

Hidden Discrimination Detected in Today's Hiring Climate



How to Raise Awareness Of your Hidden Bias

Both conscious and unconscious factors impact the screening and hiring process. Hiring is a subjective process even if, by using screening tools, we strive to make it objective. Hidden biases remain in the screening process. If we become more aware of these biases, we are more capable of navigating the selection process fairly.

When PhD. candidate Rand Ghayad sent out 4800 fictitious resumes to 600 job openings he discovered an interesting pattern. By altering one piece of information on these resumes, he was able to reduce to almost nothing the odds that certain candidates were selected for an interview.

What factors do you believe had this impact? Gender? Age? Cultural background? While these do have an impact their impact was not as significant as one other factor.

The Long Term Unemployed Face Significant Barriers to Re-Employment

In Ghayad's research, factors included level of experience, amount of job switching and time unemployed. All factors had an impact on the selection process but none as significant as that of being unemployed.

What do you think about the person looking for work for 12 or 24 months? Are there images or words that come to mind when you see a resume with a current gap of more than 6 months?

6 Months Out of Work and You Lose

It turns out that in Ghayad's study that it only requires being out of work for 6 months to lose out on any real chance of being called into an interview. At 6 months of unemployment the odds of being interviewed plunged to 2%. In fact, candidates with less experience who had switched jobs frequently were more likely to be called in for an interview compared to the long-term unemployed.

First Impression Management

It is important to consider what you are thinking as you review a candidate's application because your first thoughts have a significant impact on what actions you

will take. Our 'fast thinking' (referred to by many psychologists as system 1 thinking) is highly influential on our daily decision making process. Unless we become consciously aware of these thoughts they will influence us in ways that may not always lead us to the best decisions and actions.

Unemployment Impacts the Community

The cost of being unable to return to the workforce when you desire is not only a cost to the individual and the family, it is a cost to the larger community. The cost is practical in terms of lost productivity, including that fact that some jobs go unfilled even when there are qualified candidates to fill them. The cost is also tangible in terms of the increased costs to the health care system as individuals who are out of work are more prone to both physical and mental health concerns including stress and depression. And the cost is also intangible, the cost of losing people who want to contribute but for lack of being provided with an opportunity.

The fact is that the vast majority of individuals out of work for over 6 months are not really different from those who are currently working or recently out of work. There may be many legitimate reasons a person has not been able to return to the workforce that do not reflect on the candidate's ability to do the job.

In today's economy 6 months of unemployment can easily become 12 and 24 because once someone has reached the 6 months mark finding that next job can become very difficult. Here are a few simple actions you could take to better enable the long-term unemployed to return to work in the near future.

What can you do to help the Long-Term unemployed?

- 1) **Invite them into an interview.** Just being given a legitimate shot at an interview can boost confidence and esteem, but only if you are genuinely open to considering their candidacy
- 2) **Respond to a phone call or request for information** from someone who has been out of work for 6 months or more. If you know someone in that situation reach out to them; offer them 15-20 minutes and 2 contact names and offer to make introductions.
- 3) **Create short-term contract jobs or contingent projects** (3-6 months in length). An experienced candidate might be able to quickly walk into a role and hit the ground running.
- 4) **Overlook gaps** and be open to those who have been **self-employed or working at a staffing or temporary jobs agency.**
- 5) Partner with a local non-profit seeking placements for unemployed job seekers; offer **6-8 week bridging jobs** to help someone re-build their resumes
- 6) **Be open to an overqualified candidate.** This is not 2006, an overqualified, out of work job seeker may just turn out to be the combination of experience and skills you need.

Research on the brains ability to make decisions tells us that by becoming more aware of what is influencing our decision-making process we can enhance our thinking and decision-making. By ignoring the long-term unemployed you might miss out on finding candidate who could become loyal and hard working members of your team.

Resources

[The Terrifying Reality of Long Term Unemployment](#)

[Daniel Kahneman 'Thinking, Fast and Slow'](#)

[Psychological Effects of Underemployment and Unemployment; APA](#)