Inclusive Interviewing in Tech: How to create an inclusive hiring process

Jill Bender, Software Engineer
“How do I hire more ____?”

- veterans
- women
- Black people
- Asian American and Pacific Islanders
- people with disabilities
- parents
- neurodiverse people
- Hispanic and LatinX people
- LGBTQ+ employees

Jill Bender
The Problem

- Talent Pool & Recruiting
- Onboard
- Networks and Social Capital
- Talent Reviews
- Senior Leadership

Entering Field & Social Norms

- Hiring Process
- Sponsor
- Mentor
- Opportunity & Stretch Projects

Jill Bender
Overview

• Part 1: History of Bias in Hiring
• Part 2: Understanding Bias in Hiring
• Part 3: Best Practices for Inclusive Interviews
• Part 4: Building an Inclusive Hiring Culture
Part 1: History of Bias in Hiring
Images Credit: NASA


Dorothy Vaughan

Mary W. Jackson

Katherine Johnson
Patsy Simmers, holding ENIAC board; Gail Taylor, holding EDVAC board; Milly Beck, holding ORDVAC board; and Norma Stec, holding BRLESC-I board.
U.S. Army/ARL Technical Library Archives
Stereotype of the tech guru

• Tech interviews shifted to rely on logic and math puzzles.

• The selection criteria lead to overrepresentation of “antisocial”, “mathematically inclined”, and “male” candidates.[1]


William Henry Gates III in 1977 Albuquerque, New Mexico police department [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons
Tech Sector Job Interviews Assess Anxiety, Not Software Skills

July 14, 2020

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Matt Shipman | mshipman@ncsu.edu

Photo credit: Christina Morillo.

https://news.ncsu.edu/2020/07/tech-job-interviews-anxiety/
Part 2: Understanding Bias in Hiring
Why do we interview?

- **For the company**
  To predict success in a role

- **For the candidate**
  Evaluate the role and company to determine if they will thrive in the work environment
What is cognitive bias?

Systematic pattern in thinking that often doesn't follow logic and reasoning.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_bias

Photo: Cognitive Bias Codex | with modifications | John Manoogian & Bustser Benson via Wikimedia Commons Jm3, CC BY-SA 4.0 | Creative Commons
“But I’m not biased”

• Perceiving yourself as objective is correlated with showing even more bias.\[1\]

• We all have biases.

## Common Biases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bias</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conformity Bias</td>
<td>Change your opinion based on group opinion or peer pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affinity Bias</td>
<td>Favoring people with similar interests or backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Impression Bias</td>
<td>Adding undue importance to an initial piece of information</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Common Biases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bias</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast Error</td>
<td>Comparing candidates instead of accurately evaluating individual skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Credential Bias</td>
<td>Overlooking abilities based on school or previous job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise: What kinds of biases show up in these statements?

- “I would have a beer with them.”
- “Kim told me the candidate wasn’t a good fit from the last interview, and I trust Kim.”
- “This person doesn’t have the same command line skills as the last person in this role.”
Part 3: Best practices for inclusive interviews
Guide to inclusive interviews

- Welcoming culture
- Fair hiring criteria
- Repeatable process
- Consistent evaluation standards
Best practice:
Create environment of belonging

- Reduce stereotype threat
  - Remove stereotypically male posters, decorations[1]
  - Avoid a homogenous interview panel[2]
  - Don’t call attention to race or gender in hiring process


Best practice: Clearly Define Criteria

Myth: Improving diversity means “lowering the bar”

Best practice: Clearly Define Criteria

- Create a measurable scorecard
- Use consistent criteria to assess every candidate
- All interviewers should agree
- Track areas of potential bias
**Best practice:**

**Clearly Define Criteria: Scorecard**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>👎</th>
<th>🤝</th>
<th>⭐</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Described their…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>The classes were factored well…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algorithmic Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrated the ability to g…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Failed to write…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Described a ti…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Best practice:
Skills based assessments

• Companies that don’t use whiteboard interviews hire more Black and Latinx women technologists[1]

• Review you’re not accidentally testing performance anxiety or speed

Best practice: **Skills based assessments**

- Measure actual, current job skills
- All candidates must complete assessment
- Avoid long take-home assignments
- Examples:
  - Small coding task, Pair programming, Debugging, Design a system
Best practice: Standard interview format

- Same format for every candidate
- Keep track of time
Best practice: Standard interview format

**Start**
- 5 mins
- Intro & Interview Format

**Role**
- 10 mins
- Gather details for position

**Behavioral**
- 15 mins
- Problem
  - Action
  - Result

**Skills**
- 20 mins
- Technical Assessment

**Close**
- 10 mins
- Questions
Best practice: Independent feedback

- Interviewers submit separately before meeting
- Prevents biasing other interviewers’ assessments
Best practice: Consistent evaluation

- Avoid introducing new criteria
- Same standards for every candidate

"technical enough?"
Part 4: Building an inclusive hiring culture
Culture

- Process doesn’t fix everything
- Encourage inclusive team environment
Language Matters

Instead of: 

- “Culture Fit”
- “Diverse Hire”
- “The Ideal Candidate”

Use: 

- “Culture Add”
- “Underrepresented”
- “Candidate”
Build a team of trust

- Appropriately engage co-workers when you notice possible bias
- Remind team of agreed-upon criteria
- Use personal stories
- Ask questions and listen
Summary

• Rethink interview norms
• We are all biased, but systems and consistency can block bias
• Building inclusiveness through the hiring process is a team effort
Thank you

Questions? Comments?
https://www.linkedin.com/in/jill-bender/

To learn more:
AnitaB.org Top Companies Report
National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) Women in Tech: The Facts
Nathan Ensmenger The Computer Boys Take Over
Additional Resources
Research:


Research:


Articles & Books

- https://hbr.org/2016/02/a-scorecard-for-making-better-hiring-decisions
- https://hbr.org/2019/06/how-to-reduce-personal-bias-when-hiring
- https://anitab.org/research-and-impact/top-companies/2022-results/
Articles & Books

Articles & Books

What Happened To Women In Computer Science?
% Of Women Majors, By Field

Source: National Science Foundation, American Bar Association, American Association of Medical Colleges
Credit: Quoctrung Bui/NPR
https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2014/10/21/357629765/when-women-stopped-coding
Other Resources

- [https://github.com/poteto/hiring-without-whiteboards](https://github.com/poteto/hiring-without-whiteboards)