

TIPS FOR MITIGATING AND MANAGING TEAM BIAS

We all need to take proactive measures to mitigate our own individual biases in order to create more inclusive and equitable workplaces. Teams or groups can activate certain types of biases, which also need to be managed.

Team or group biases can impact decisions within the organization. We are most at risk for bias when deadlines are present, pressure is high, we have too much information or very little information. In teams, bias can implicate how we should behave, who or what we should consult, and it can compromise the integrity of our decision and limit the ability to be creative and innovative. It's important to think about how you can broaden the ways you collect or share information.

COMMON BIASES THAT IMPACT TEAMS

AVAILABILITY BIAS occurs when the most readily information is used rather than what is most representative.



For example: If a research team of a biotech company only sources participants for their studies that live locally. By not diversifying the study participants, their research results will be particularly biased and not representative. You don't have to be part of a research team to contribute important organizational data.

Try this: Rather than relying on top-of-mind ideas, consult with others different than you or more representative of your intended audience. Think about the processes that you're a part of. Does your team use the same vendors or resources? How could you broaden the ways in which you collect or share information?

CONFIRMATION BIAS is the tendency to utilize information in a way that supports the existing viewpoint, but ignores information that could dispute or discredit.



For example: Imagine that when your manager is presenting new ideas, they consistently ask to hear from individuals that support them, and your manager only cites evidence that confirms their position.

Conflicting ideas fuel creativity, and by ignoring people or information that we perceive could discredit us, instead rob us of the opportunity to be more collectively innovative, and results in products that are not as thoughtful or responsive.

Try this: Although it may be difficult, look for information that may challenge your views or ideas and invite the team to do the same. When you hear an opinion or a suggestion that is different than your own, show gratitude, get curious, and invite the team to learn together.

CONFORMITY BIAS refers to how humans take cues for proper behavior or acceptable ways of being from others, rather than exercising independent judgment.



For example: You may have heard of groupthink, when the team prefers consensus rather than conflict. Members will agree with one another to maintain harmonious environments. Team members may also pick up ways of being, physical mannerisms, or patterns of speech, among other things, to adapt to meet the explicit and implicit group norms.

Try this: Champion new ideas and encourage the group to use brainstorming techniques that allow suggestions to be documented before the team can talk and influence one another. You should also leverage and celebrate unique and individual strengths.

COMMITMENT BIAS occurs when groups or individuals continue down a course of action or decision with increasingly negative feedback or outcomes without altering their course.



For example: Consider a long-term project that you've been working on for a while, where the team was getting small or sometimes large signals that weren't going to plan. Rather than changing the approach, the team pushed forward. No one likes to admit failure, but course-correcting or changing an approach doesn't mean failure.

Commitment bias limits our ability to innovate. Unlike most of these biases experienced by groups, it creates barriers and blocks others that may offer a different perspective than our own.

Try this: Build a project and change management practices that integrate feedback throughout the project's lifespan. Be explicit about the goals, the measures for success, and layout accountability indicators. This will allow everyone access and the opportunity to see objectively when new approaches need to be adopted.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Lean into gratitude, curiosity, and learning

2

Welcome divergent ways of thinking and being

3

Set clear objectives, measurable goals, and plan for feedback throughout the process with accountability indicators