

Table 2: Unconscious Bias - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: What Is Working, Where Can We Do Better?

Facilitator: Romina Hofele, AstraZeneca, Gaithersburg, MD, USA

Scope:

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) initiatives have the potential to improve scientific output and collaboration in ways that scientists themselves may find hard to measure. Efforts on D&I are widely implemented across industry, government and academia, with varied degrees of success and focus. Promoting D&I and ensuring our field is welcoming to a varied pool of scientists are both challenging and rewarding goals. As they help us approach a truly meritocratic scientific system, these values may as well provide the boost needed for the next scientific breakthrough. In this roundtable, we aim at sharing experiences in D&I on a variety of topics that directly impact our field. We will discuss hiring, team dynamics and collaborations and mentorship programs. Strategies implemented to address these will be discussed, as well as pitfalls experienced in the process.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Diversity in hiring: What are strategies that have been implemented to ensure a diverse candidate pool is attracted?
2. What kind of training is provided to better understand their unconscious biases? Are topics such as neurodiversity, and cultural expectations directly addressed in trainings?
3. How do we ensure ‘all are welcome’ in our working culture? Effective inclusion of diverse talent is harder to implement than diverse hires. How has your team adapted to be more inclusive?
4. In consideration of differences in diversity in senior management, and career advancement pitfalls, such as the ‘likeability track’, what are active strategies that ensure a continuous pipeline of diverse talent that translates to all levels of the organization?
5. What is the success of initiatives such as mentorship programs in advancing career prospects of diverse talent? Should mentors act as sponsors and advocates? How do we address biases in mentor-mentee pairing?

Discussion Notes:

1. Diversity in hiring: What are strategies that have been implemented to ensure a diverse candidate pool is attracted?
 - Companies have implemented different strategies:
 - active advertisement and collaboration with HCBUs
 - intern and rotational programs for entry level positions with students from HCBUs and organizations that work with minority students

- improvement in diversity of interview panels as part of equitable recruiting
- equity council that ensures diverse hires adapt to new workplace and aids in talent retention
- active recruitment of diverse candidate at senior level positions
- values alignment as part of interview
- active implementation of these strategies approx. 3 years ago for one company is starting to result in increased diversity.
 - most initiatives are still focused in diversifying entry level talent pool.
 - some companies have programs to aid veterans in getting college education/scholarships and accessing entry level positions

2. What kind of training is provided to better understand their unconscious biases? Are topics such as neurodiversity, and cultural expectations directly addressed in trainings?

- training is mandatory for some companies, and optional for others
- for companies in which the training is optional, in some cases, incentives are provided to complete the training
- training is more effective when specific workplace examples are provided as well as options on what to do better
- for unconscious bias training specifically, it was suggested that in person trainings, with small groups have the best chance at being effective. One company is providing training on allyship as well as intersectionality for employees that are line managers or above as in person training. The training on intersectionality proved the most impactful.

3. How do we ensure ‘all are welcome’ in our working culture? Effective inclusion of diverse talent is harder to implement than diverse hires. How has your team adapted to be more inclusive?

- one company has implemented a broad group termed equity council that deals with helping talent adapt to the company culture. This was related to feedback from exit interviews that indicated that talent didn’t feel represented or included.
- inclusion team is part of interview panel and helps coach new hires
- when senior leadership, even if not minorities themselves, identify and act as allies, they signal that that is an important value for the company. Even if not as impactful as having adequate representation, it can be helpful.
- ‘culture bridging club’ helps colleagues understand the diverse backgrounds of different employees and the breadth of diversity of experiences.

4. In consideration of differences in diversity in senior management, and career advancement pitfalls, such as the ‘likeability track’, what are active strategies that ensure a continuous pipeline of diverse talent that translates to all levels of the organization?

- allyship at senior levels.
- ‘culture club’ helps retain diverse talent.
- ensuring adequate representation at higher levels in the organization remains a widespread challenge for organizations.

5. What is the success of initiatives such as mentorship programs in advancing career prospects of diverse talent? Should mentors act as sponsors and advocates? How do we address biases in mentor-mentee pairing?

- mentoring programs have different success levels on pairing, as sometimes affinities are not present. Although experiences with ‘organic’ mentorship have been more successful for individuals, it is recognized that programs have the advantage of providing a mentor for employees that would have otherwise not been able to find one.
- mentoring programs with training for mentor and mentee, and a bimonthly to quarterly frequency yielded best outcomes, as well as those with multiple instances of interviews and checks for
- not all mentors are in a position to act as sponsors, but should aim to when possible.