[BIAS INTERRUPTERS] *meritocracy now!*

Tools for Hiring & Recruiting

THE CHALLENGE

Matched-resume studies, in which researchers send identical resumes except for one factor (such as the applicant's name or membership in an organization that signals something about their identity) provide objective evidence that bias drives decision making. Despite identical qualifications:

Race/ethnicity: "Jamal" needed eight additional years of experiences to be considered as qualified as "Greg."[1]

Gender: "Jennifer" was offered $4,000 less in starting salary than "John." [2]

Sexual orientation: Holding a leadership position in an LGBTQ organization made a queer woman receive 30% fewer callbacks[3] and a gay man receive 40% fewer callbacks than their heterosexual peers.[4]

Parenthood status: Membership in the Parent-Teacher Association made a mother 79% less likely to be hired than a non-mother and offered $11,000 less in starting salary. [5]

Social class: A candidate that listed elite hobbies: "polo, sailing, and classical music" was 12 times more likely to get a callback than a candidate that listed "pickup socker, country music, and mentoring other first-gen students."[6]

You can't tap the full talent pool unless you control for bias in hiring. To truly see results, you will need to interrupt bias at every stage from the initial job posting to the final offer letter.

THE SOLUTION

1. ***Consider the Metrics***
   Organizations should keep metrics by: 1) individual supervisor; 2) department; 3) location if relevant; and 4) the organization as a whole and:

   - Anonymously track the demography of the candidate pool through the entire hiring process: from the initial pool of candidates considered, to who survives resume review, who gets invited to interview, who survives the interview process, who gets job offers, who accepts those offers, and who doesn't. Break down the demography by under-represented groups: women, people of color, people with disabilities, veterans, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, etc. and pinpoint which stage(s) of the hiring process are disproportionately weeding out candidates from those groups.

   - Track interviewers' reviews and/or recommendations to ensure they are not consistently rating majority candidates higher than others.

COLLECTING DATA
It's very likely that your organization is already tracking applicants through the hiring process, but you will need to pull this data in a way that allows you to analyze the demographic breakdown of the entire hiring funnel.

You are looking for two types of data, that may be stored in different places:

Demographic data of applicants:
Race/Ethnicity : This is likely collected from applicants when they are filling out applications online.
Gender identity : This is likely collected from applicants when they are filling out applications online.

Hiring process data:

Stage of the hiring process: Many organizations break the hiring process into 5 categories:
· Online applicant
· Referral
· Resume Review
· Interview/Skills assessment
· Offer

Other organizations use more specific categories, tracking whether interviews have been scheduled but not yet completed, background check paperwork, or other information that might be relevant. If your organization uses many categories, it will be helpful for you to condense the data to only the 5 above.

Ratings data (if applicable): Some organizations require candidates to be rated using numerical scores or labels (for example, strong hire, do not hire, etc.). If you have ratings data, definitely include it!

INTERPRETING DATA
Tracking your metrics across the hiring funnel will help you pinpoint where to intervene and implement the most impactful tweaks.

Looking at the demographic breakdown of the candidate pool across the hiring funnel will give you a path forward.

Look across the entire process
Is one group increasing its share of the candidate pool in stage after stage? This may mean they are being artificially advantaged (often called the "invisible escalator" for white men).

Changes in the demography of the pool from stage to stage are good indicators that different groups are having different experiences in the hiring process.

Look at the ratings
Compare the ratings of different groups. Are some groups hired with lower average ratings than other groups? If so, they are being held to different standards.

If a group has lower ratings but an ever-increasing portion of the candidate pool, they may be getting an artificial advantage.

If a group has higher ratings but an ever-decreasing proportion of the candidate pool, they may be facing an artificial disadvantage.

Applications and referrals
Compare applications with referrals.

Are some groups artificially advantaged because they are more likely to come into the process through referrals?

Is your original application pool overly homogeneous? If you don't start out with a representative pool, you won't end up with one!

ACTING ON DATA
Depending on the pattern(s) you see in the pre-intervention data, you will choose one or more areas of focus for your structural intervention:

· Applications
· Referral hiring
· Resume review
· Interviews/skills assessments

We have a curated drop-down menu of Bias Interrupters below for each area of focus – you should choose which options are best for your organization. Many organizations are drawn to particular strategies because they fit well with other initiatives or the company culture.

INTERPRETING POST-INTERVENTION DATA
After implementing your chosen interventions, you will want to examine the impact of your changes. There are a few key indicators you should be looking for:

Changes to the new applicant or referral pools: Compare your pre-intervention results to the post-intervention results. Are you closer to your goals? Where might you still need to act?

