

# We Don't Have a Bias Problem. We Have an Accountability Problem.

*Practical moves for leaders ready to stop treating bias as a training problem.*

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## LEADER'S CHECKLIST

### Define expectations before decisions — in writing.

Before interviews or promotion cycles begin, specify in writing what 'good' looks like: the criteria, the behaviors, and how they will be observed. Vague standards leave room for familiarity to fill the gap.

### Track decisions, not just training completion.

Measure who gets hired, who gets promoted, and who gets stretch assignments — by manager, by team, by demographic. Training completion rates tell you nothing about whether decisions changed.

### Review patterns, not just individual decisions.

Ask quarterly: who has this manager consistently selected? Who has not been considered? Pattern review is where bias accountability becomes visible rather than theoretical.

### Follow up with a direct conversation.

When a pattern of biased decision-making is identified, address it directly — with a conversation, not another training module. Name what you observed. Ask what happened. Expect a response.

### Attach real consequences to repeated patterns.

Organizations that hold leaders accountable for biased decisions — through compensation, advancement, or explicit performance expectations — produce measurably different outcomes than those that rely on awareness alone.

### Slow down time-to-fill pressure.

Speed-of-hire metrics actively work against equitable decisions. When filling quickly is rewarded, familiarity wins. Build in structured review steps before decisions are finalized.

### Ask who keeps not getting filled in.

Beyond tracking who is selected, name who is consistently overlooked. Patterns of absence are as meaningful as patterns of selection — and far less often examined.

## CRAFT GUARDRAILS

### Do not mistake awareness for accountability.

Unconscious bias training builds awareness. It does not, on its own, change decisions. Awareness without follow-through is theater. The question is not whether leaders completed the module — it is what happened when they didn't change.

### Do not accelerate bias to avoid it.

Speed-dating hiring formats and rapid-screening tools can entrench bias faster, not eliminate it. If a process is designed around the assumption that bias is inevitable, it has accepted the wrong premise.

### Do not confuse good intentions with good outcomes.

Most leaders who make biased decisions believe they are being fair. Intent does not determine impact. The system that produces inequitable outcomes is the problem — regardless of whether anyone meant it to.

### Do not isolate accountability to HR.

Bias accountability is a leadership issue. It belongs in manager performance reviews, in senior leader conversations, and in board-level talent discussions — not only in the HR compliance stack.

## REFLECTION PROMPTS

*The question is not did we train them. The question is what happened when they didn't change.*

*Where in your organization does bias training exist without real accountability attached to it?*

*What would change if the follow-up question was always: and what happened next?*