



How Employers Can Address Bias in the Student Recruitment Process to Attract Top Talent

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Brainstorm #1: Bias Challenges

- What is your top challenge related to bias in your recruitment process? And what do you hope to get out of the talk today?

For example:

- Lack of acknowledgement about a bias issue
- Lack of time/money to invest in revamping recruitment processes
- Investment has been made but still not happy with results
- Talk to your neighbours...

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Cassels Case Study



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Thread

Hadiya Roderique @hadiyaroderique

Be on the look out for firms that ask good behavioural questions focusing on whether you possess the skills, abilities, and organizational values required for the job. They are more likely to be doing other things right later on in your time at the firm.

11:02 AM - Mar 2, 2021 - Twitter Web App

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Making the Business Case to Hire Outside Expertise

1. Identify the problem
2. Analyze the problem
3. Suggest a solution
4. Address cost/benefits
5. Address implementation timeline

- Modified from Grammarly Business, "How to Write a Business Case: Tips, Tricks, and Templates"

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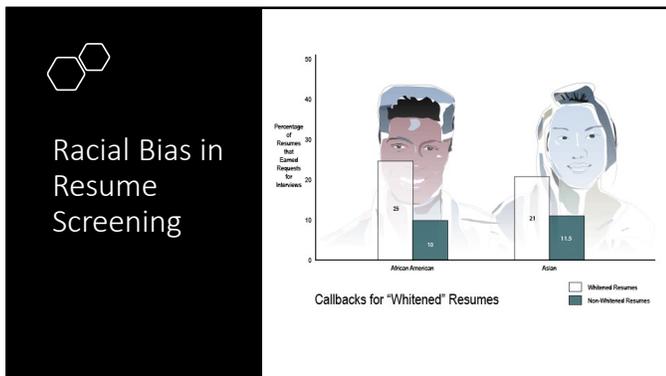
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Racial Bias in Resume Screening

- 5000 resumes sent – Black and white names.
 - Emily, Carrie, Brad, Greg
 - Aisha, Lakisha, Jamal, Tyrone
- **White resumes received 50% more callbacks.**
- **Jamal needed 8 years more experience to get the same callback rate as Greg.**

• Source: Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004).

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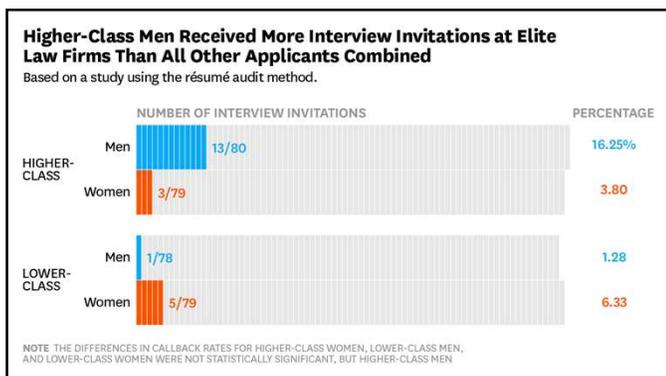
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Class Bias in Resume Screening

- Applications from fictitious students at selective but non-elite law schools.
- 316 law firms, 14 cities.
- Randomly assigned signals of class background and gender to otherwise identical resumes.
 - Sailing vs Track
 - Classical vs Country

• Source: Rivera & Tilcsik (2016)

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Changing Systems – Interrupting Bias

Approach

- In depth review of:
 - All written materials and communications sent regarding hiring
 - All training sessions modules
 - Interviews with student recruitment team
 - Interviews with others who conduct interviews
 - Academic literature on hiring biases

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Changing Systems – Interrupting Bias

Report

- In depth assessment of the student hiring process, from application and advertising to eventual offers
- At each step, described:
 - How bias can creep in and why
 - Bias risks
 - Recommendations of new approaches to debias or minimize bias

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Changing Systems – Interrupting Bias

Sample recommendations

- Adjust your new hire competencies.
- Update your recruiting website materials to communicate the competencies to prospective students.
- Establish clearer criteria and rubrics for interviews.

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Brainstorm #2: Reflection

With Dr. Roderique's studies in mind, are there changes you could make to your recruitment process? And could you anticipate resistance to these changes?

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Implementing Change

1. Evaluated what could be changed now
2. Strategize how to get buy in
3. Created a communication plan
4. Reflected on outcomes

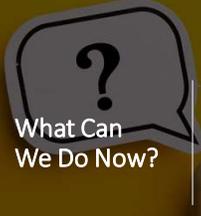
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What Can We Do Now?

It's May 2021...



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What Can We Do Now?

What is within our control?
+
What will have the biggest impact?

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What Can We Do Now?

1. Adjust our new hire competencies
2. Update our website to better communicate those competencies to prospective students
3. Establish clearer criteria and rubrics for interviews
4. Update standardized questions to make them more useful
5. Enhance interviewer training

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Getting Buy-in

Created a subcommittee

- National representation
- Practice group representation
- Associate and Partner representation
- Diverse representation

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What We Created

 <p>TEAM ORIENTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values team success over personal success • Willing to play different roles on a team • Collaborative in approach <p>SKILLS & BEHAVIOURS: Respect for others, integrity, reliable, accountable</p>	 <p>ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing to step outside comfort zone • Can operate with uncertainty • Looks for opportunities to start or grow initiatives <p>SKILLS & BEHAVIOURS: Proactive, resilient, adaptable</p>
 <p>SERVICE FOCUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on the need of clients/customers • Looks for opportunities to surpass expectations • Ability to balance competing demands <p>SKILLS & BEHAVIOURS: Detail oriented, organized, hardworking</p>	 <p>PROBLEM SOLVER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies potential solutions • Approaches challenges analytically • Leverages resources <p>SKILLS & BEHAVIOURS: Creative, sound judgement, strong communication skills (oral & written)</p>

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Getting Buy-in Firmwide

Quality Control

- Feedback from Student Committees
- Feedback from Senior Leadership
- Tested questions on current students

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Communicating to the Firm

Enhanced Lawyer Training

- Mandatory for all lawyers who participate in recruitment
- Heavy focus on unconscious bias
- Enhanced
 - What are the competencies
 - Questions lawyers should be using
 - Examples of how unconscious bias can show up when assessing competencies

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Communicating to the Student Committees

Enhanced Student Committee Training

- Every candidate is asked the standard questions by a member of the Student Committee
- Every candidate who has made it to the end of the process has met at least 4 Student Committee members
- Key decision makers in the process need to be competency experts and hyper attuned to unconscious bias

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Communicating to Interviewers

Changed the interview feedback

- Each stage of the process has a different tool to assess the competencies
- Non-student committee members given the competencies and asked to check off the components
- Student committee members feedback weighted significantly more in the decision making process

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Communicating to Students

We put the information everywhere!

- All the competencies & elements on our main student webpage
- Talked about competencies based approach at EVERY student event
- Students & Student Committee members highlighted it whenever they spoke with prospective students

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Reflections

The Good!

1. Direct impact on decision making at all stages
2. Provide students with meaningful feedback
3. Easy buy-in
4. Decisions were easier

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Reflections

The Interesting...

Women advanced disproportionately forward at every stage of the process

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What's Next

- Tackling process-wide issues
- Implementing more difficult changes

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