More level playing field across stages: Compare your pre-intervention results to the post-intervention results.

Have the differences between groups diminished? That is a good indicator that your intervention was impactful.

Is your hiring funnel showing the same issues as before? That is a good indicator that you need to add more bias interrupters.

Is your hiring funnel showing different issues than before? The changes you made may have pushed problems to a different stage of the hiring funnel. Interrupting bias is an iterative process – you may need to make several rounds of changes.

Consider the menu of options below, and decide whether you want to add in more bias interrupters to different parts of the hiring process.

Ratings: Compare your pre-intervention results to the post-intervention results.

Are you closer to equal ratings for different groups at each stage? That is a good indicator that your intervention was impactful.

Are you seeing the same issues as before? That is a good indicator that you need to add more bias interrupters.

Are you seeing more, or different issues than before? The changes you made may have pushed problems to a different stage of the hiring funnel. Interrupting bias is an iterative process – you may need to make several rounds of changes.

Consider the menu of options below, and decide whether you want to add in more bias interrupters to different parts of the hiring process.

2. ***Empower people involved in the hiring process to spot and interrupt bias*** by using our [Identifying Bias in Hiring Guide](#). Read and distribute.

3. **Appoint Bias Interrupters** — HR professionals or team members trained to spot bias, and involve them at every step of the hiring process.

4. **Go through the menu below** to learn more about how to interrupt bias during each step of the hiring process.

APPLICATIONS
The application process is the first level of the hiring process. Working to ensure you have a representative candidate pool in the application process will help your organization build a strong pipeline of top talent. Below are a few strategies to help encourage that in an applicant pool.

1. Insist on a representative pool

If the initial pool is largely homogenous, you might end up giving an artificial advantage to one group. In one study, the odds of hiring a woman were 79 times greater if there were at least two women in the finalist pool; the odds of hiring a person of color were 194 times greater.[7]

2. Tap diverse networks

If your existing organization is largely homogenous, hiring from your current employees' social networks will replicate that homogeneity. Instead, tap into diverse networks. Identify job fairs, affinity networks, conferences and training programs that are aimed at historically excluded communities in your field and send recruiters.

3. Getting the word out

Let people know that your company is a great place to work. One company offers public talks by women at their company and writes blog posts, and social media articles highlighting the women who work there. If you don't currently have the representation to create that kind of content, face it head on with an article about your organization's interest in hiring more people of color, women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, first-generation professionals— and your development plan to support new hires.

4. Change the wording of your job postings

Take another look at your job ads to make sure you are asking for what you really want.

1) **Encourage applicants to apply even if they don't meet 100% of the criteria** – research has found that men tend to apply when they meet only 60% of the criteria whereas women only apply if they meet 100%.[8]

2) **Select job-relevant criteria.** Sometimes job ads include requirements that aren't really requirements at all – such as desk jobs that require applicants to be able to lift 25 pounds. This kind of language may weed out applicants with disabilities.

3) **Choose your words thoughtfully.** Using masculine-coded words like "leader" and "competitive" will tend to reduce the number of women who apply;[9] using words like "responsible" and "conscientious" will attract more women, and men too. Research shows that gender-neutral job postings result in more applications overall. [10] Tech alternatives (see: Textio or the SAP Job Analyzer for Recruiting) [11] can help you craft job postings that ensure you attract top talent without discouraging women.

4) **Avoid making statements about innate abilities**. Gender stereotypes about "innate" cognitive abilities emerge early with research showing that girls stay away from games designed for "really, really, smart" people. [12] This may also extend to terms like "analytical mindset", more stereotypically associated with men than women.

5) **Review job ads for extreme language** like "customer-obsessed" or "aggressive expectations." It may be best to avoid using "extreme" language. Given equal performance on average, men are more likely than women to be overconfident about their performance and to self-promote more than women. [13]

6) **Add information about family leave policies to job ads**. This simple fix could help draw in a wider pool of applicants.

7) **List salary ranges.** Pay transparency can increase a company's number of applicants. Asking applicants for their salary expectations can perpetuate pay discrimination from job to job. Women also tend to ask for lower salaries than their male counterparts, and women and minorities fear negotiation backlash to a greater extent than their white, male peers. If negotiation is expected, make that clear to candidates upfront.

REFERRAL HIRING

Referrals present opportunities if done thoughtfully, but substantial risks if done incorrectly. Below are a few ideas to consider when utilizing referral hiring.

Opportunities

- **Tap diverse networks**
  Tapping into diverse networks through job fairs, affinity networks, conferences and training programs can help you reach qualified applicants that are not as well connected.

