

Diversity and Inclusion: Improving Practices to Hire and Retain Top Talent

By Indeed Editorial Team

When we talk about diversity in the workplace, we often think in terms of demographics. Do women make up a certain percentage of your company's leadership? Are you recruiting more candidates from underrepresented backgrounds than in the past?

A diverse workforce is one in which people of all genders, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, ages, abilities and more feel welcome, but "diversity" and "inclusion" are more than just criteria to be met. These are critical elements of the employee experience that can also make companies more innovative and successful.

If diversity goes beyond simply having employees of different backgrounds, how can you truly make hiring more inclusive? We've got some suggestions for how to incorporate diversity and inclusion into recruiting and facilitate positive workplace experiences.

Partner with outside organizations to meet new candidates

If you want a more diverse workforce than you have now, you're going to have to try something different. While it may be tempting to rely on the same sourcing strategy that has worked for you in the past, this may ultimately be limiting your company's ability to recruit a larger — and more diverse — pool of candidates. Partnering with organisations in your industry that represent people of diverse backgrounds is a great way to discover candidates you may never have met otherwise.

3 tips for making your job descriptions more inclusive

The language you use in job descriptions can be losing you top talent. In fact, a Harvard University study found that **women were less likely to believe they were fit for a certain role when the description used words associated with male stereotypes**. Reevaluating every job description might seem overwhelming, but a few small steps can make a big difference in attracting diverse candidates:

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Use online tools to decode job descriptions.
There are a variety of online tools available — such as **Textio** and **Gender Decoder** — that detect bias in job descriptions. These tools are helpful for identifying words or phrases that may be limiting your company's ability to recruit a diverse talent pool.
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Use gender-neutral words.
Certain words, such as "decisive" and "dominant," **are associated with masculinity**. Meanwhile, words such as "interpersonal" and "support" are **associated with being feminine**. Using these gender-coded terms can impact whether a job seeker feels they belong at your company — and may keep top candidates from applying.
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State your company's inclusive benefits.
Don't make applicants go out of their way to discover inclusive perks your company offers — list benefits such as paid parental leave or tuition reimbursement programs clearly in your postings.

Company Spotlight

Diversity and Inclusion is about creating an environment where employees can be their true selves and be accepted and respected for who they are.

Software consultancy organization Thoughtworks, has made strides in LGBTQI+ inclusion at the workplace. They have an initiative called "Interning with Pride", a 5-month technical training program for LGBTQI+ interns, which builds skills through the industry experience of working on a real-life project hands-on. Some of the interns of this program have also become full-time employees as a result.

They have also set up an LGBTQ+ council called "MITRA Collective", which organizes events, conducts workshops & awareness campaigns (both internally and externally), and partners with non-profits for the cause.

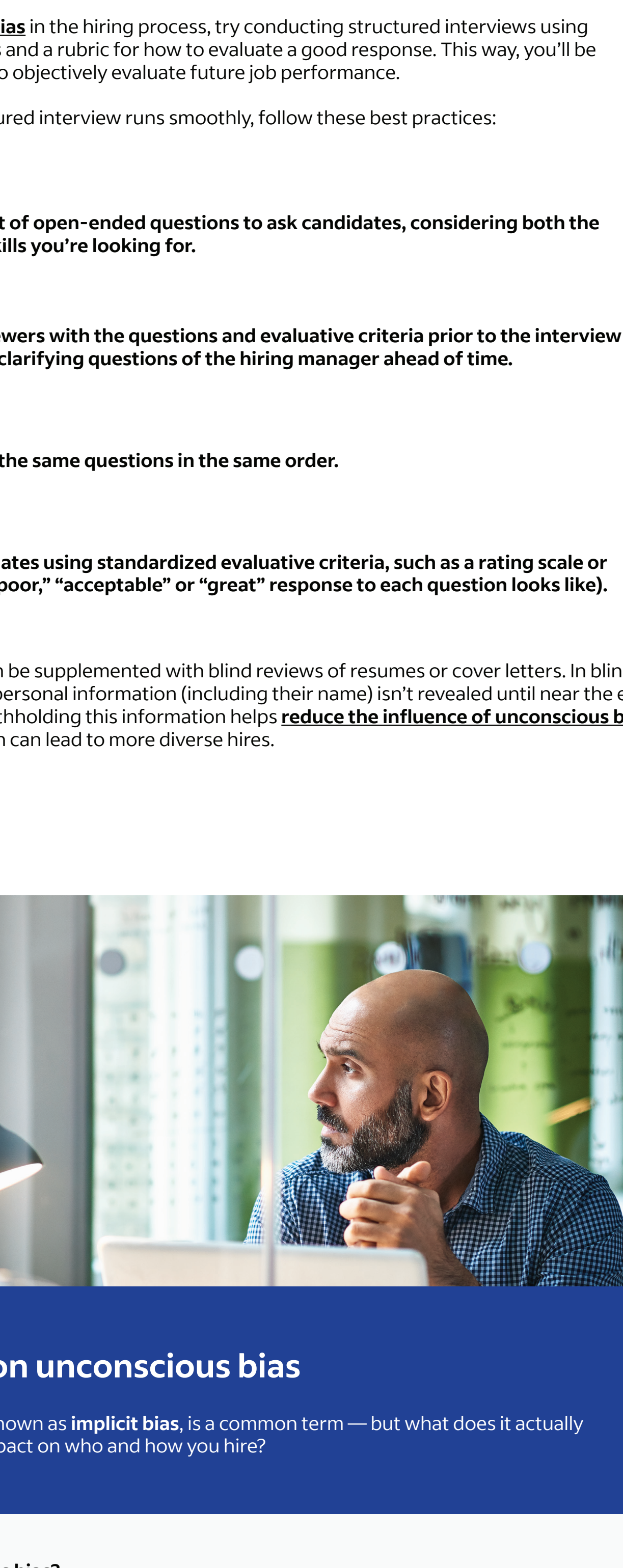
Source: [ThoughtWorks, Interning with Pride](#).

