Advancing the Work of Unconscious Bias

The Boston Club is committed to advancing diversity and inclusion through the strategic priorities of its Diversity and Inclusion Committee (DIC):
   * Education and Awareness
   * Resources and Tools
   * External Partnerships

Unconscious bias is one key area of focus and is an important aspect of leadership development. DIC members collaborate with other committees to examine this important topic. In addition to programming support, the DIC provides this tool kit of resources on unconscious bias. Our goal is to inspire self-reflection, conversations and meaningful action. We believe this enriches our TBC community and our individual leadership lenses. Stay tuned for other resources, suggested events and forums.

Before you review the resources that follow, you are invited to bring your own self into this picture. Consider these ways to better understand your personal experiences and frames of reference.

How our actions, attitudes and behaviors impact others

-Make note of a situation where your intent and its impact on another were very different, where a response was not what you expected.

-Think about what happened next: How you responded and how the exchange continued— or didn't.

-When have you been surprised by how another handled a situation very differently than you?

How can my unconscious bias appear?

We all want our behavior and actions to align with our intentions. Yet each of our own frames of reference have an impact that we often don't recognize. Our brain is wired to be biased on an unconscious level, often for vital reasons, but not always productive or wise. Our conscious thoughts need to have the upper hand over troublesome unconscious bias that stands in the way.

1. **Identify your biases and begin to explore how and when they come into play**. Becoming self- aware is the starting point for recognizing your conscious and unconscious biases. Unconscious personal biases impact your everyday actions, decisions, teams, and work environment.

   - Ask people for feedback on what they observe, especially people who are different from you.

   - Take the Implicit Association Test again, choosing a different category (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/takeatest.html)

   - Discuss your frames of reference with a mentor, coach or trusted colleague.

   - For a difficult dynamic. consider a mutual third-party observer with the explicit assignment of pointing out when miscommunication occurs.

   - Surround yourself with people who think differently than you and listen to their viewpoints.

2. **Evaluate your actions every day.** Consider these common decisions where unintended bias can

play a role. Spend time thinking about these questions. Revisit them, especially before situations that challenge your thinking.

Recruiting
- Do I favor certain leadership and communication styles?
- Am I willing to hire someone not like me or do I tell myself it's too "risky"?
- When I say that someone is not the right "fit", what am I really saying?
- What does my candidate pool look like? Do I challenge when not presented with a diverse slate?
- Even if I might consider a diverse candidate pool, do I typically favor the same "type" of person? (Think broadly . for example, school, degree, background, geography, etc.)

Assigning Work
- To whom do I typically assign work? Who receives a lead role and why?
- Do I have the same "go-to" people/person most of the time? Do I spread out the challenging work? Am I providing the best skill-building opportunities to different people?
- Who do I typically choose to lead meetings? Who do I take to important meetings?
- How do I view non-U.S. experience and qualifications?

Developing Others
- How do I evaluate performance? Do I focus on the results more than the method? Do I prefer people with styles that are similar to mine?
- To whom am I providing "just-in-time" feedback? Certain people more easily than others? Why?
- What is my comfort level in providing feedback? Do I avoid certain conversations with some?
- To whom am I giving the harshest developmental feedback? Is their performance truly lacking or are they simply approaching things differently than I?
- Do I counsel people differently based on 'differences'?
- Who am I coaching around the 'unwritten' rules of the organization?
- Who am I sponsoring for success and who am I not sponsoring? Why?
- Do I find myself saying that some people lack certain presence? What am I *really* saying? Do they truly have a skills-gap or is their style a bit different than my own?

Day-to-Day Interactions
- With whom do I eat lunch? Go out to the bar? Catch up about the weekend? Tend to take to events? Invite to join me socially or at home?
- How do I define flexibility? Are certain requests for flexibility more reasonable than others depending on my own personal values? How does this then play out?
- Who do I mentor? Why?
- How do I set a tone that promotes teamwork and not in/out crowds?
- Are my interactions limited to people at certain ranks?
- Do I try as hard to know about those on my team whom I consider different?

3. **Safeguards to change your conscious thoughts.** Set "alarm clocks" to help remind yourself before your unconscious brain begins to take over.

- Integrate the idea of "insider" and "outsider" groups into your daily interactions. For example, ask yourself who might consistently be an outsider on your team(s) and take steps to address.

- Consider The Guiding Questions when implementing Boston Club activities
  http://www.thebostonclub.com/index.php/download_file/view/840/1/

- Be conscious of the words you choose to use . are you being respectful of different styles?

- Purposefully build meaningful relationships with people not like you. Be accepting and inviting of people with whom you haven't previously worked. Then explore how this might make you more comfortable in future situations regarding feedback, assignments, style differences, etc.

- Attend professional affinity group events to step outside of your comfort zone.

- Be active and visible in supporting the recruitment of a diverse workforce.

- Be proactive about learning people's capabilities. Prepare them to take challenging assignments, to interact with key clients, and to represent the firm in important meetings and public forums.

- Be aware, respectful, curious, and supportive of your colleagues' differences.

- Practice open, honest curiosity and conversations about uncomfortable subjects. Consider exploring *why* you are not comfortable with something ahead of time so that you are not sending subtle messages that might undermine someone's confidence.

Interested in learning more?

Reading material and infographics

Banaji, M., & Greenwald, A. (2013). *Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Barton, D. (9.27.16). *It's Time for Companies to Try a New Gender-Equality Playbook.* Wall Street Journal. Retrieved 2.10.17 from:
   https://www.wsj.com/articles/its-time-for-companies-to-try-a-new-gender-equality-playbook-1474963861

Choate, A., (11.30.16). *Neuroleadership Lessons: Recognizing and Mitigating Unconscious Bias in the Workplace.* Linked in. Retrieved 2.10.17 from:
   https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/neuroleadership-lessons-recognizing-mitigating-bias-hr?published=t

The Guiding Questions of The Boston Club at (link to come from Constance when posted)

Lee, S. & Lebowitz, S. (2015). *20 cognitive biases that screw up your decisions.* Business Insider. Retrieved 2.10.17 from:
   http://www.businessinsider.com/cognitive-biases-that-affect-decisions-20158?ir=t&goal=0_4d8277f97a-5387bc94b6-309673349

Video selections:

Unconscious Bias and Ingrained Beliefs: http://www.mckinsey.com/videos/video?vid=4847327195001

Mahzarin Banaji on PBS: http://www.pbs.org/video/2365399552/

Who Me? Bias?: https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000004818663/peanut-butter-jelly-and-racism.html

Are you biased? Kristen Pressner TEDx talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bq_xYSOZrgU

Implicit Association Test: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/takeatest.html

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