SUMMARY

Unconscious biases are, well, unconscious, which makes them hard to identify and understand. Bias is a complex issue and sometimes a controversial one, so is it any wonder that there are so many misconceptions around what to do about them?

It's one thing to know that we're all biased—our brains are wired to take mental shortcuts whenever they can, which means we sometimes unknowingly favour (or overlook) certain people or groups based on stereotypes or partial information—but what can we do about it in our day-to-day work?

While some of our biases are conscious, many of them are unconscious and influence the thoughts we have, decisions we make, how we engage with others, and how we respond to various circumstances, often limiting potential.

Introducing Unconscious Bias: Understanding Bias to Unleash Potential
A bias is a preference for or against a person, place, or thing.
But unconscious bias leaves us unaware of potential harm resulting from biased thinking.
As we understand bias, we can address it to create a culture in which everyone thrives.

To do so, we must:
- Identify Bias where it shows up in our own thinking and in our workplaces.

- Cultivate Connection with those around us to expand our understanding and improve our decision-making.

- Choose Courage as we engage with care and boldness in addressing biases that limit people and constrain performance.

There is nothing more fundamental to performance than how we see and treat each other as human beings. Helping your leaders and team members address bias will let them thrive, increasing performance across your business.

THE CHALLENGE	THE SOLUTION
We don't recognize when biases shape our decisions in ways that limit ourselves or others.	Learning to see when we default to biases, especially when we're overwhelmed with information, we need to act quickly, or we're driven by emotion.
We are overloaded, so we don't expand our networks or proactively seek out alternate perspectives.	Building meaningful connections with empathy and curiosity to expand the perspectives that drive decisions.
We don't thoughtfully address bias when we see it because we worry doing so will be harmful or difficult.	Strengthening skills that let us act with courage and care to constructively counter bias and its potential harms.
Our inability or unwillingness to constructively counter bias limits performance—our own, others', and our organization's.	Building a company culture and training leaders around respecting, including, and valuing the perspectives and contributions of all team members.

Table: Stephen Covey

Impact of Behaviors

Damaging Zone

When we either intentionally or unintentionally use verbal, nonverbal, or environmental behaviors that communicate negative, hostile, or derogatory messages, we can affect people's emotional, mental, and physical well-being. Damaging behaviors vary from microaggressions (everyday slights, snubs, or insults) to harassment and abuse.

Limiting Zone

When we don't make an effort to address biases, we allow them to limit the contribution of others. Ignoring or tolerating others affects their sense of belonging and, ultimately, their engagement and contribution.

High-Performance Zone

When we make the effort to be aware of and address our biases, we actively behave in ways that make people feel valued, included, and respected.

3 Bias Traps

Information Overload

We are bombarded by information that our brains automatically filter. Some of the information we filter out is actually useful and important. Example: Confirmation Bias, Anchoring Bias.

Use these tips to avoid this bias trap.

Pause: Question It	Seek to Understand	Check Assumptions	Learn
• What information have I excluded? • Have I only chosen data that confirms existing beliefs?	• Have I explored the opposing side? • What is an alternative point of view?	• What am I assuming? • What are others assuming?	• What information am I avoiding? • What are the critical facts I need in order to make an effective decision?

Feelings Over Facts

When we have strong feelings about something, we tend to be driven by our beliefs rather than by facts. Our impulses and beliefs can override our logic and thinking processes. Example Biases: In-Group Bias, Negativity Bias.

Use these tips to avoid this bias trap.

Pause: Question It	Seek to Understand	Check Assumptions	Learn
• What am I feeling? Why? • What am I making up?	• Am I jumping to conclusions? • What have I discarded because it didn't fit my beliefs?	• What am I assuming? • Who can I check my assumptions with?	• What are the facts that support what I'm feeling? • What other information do I need?

Need For Speed

We take shortcuts to act quickly. Often these time-savers are based on bias and can be simplistic, self-centered, and even counterproductive. Example: Attribution Bias, Sunk-Cost Bias.

Use these tips to avoid this bias trap.

Pause: Question It	Seek to Understand	Check Assumptions	Learn
• What shortcuts am I taking? • Is this the right decision, or just the thing that is in front of me?	• Why do I need to act fast? • What are the unintended consequences of acting fast?	• If I had more time, what would I be doing differently? • Would this be the best solution if there were no previous investement of time or energy?	• What would the best solution look like? • Can I make a checklist to help me take effective action?

Structure your hiring process, including resume reviews, interviews, and test projects.

- Before you start reviewing resumes, list the three or so core competencies for the position you need to fill. Then, ask HR to replace the names on resumes with initials or an identification number and judge the resumes solely on the core competencies you've identified.

- Make a list of behavioural and situational questions to ask each person to ensure you make a fair comparison among candidates. Behavioural questions focus on past experiences: "Tell me about the most significant written report you've completed—how did you go about it?" Situational questions present hypothetical scenarios: "How would you respond to a customer complaint that our product is hard to use?" Take notes and rank answers using a standard candidate evaluation form.

- Depending on the job, devise a group panel interview or a test project for the candidate to complete to ensure that all candidates get a similar experience. Research shows that these formats tend to be better predictors of job performance than traditional one-on-one interviews.

For performance evaluations, keep notes over time and measure against established criteria. Does someone meet expectations or exceed expectations? You can't really know unless you've explicitly listed goals and expectations for the person ahead of time. Document specific examples of how the person has or hasn't met the goals over time to ensure that you're not basing your assessment solely on what's freshest in your mind or on a vague impression (versus a specific instance or result).

To create thriving cultures, leaders need to face bias with courage and create spaces where everyone is respected, included, valued, and truly able to contribute their best.

When leaders and team members address bias, performance increases and decision-making improves.

Courage That Drives Change

Effective courage is both careful and bold.

Careful courage is especially valuable when there's high risk. Use these ideas to practice careful courage when addressing bias.

Use Softening Statements
"What I'm hearing you say is…"
"It seems like…"
"When you said… what did you mean?"

Create a Safe Place
- Reflect before speaking.
- Give yourself and others time.
- "Let's take a break now and come back later."

Apologise when you need to.
- Have a 1-on-1 discussion.
- Avoid shaming.
- Assume good intent.

Bold courage makes the case for an immediate need to change. Use these ideas to practice bold courage when addressing bias.

Be Direct

- Ask for what you want.
- Call things what they are.
- Share the evidence and the impact.

Challenge the Status Quo

- Be willing to say no.
- Point out problems.
- Offer solutions. Include Others

Call other people into the conversation.

- Ask for feedback:
- "What can we do to make this right?"
- Create opportunities.