Use inclusive interview panels to make candidates more comfortable and increase hiring

Throughout the recruiting process, much of the focus is external: it's about getting the right candidates to the table. But equally important is **putting the right internal people on the other side of that table** and ensuring you have the right interview structure in place to counter bias.

Interview panels are one way to create an environment that highlights the diverse backgrounds and experiences of both candidates and employees. In a traditional interview process, candidates may only meet one or two people from your company. By allowing a candidate to interact with a whole panel of employees of different ages, genders, education levels and professional backgrounds, there is a greater chance they'll meet someone they identify with.

The more they can see themselves working at your company, the greater your chances of hiring more diverse candidates. In fact, **74% of job seekers in India say working at a company that prioritizes diversity and inclusion is very or extremely important to them.**¹



For instance, in 2014 Intel began requiring that their interview panels include at least two women and/or underrepresented minorities. Within two years of implementing this, the percentage of new hires who were women or people of color **increased by 13%** (from 32% to 45%). It is unreasonable to put the onus of diversity success solely on the candidate because it takes the organization off the hook. It has to really be a parallel effort.

“Our (not so) secret sauce - making Godrej representative of our diverse, global consumers. We are building diversity in different ways - through businesses in new geographies, inclusive stances on gender and LGBT+ rights, and hiring for future-ready skills. Rather than narrowing the definition of inclusion, we are broadening it. Our message to the world is that we want to hire all kinds of people and we want to enable them to bring their 'whole selves' to Godrej.”

Nisaba Godrej
Chairperson and Managing Director Godrej Consumer Products

Use interview techniques designed to reduce unconscious bias

Stereotypes can play out in ways you're not even aware of. That's why a gut instinct isn't always reliable — it's often being influenced by unconscious bias.

For example, if you have a good feeling about a candidate, it may be because they're similar to you. Perhaps you're from the same city or studied the same thing in school. Ultimately, what may seem like a great personal connection doesn't always translate to high job performance.

To **reduce unconscious bias** in the hiring process, try conducting structured interviews using predetermined questions and a rubric for how to evaluate a good response. This way, you'll be equipped with the tools to objectively evaluate future job performance.

To make sure your structured interview runs smoothly, follow these best practices:

- Prepare a set list of open-ended questions to ask candidates, considering both the hard and soft skills you're looking for.**
- Provide interviewers with the questions and evaluative criteria prior to the interview so they can ask clarifying questions of the hiring manager ahead of time.**
- Ask candidates the same questions in the same order.**
- Evaluate candidates using standardized evaluative criteria, such as a rating scale or rubric (what a "poor," "acceptable" or "great" response to each question looks like).**

Structured interviews can be supplemented with blind reviews of resumes or cover letters. In blind reviews, the candidate's personal information (including their name) isn't revealed until near the end of the selection process. Withholding this information helps **reduce the influence of unconscious bias** on the hiring manager, which can lead to more diverse hires.

Crash course on unconscious bias

Unconscious bias, also known as **implicit bias**, is a common term — but what does it actually mean, and what is the impact on who and how you hire?

What is unconscious bias?

Unconscious bias is a social stereotype that a person holds, outside of their own awareness, about another person or group. Oftentimes, unconscious biases contradict conscious beliefs and values.

How does unconscious bias play out in our brains?

These biases play out **automatically**, without your explicit attention or effort. Since your **brain takes in more information** than it can handle, it often relies on stereotypes — quick judgments based on previous experiences — to make decisions.

For example, consider this riddle: "A father and son are in a horrible car crash that kills the dad. The son is rushed to the hospital; just as he's about to go under the knife, the surgeon says, 'I can't operate — that boy is my son!' Explain."

If you said, "The doctor is the boy's mother," you are among only **15% of adults who were able to imagine a female doctor in that scenario**.

How is unconscious bias reflected in hiring?

There are certain situations where it's harder to fight unconscious bias than others, such as when you're in a time crunch to make a hire or are juggling several different candidates at once.

