

How Unconscious Biases May Impact Reviewing a Resume

Typically a resume review entails a look at the applicant's basic qualifications for a position and reviewing their background and education and an overall impression of their work history. However, we all have unconscious biases that play into what we see on the resume in front of us. Let us consider how our perception may inadvertently have a negative impact on an applicant being considered.

Name

Names can provide hints to race or cultural background of an individual. Studies show that there is a hidden bias against both men and women of color when applying to jobs. Being aware of the bias that is created based on a name is a good pulse check and reminder when reading a resume and something to also remind hiring managers about.

Address

It is easy to make false implications or guesses about an individual's success or ethnicity based on their address. Someone may guess that an address in a lower socio-economic area means that the individual did not do well at their last jobs. Depending on the city, an address can also imply ethnicity, socio-economic status, and marital status. However, these are all factors that should not be used to evaluate a candidate's qualification for a position. Additionally, many candidates are choosing not to include their address on their resume for these reasons. Resumes without addresses are becoming more commonplace and shouldn't be perceived as a lack of attention to detail.

Education and past jobs

Details of where someone worked in the past and what schools they attended also create a type of bias for the individual reviewing the resume. For example, people gravitate toward top universities and institutions when reading resumes. They also tend to pick candidates who share the same university or institution as themselves. But there is much more than meets the eye. The reality is – the only takeaway should be that the individual spent time at that organization, and does not necessarily indicate their performance.

Time Gaps and Duration of Jobs

Many people associate the time spent at a job or between jobs as an indicator of the applicant's dedication, work ethic, etc. People take breaks between jobs for a variety of reasons, so do not jump to conclusions. Some people take the opportunity to travel, take care of a sick family member, or spend time with new family members, to name a few. That is not a reflection of their work ethic. More and more you will see people adding the gap months / years to their resume too.

People used to stay at the same organization for their entire career. However, that is not the case anymore. People may change jobs for numerous reasons. Perhaps it was a contract, or it was not a good culture fit. Maybe there were organizational changes that the person did not agree with.

As an overall takeaway, if there are multiple gaps and long durations between jobs, dig deeper into the motivations and reasons behind these things. There may be a good reason or there really may be a red flag. Nonetheless, you will find out more about the person and see if there is intent or a methodology behind it.