- **Work with recruitment partners**
  Finding recruitment partners that specialize in matching candidates from various groups with companies can help with the finding and recruitment of candidates. Additionally, these partners may be able to provide support for promoting inclusive hiring efforts more generally. [14]

- **Create a strong pool**
  Having a pool of well-qualified leads means you won't have to spend as much time recruiting when a new position opens up. [15]

- **Better retention rate**
  Referred employees tend to stick with the organization for longer. One study found that 46% of referrals are retained at the one-year mark, compared to 33% from career sites.

Risks

- **Replicating or magnifying current homogeneity**
  If your existing organization is largely homogenous, hiring from your current employees' social networks will replicate that homogeneity. One study showed that "women and racial minorities may be at a disadvantage specifically because they are less likely to have networks upon entry into the organization." [16]

  To head off this risk, keep careful metrics of the demography of your referrals pool. Make sure the pool does not provide an artificial advantage to any one group. If it does, take action quickly to change things.

- **Applying looser standards to referrals**
  Since referrals are entering the system in a different way than other candidates, it is important to make sure you have a standardized review process. Referred candidates should meet the same job-related criteria as all other applicants. Make sure you're not giving a pass to these candidates just because they already know someone in the organization.

RESUME REVIEW

When recruiters are reviewing resumes, it helps to have objective metrics that they can rely on to pick out the top candidates for each role. Here are some tips for setting those metrics:

1. **Distribute the [Identifying Bias in Hiring Guide](#)**
   Before resumes are reviewed, have reviewers read our guide so that they are aware of the common forms of bias that can affect the hiring process.

2. **Pre-commit to what's important—and require accountability**
   Pre-commit in writing to what qualifications are important, both in entry-level and in lateral hiring. When qualifications are waived for a specific candidate, require an explanation of why they are no longer important—and keep track to see if there's a pattern among waiver recipients.[17]

3. **Ensure resumes are graded on the same scale**
   Establish clear grading rubrics and ensure that everyone grades on the same scale. Consider having each resume reviewed by two different managers and averaging the score.

4. **Redact extra-curricular activities from resumes**
   Including extra-curricular activities on resumes can artificially disadvantage first-generation professionals. As mentioned above, one study found that law firms were less likely to hire a candidate whose interests included "country music" and "pick-up soccer" rather than "classical music" and "sailing"—even though the work and educational experience was exactly the same.[18] Because most people aren't as aware of class-based bias, communicate why you are removing extracurricular activities from resumes.

5. **Don't count resume gaps as an automatic negative**
   Don't count "gaps in a resume" as an automatic negative. Instead, give the candidates an opportunity to explain gaps by asking about them directly during the interview stage.[19] There are many, many reasons people may take time off from paid work (including to care for children or elderly parents or to take care of their own health). Don't infer that if someone has taken time off for family caregiving responsibilities that they will be less committed to the job they are applying for now.

6. **Consider candidates from multi-tier schools**
   Don't limit your search to candidates from Ivy League and other top-tier schools. Using graduation from a narrow range of elite schools as a proxy for intelligence and future success disadvantages first-generation students, the majority of whom are people of color.[20] Studies show that top students from lower ranked schools are often just as successful.[21] Whenever possible, use skills tests to gauge qualification and preparedness for the role.

7. **Try using "blind auditions"** where the evaluators don't know who they are reviewing. If women and candidates of color are dropping out of the pool at the resume review stage, consider removing names or other demographic-signaling info from resumes before review. This way, candidates can be evaluated based solely on their qualifications.

INTERVIEWS
During the interview process, clear rubrics and rating scales are essential to make sure all candidates are receiving fair reviews. Below are a few strategies to help structure an equitable interview process.

To understand the research and rationale behind the suggested bias interrupters, read our [Identifying Bias in Hiring Guide](#) which summarizes numerous studies.

1) **Distribute this** [interview toolkit](#) **to everyone involved in your interview process.** The law firm Ice Miller LLP created this [Attorney Interview toolkit](#) to interrupt common forms of bias in their interview process. The toolkit equips interviewers with materials to evaluate candidates based on their knowledge, skills and abilities pertaining to the position and minimizes the risks of unexamined bias influencing their decision-making. This toolkit sets interviewers up for success because it determines consistent criteria upon which to evaluate candidates in advance. The rubrics ensure that every person is rated on the same scale.

