

Common Interview Biases

Without ensuring that you have created a fair and structured interview process, your interviews may be prone to a number of bias or errors. These can significantly impact on the outcome of the interview itself - which could be positive or negative for you and/or the candidate(s) being interviewed.

Following are some common interview biases and errors.

First Impression Bias

This refers to our limitation to see beyond the very first piece of information that we are exposed to. So in the case of interviewing a candidate when they walk into the interview room, we are making a judgement based on our first impression – good or bad.

Halo Effects

Have you ever met anyone and once you have got chatting experienced positive feelings about one characteristic that they possess (such as their appearance or that they possess a product you favour)? If you warm to this person because of the characteristic then everything they say seems so valid and in keeping with you – if you hear something that isn't quite in keeping with the characteristic, the chances are, you will ignore it.

Devil's Horns

This is quite the extreme to Halo Effects in an interview situation. Here the interviewer will tend to overemphasise an undesirable personality trait or past event in the candidate's previous work experience – again trying to change this negative point of view is very difficult.

Stereotyping

This is the formation of beliefs about a person or a group of people, ignoring the individual differences of those that may form the group. For example, an interviewer may be reluctant to offer a position to a Gen Y candidate in case they will go in pursuit of their job (stereotype – Gen Y's want to be CEOs of the companies they join and won't let anyone stand in their way). However, this ignores the individual differences of younger candidates who may be committed, hard working, have excellent ideas and be highly innovative, with a great deal to offer a business.

Contrast Effects

This occurs when interviewees are not compared against the criterion of the role, but against the other candidates being interviewed. One of the major errors here is that a poor candidate who is not ideal for a role may be hired as they are seen as the best of a bad bunch.

Similar to me

Oh, s/he is just like me! They will fit in perfectly! Sound familiar? Yes, whilst you may be a lovely person who is very capable of performing your job, ask yourself – does this candidate possess the skills, experience and knowledge to do the job that they are being interviewed for? Not your job.

Poor Validity

Are your interview questions actually focusing on the requirements of the job? Do they measure what they are supposed to measure?

All of these biases are subjective and whilst humans are conducting interviews they will possess an element of subjectivity. However, introducing structured interview questions can help to put candidates on a more equal footing.