

Tapping into the North Shore Immigrant Talent Pool:

How Unconscious Bias May be Hindering Your Recruitment Success

Despite that fact that many employers are experiencing labour shortages, they may inadvertently be overlooking immigrant talent. Unconscious bias plays a big role in who gets hired—to increase hiring options, it is important for employers to address how unconscious bias might be influencing their recruitment, hiring and staff retention practices.

With Canada's aging population and growing shortage of workers, it is imperative for employers to recognize the importance of hiring, recruiting and retaining immigrant talent for the success of their companies. Implementing inclusive recruitment strategies will help businesses build a competitive edge. Immigrant talent offers unique perspectives and experiences that help fill the skills and labour shortages that exist in Canadian organizations and companies.

What is Unconscious Bias?

- Also known as implicit bias and closely related to affinity bias, where individuals tend to gravitate towards others who look, act, and think the way they do.
- Mental processes that cause individuals to act in ways that reinforce stereotypes, even when the conscious mind would deem that behaviour counter to the individual's value system.

SOURCE: hbs.edu/recruiting/insights-and-advice/blog/post/actively-addressing-unconscious-bias-in-recruiting

Unconscious Bias and Recruitment

In the hiring process, unconscious bias can happen when a hiring manager forms an opinion about a candidate based solely on surface-level impressions. Unconscious bias can influence the hiring manager's decision in either a negative or positive way using criteria that is usually irrelevant to the job. In recruiting, unconscious bias and affinity bias often show up in a number of ways:

- Preference for one candidate over another because of "culture fit".
- Resume screeners making decisions based on a bias to one name over another (ex. "Michael" given preference over "Mustafa").
- Pre-emptively judging a candidate who may have limited knowledge of subjects that make up Canadian culture (for example, hockey) and who is uncomfortable engaging in small talk (for example, about the weather).
- The way a candidate communicates may influence a hiring manager's decision negatively (ex. a candidate's accent, level of eye contact, or the way they dress)
- Resume screeners may be inclined to favour those with "Canadian experience". Many immigrants face this barrier when launching their career in Canada.

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Why Addressing Unconscious Bias Benefits Your Organization

Hiring decisions that are rooted in unconscious bias can result in workplaces that lack diversity of race, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexual orientation and other identities. These organizations miss the opportunity to bring together individuals who each contribute unique experiences and perspectives. Diversity in organizations fosters qualities such as innovation, problem solving, and strategic planning. In addition, organizations that have diversity in their teams attract more dynamic candidates and overall demonstrate better productivity.

SOURCE: hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter

How to Address Unconscious Bias

Addressing unconscious bias must start from the beginning of the recruiting cycle:

- **Marketing techniques**—Are your job marketing strategies reaching immigrants? In what ways could your strategies be diversified?
- **Job Descriptions**—Are your job postings using inclusive language or are they telling potential talent that they are not the right fit? Is the job posting written using CLAD (Clear Language and Design) principles?
- **Rethinking interview processes**—Are you asking the same questions in the same order to all candidates? Do you have multiple people interviewing the candidate so that their success is evaluated from different perspectives? Are you considering transferable skills and work experience?

Unconscious bias exists in all recruiting & hiring processes: it is the responsibility of employers to both identify it and proactively address it in order to create more diverse, inclusive and impactful organizations.

In many cases, an employer's unconscious bias may contribute to the challenges newcomers face in the recruitment process, leaving them unemployed or underemployed. Unconscious bias may also hinder an employer's ability to hire the most capable and experienced talent, resulting in a shortage of labour, positions being underfilled and lower overall productivity. Effective and inclusive recruitment practices are important not only to immigrant job seekers but also to an organization's workforce stability and continued success.

Additional Reading

Diversity and Inclusion Resource Hub—Unconscious Bias Resources (diversity.tapnetwork.ca/search?keywords=unconscious+bias)

IEC-BC Resources—Onboarding Newcomers: A Toolkit for BC Employers (iecbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IECBC-Onboarding2018-webV2.pdf)

Inclusive Workplace Competencies—The Skills and Knowledge to Build Inclusive Workplaces (triec.ca/competencies)

Triec Learning—Unconscious Bias in Resume Screening (trieclearning.ca/course/view.php?id=8)

VEZA—People of Diverse Backgrounds Terminology Resource (diversity.tapnetwork.ca/sites/default/files/2020-07/POC%20Terminology%20Resource.pdf)

WorkBC Employers Toolkit—A Resource for British Columbia Businesses: Diversity at Work —Recruiting and Retaining immigrants (iecbc.ca/files/WorkBC%20Employers%20Toolkit%20Book4%20-%20Diversity%20at%20Work.pdf)

ABOUT NSIIP

North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership is a coalition of community agencies and institutions focused on improving the settlement outcomes of new immigrants to the North Shore. NSIIP's mission is to work collaboratively with organizations and residents across North and West Vancouver to foster inclusive, equitable communities and ensure all immigrants have opportunities to fully participate in economic, social, and civic aspects of community life.



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