2) **Conduct interviews using an interview rubric.** A rubric clearly defines what a "good" candidate is, helping to standardize scoring for each interviewee and reduce potential bias. In contrast to a structured interview, unstructured interviews are "among the worst predictors of actual on-the-job performance." [22]

3) **Develop a consistent rating scale and discount outliers.** Candidate's answers (or skills-based assessments) should be rated on a consistent scale and backed up by evidence. Average the scores granted on each relevant criterion and discount outliers. [23]

4) **Use structured interviews.** Ask the same list of questions to every person who is interviewed. Ask questions that are directly relevant to the job the candidate is applying for. [24]

5) **Ask performance-based questions & use skills-based assessments.** Performance-based questions ("tell me about a time you had too many things to do and had to prioritize") provide concrete information about job-relevant skills. [25] If applicable, ask candidates to take a skills-based assessment. For example, if part of the job is analyzing data sets and making recommendations, ask the candidate to do that.

6) **Try behavioral interviewing.** [26] Ask questions that reveal how candidates have dealt with prior work experiences, as research shows that structured behavioral interviews can more accurately predict the future performance of a candidate than unstructured interviews. [27] Instead of asking, "How do you deal with problems with your manager?" ask them to "Describe a time you had a conflict at work with your manager and how you handled it." When evaluating answers, a good model to follow is the STAR[28] model: the candidate should describe the Situation they faced, the Task that they had to handle, the Action they took to deal with the situation, and the Result.

7) **If "culture fit" is a criterion for hiring, provide a specific definition.** Culture fit can be important but when it's misused, it can disadvantage people of color, first-generation professionals, and women. [29] Culture fit should not mean the "lunch test" (who you would like to have lunch with.) Instead, make it clear what the hiring criteria is to evaluators and candidates. One good example of a work-relevant definition of culture fit is "Googleyness," which Laszlo Block, Google's former SVP of People Operations defined as "Attributes like enjoying fun (who doesn't), a certain dose of intellectual humility (it's hard to learn if you can't admit that you might be wrong), a strong measure of conscientiousness (we want owners, not employees), comfort with ambiguity (we don't know how our business will evolve, and navigating Google internally requires dealing with a lot of ambiguity), and evidence that you've taken some courageous or interesting paths in your life." [30]

8) **Address resume gaps head on.** Give candidates an opportunity to explain gaps by asking about it explicitly during the interview stage. Women fare better in interviews if they are able to provide information upfront, rather than having to avoid the issue.

9) **Send a memo to candidates prior to their interview detailing expectations.** Develop an interview protocol sheet that explains to candidates what is expected from them during an interview. This can level the playing field for first-generation professionals, Asian Americans, women, and introverts — groups that are more likely to feel pressure to be modest or self-effacing. Setting expectations clearly allows them to make the best case for themselves.
Here's a [sample memo](#) as well as a checklist of what to include:
   - Δ Outline the interview process with as many details as possible. If you're planning on giving them a skills assessment, say so. If it's not clear in the assessment instructions, let them know what you're looking to learn from the assessment – "We will be evaluating your ability to use Adobe Creative Suite by asking you to make social media graphic for a fictional event."
   - Δ Qualities your organization values because they better the work environment. Think: "culture fit."
   - Δ Skill sets required for the position.
   - Δ Any additional qualifications your hiring team thinks are important, cross check with your interview evaluation form.

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BIAS INTERRUPTERS — *meritocracy now!*

BIAS INTERRUPTERS FOR HIRING & RECRUITING
Identifying Bias in Hiring Guide

The five patterns below describe *tendencies not absolutes.* Here's what to watch out for:

Prove-It-Again! ("PIA") — Groups stereotyped as less competent often have to prove themselves over and over. "PIA groups" include women, people of color, individuals with disabilities,[1] members of the LGBTQIA+ community,[2] older employees,[3] and first-generation professionals.[4]

1. ***Higher standards.*** Despite identical resumes, a candidate who listed elite interests like tennis received 12 times more callbacks than one who signaled he was a first-gen professional[5]; "Jamal" needed eight additional years of experience to be considered as qualified as "Greg",[6] and "Jennifer" was offered $4,000 less in starting salary than "John."[7] A queer woman received 30% fewer callbacks than a straight woman[8] and a gay men had to apply to 5 more jobs than a straight man to receive a positive response.[9]

2. ***"He'll go far;" "She's not ready."*** The dominant group* tends to be judged on their potential, whereas PIA groups tend to be judged on what they have already accomplished.[10]

3. ***Elite school bias.*** Over-reliance on elite educational credentials hurts first-generation professionals and candidates of color, who are more likely to attend schools close to home with more modest reputations.[11] Education shouldn't be used as a proxy for intelligence: top students from lower ranked schools are often as successful as students from elite schools.[12]

4. ***PIA groups get horns; others a halo.*** Horns=one weakness generalized into an overall negative rating. Halo=one strength generalized into a global positive rating.[13]

5. ***"We applied the rule—until we didn't."*** Objective requirements often are applied rigorously to PIA groups—but leniently (or waived entirely) for the dominant group.[14] This means that some groups are left out: for example, desk jobs that require applicants to be able to lift 25 pounds may weed out employees with disabilities.[15]

6. ***Can only superstars survive?*** Superstars often escape PIA problems that affect others of their group.[16]

Tightrope ("TR") — A narrower range of workplace behavior is considered socially acceptable from women[17], people of color[18], and members of the LGBTQIA+ community[19] ("TR groups"). First-generation professionals and modest or introverted men can face Tightrope problems, too.