Unconscious bias can take many forms, including confirmation bias and preexisting similarity bias. Confirmation bias is when you look for information that supports your preexisting beliefs. If you've made the implicit judgment that a candidate is the perfect fit for your role based on information from their resume or their appearance, you may be more likely to look for information during the hiring process that supports this.

Meanwhile, personal similarity bias is when you unconsciously view people who are like you more favorably than people who aren't. For example, if a candidate looks like you, went to the same school or likes the same sports team, you may be more likely to rate them favorably than if you didn't have any of these attributes in common, regardless of how qualified they are for your role.

How can we combat unconscious bias in hiring?

Everyone has unconscious biases, but this doesn't mean that you can't take active steps to combat them. To limit the role of unconscious bias in your company's hiring process, consider implementing:

Unconscious bias training, which enlists professional trainers to point out blind spots that are hard to see on your own. At the University of Wisconsin, departments that participated in unconscious bias training increased the percentage of women hired from **33% to 47%**.

Blind resume reviews, where a candidate's name, gender, graduation year and other personal information is not revealed until the end of the interview process.

Structured interviews with predetermined questions and criteria so candidates are evaluated on the same standards.

Inclusive interview panels with interviewees of different backgrounds and from different roles.

Work-sample or skills tests, where candidates complete a task similar to what they'd do on the job.

Test a candidate's ability instead of relying on their past experience

One of the most common measures for evaluating future job performance is a candidate's past experience. Many recruiters fall into the trap of thinking a candidate must check off certain boxes to be qualified for a job.

Rather than defaulting to educational requirements, it turns out that the best way to predict job performance is to **put candidates to the test**. One way to do this is through work samples. Asking candidates to complete tasks similar to the ones they would be expected to do on the job, then reviewing their work without their names attached, is a great way to see their work quality firsthand and avoid bias or preference.

Another approach is measuring their general cognitive ability in conjunction with a structured interview or with an **integrity test** — a personality test that indicates a candidate's tendency to be dependable, honest and trustworthy. General cognitive ability (also known as general intelligence) can be measured using commercially available tests.

Does the job need a college degree or just relevant skills?

When internal research showed a degree wasn't necessary for success in more than 3,000 roles, Indeed eliminated that degree requirement.

Focus on inclusion: Supporting employees after the hire

There are countless stories of employees from underrepresented communities being drawn to a company for its diversity efforts — only to later discover that they aren't supported on the job.

Inclusive hiring isn't only about what happens before a candidate walks through the door. Perhaps more importantly, it's about creating an environment to support people after the hire — embedding diversity in your company culture, not just using it as a talking point. Not only is this the right thing to do, it's also expensive and time-consuming to replace an employee, and no one wants to lose top talent.

To create an environment where employees feel at home — and want to stay — diversity must be a core value, embodied at every level of your organization. On a tactical level, consider implementing practices that encourage inclusive experiences for employees, such as **employee resource groups** (ERGs) — employee-led groups formed around shared experiences or interests.

How to jumpstart your company's Employee Resource Group program

Forming ERGs may seem like a daunting task, but it's possible that your company has already taken its first steps toward creating them. For example, maybe you hold monthly networking events for female-identifying employees or host a panel featuring LGBTQ+ employees during Pride Month.

If not, don't fret — here are four tips for jumpstarting ERGs at your company:

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Gauge employee interest
The best way to determine what your employees want is to ask them directly. Consider a survey about what types of employee-led groups they'd like and what experiences and activities they are interested in.
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Learn from experts
There are external groups that have expertise in starting or supporting existing ERGs at a company, such as Lesbians Who Tech and Latinas in Tech. Research groups in your industry that will support the ERGs your employees want.
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Recruit members from all levels
From the C-suite to interns, encourage employees of all experience levels to join your ERGs. Having an executive sponsor is helpful for showcasing your company's commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace.
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Spread the word
You can advertise your ERG through a company-wide email or newsletter, an internal company site or a networking event. The added bonus of publicizing ERG activities? They serve as a recruiting tool for others with these interests.

Company Spotlight

Infosys was one of the first Indian IT company to establish a separate office for Diversity and Inclusion. They also launched an Employee Resource Group (ERG) for employees with disabilities called "Infyability". This ERG assists with various facets such as the recruitment, development, engagement, growth, and retention of disabled employees.

Besides providing accessories and tools that enable greater accessibility, they also offer their disabled employees a special loan scheme which enables them to purchase equipment that their condition may require.

They also leveraged their intranet platform to launch innovative awareness campaigns within the company. These campaigns used videos and emails to allow disabled employees to share their experiences with their peers.

Source: [Infosys careers](#)

While there's no guarantee that these practices will help you hire more diverse candidates immediately, they can certainly help you take steps in the right direction for a longer-term payoff. It's not enough to check boxes or host events aimed at promoting diversity — potential talent will see through this if a company isn't living its stated values. What's more important to attracting a diverse array of candidates is making sure diversity and inclusion efforts are embedded in your company culture and represented in everything you do.