we can start doing that.

In addition to unconscious bias we have things like conformity where we like to be part of the group. This happens in workplaces all the time with different cliques of people.

There is a beauty bias. There's this interesting data point where about 15% of the population is over six feet, but 60% of CEOs are over six feet. What's going on there? That's just one example, but we know that people who are considered more attractive get lots of advantages.

Affinity and similarity biases are different technically, but they're similar enough that I grouped them together. They are biases towards people who are like us and we can relate to- same hometown, same college, same sports team, whatever.

Halo and Horn bias are opposite. The Halo is you think somebody can do no wrong and the horn is that person can do no right.

Finally a confirmation bias where we like to think we're right. This shows up a lot in hiring where we make an initial impression of somebody and then we interpret the rest of the interview based on that initial impression.



We do it so that we can confirm what our initial thought was.

You can have biases around anything.

We have protected classes in the workplace because those biases show up a lot but there are also biases around most anything. This list is not meant to be comprehensive. It's just to start to show you that it's more- it certainly includes protected classes, but it's also a lot more than that as well.

They show up everywhere, in our hiring, recruiting, who we give job tasks and responsibilities to, how much work we give, who gets promoted, what gets put on a review, the conversations we have socially, the relationships we build. It shows up everywhere in our work and that's why it's so important to start to confront these, because if you don't confront them and your biases and assumptions are negatively affecting the way that you lead, then it's going to continue to negatively affect the way that you lead.

It's a problem in lots of ways. Outside of the very big problem that it's morally and ethically not okay, in addition to that, it limits your talent pool and underutilizes people's gifts when you don't hire certain groups of people or you don't give them certain opportunities or you don't promote them because you don't think that they're capable or qualified and you assess their work differently.

You also miss out on a level of understanding and perspective when you exclude people from your team, from your job, from your board. It's important to really get as deep an understanding as possible in the work that you do and you will not be able to do that if everybody thinks the same.

When people recognize bias and assumptions this naturally creates low morale and high tension which often leads to low productivity or turnover.

It speaks to your leadership credibility and not in a good way.

It affects people with their mental health and their physical health.

It gives a poor reputation to you and your organization. And of course it can result in lawsuits.

But even if we take lawsuits out of the equation, Gallup has found that workplace bias costs billions of dollars annually in terms of turnover, low productivity and mental health.

It's a big problem across the country, across the world, and we need to do our own little part in our own little corner of the world to start to make it better.

So what can you do about it? The first step is self-awareness and though there



are moments when we can hear those assumptions and those biases pop in if we see a certain name on a resume or we find ourselves making decisions based on generalizations and categorizations where we need to check those things that are popping into our head.

But we're not always able to get to that unconscious piece. That's where some of these other areas come into play. There is a very famous test from Harvard called the implicit association test. You may have taken it before. Take it again. It's really valuable to start to uncover some of those biases that you have.

You also need to be really open to feedback and create that culture on your team where people feel comfortable to let you know when your biases and assumptions are showing up.

You can also do visualization exercises which are good for a lot of things including if you're aware of a bias you have where you think that older people can't do technology as well or whatever then you can do visualization to imagine the opposite of what your assumption is and you start to train your brain to tell itself and believe new stories.

Of course inclusion is at the forefront of this work. In addition to the policies, the representation you have, and the language that you're using.

Gallup also found these practical tips that make a huge impact on helping to eliminate bias in the workplace. The first is to make sure all of your staff have their own mentor or sponsor which helps them get on the same leadership track or promotion track as everybody else.

Creating a speak-up culture where your team feels comfortable to call out bias when they see it.

And finally having diversity in management. So these are huge ways to really positively affect and combat bias in the workplace.

On an individual level as a leader, you can make sure you're always sharing opportunities equally and the credit.

There's our feedback again, open communication, and making sure that you're not the only one who makes the decisions, that you have other input, and you empower your team to be part of that decision-making process.

I know this is hard, uncomfortable work. You have to do it anyway. You have to dig into what is unconscious for you or challenging some of the assumptions and conscious beliefs you have so that you can be a more inclusive leader, you can increase your talent pool, and you can make sure you have a broader understanding and perspective in the work that you do.



So the most important question for you is, how will you work on your own biases to create an inclusive team culture?

Please take the test. I hope you find it really valuable.