1. ***Leader or worker bee?*** TR groups face pressure to be "worker bees" who work hard and are undemanding...but if they comply, they lack "leadership potential."[20]

2. ***Modest, likeable, not ambitious.*** Prescriptive stereotypes create pressures on women to be modest, mild-mannered team players. "Ambitious" is not a compliment for women and "niceness" may be optional for men but required of women.[21]

3. ***Direct and assertive—or angry and abrasive?*** Behavior seen as admirably direct, competitive, and assertive in the dominant group may be seen as inappropriate in TR groups — "tactless," "selfish," "difficult." Anger that's accepted from the dominant group may be seen as inappropriate in TR groups.[22]

4. ***"She's a prima donna"; "He knows his own worth."*** Self-promotion may be seen as off-putting in TR groups. Modest men may encounter bias that reflect assumptions about how "real men" should behave. Also, strong modesty norms can make first-generation professionals, people of Asian descent, and women uncomfortable with self-promotion.[23]

5. ***LGBTQIA+ employees*** may be stereotyped as "too feminine," "too masculine," or just "too gay."[24] These kinds of judgement signal illegal discrimination under federal and state law.

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* Who is the dominant group in your workplace? Look at which group predominates in the company's top positions.

The Parental Wall can affect parents regardless of gender—as well as employees without children.

1. *"He has a family to support."* Fathers face expectations that they will not—or should not—take time off for caregiving, or that they are—or should be—sole breadwinners. They may be seen as deserving more pay because of their presumed family role.[25]
2. *"Gaps in her resume."* People take time off for many reasons. Be consistent. If you don't penalize for military service, don't do so for taking time off for children either.[26]
3. *"Her priorities lie elsewhere" (or should!).* Mothers are stereotyped as less competent and committed. In one matched-resume study, a mother was 79% less likely to be hired than an identical candidate without children.[27]
4. *"I worry about her children."* Mothers who work long hours tend to be disliked and held to higher performance standards. Taxing jobs may be withheld on the assumption that mothers will not—or should not—want them.[28]
5. *"No life."* Employees without children may face the assumption that they can always pick up the slack because they have "no life."

Tug of War — Bias against a group can create conflict within that group.[29]

1. *Tokenism.* It's important to make sure there is more than just one "token" member of a given group in the applicant pool.
2. *Favoritism threat.* Research shows that people from certain groups feel they can't support applicants of their own group without being accused of favoritism.[30]
3. *Passthroughs. PIA:* Research shows that people from certain groups may hold members of their own groups to higher standards because, "That's what it takes to succeed here." *Tightrope:* Women or LGBTQIA+ employees may fault each other for being too masculine—or too feminine. People of color may fault each other for being "too white"—or not "white" enough.[31] *Parental wall:* Parents may fault each other for handling parenthood wrong—taking too much time off or too little.[32]

Racial Stereotypes — People of Asian descent are often stereotyped as passive and lacking in social skills; Black people as angry or too aggressive; Latino/a people as hotheaded or emotional.[33] Racial stereotypes can impact whether someone is seen as a good match for a given role – set up systems to ensure that you consider all eligible candidates for any role.

Ten Powerful Bias Interrupters
1. Decide in advance what factors are important for the job.
2. Give each candidate a separate rating for each factor, then average the ratings to identify the highest ranked candidates.
3. Keep track of referrals; if one group predominates, reach out proactively to other groups.
4. Hire candidates from multiple tiers of schools, not just elite institutions.
5. Make sure to give everyone—or no one—the benefit of the doubt.
6. If you waive job requirements, do so consistently and require an explanation.
7. Don't insist on likeability, modesty, or deference from some but not others.
8. Don't make assumptions about what mothers—or fathers—want or are able to do, and don't count "gaps in a resume" against someone without a good reason for doing so.
9. Don't use "culture fit" without a clear definition of specific work-relevant qualities—and keep track to ensure such concepts aren't artificially advantaging one group.
10. Hand out this guide so people know what bias looks like.

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