

Unconscious Bias in job advertisements

Diverse teams help make your organization more competitive. But basing recruitment decisions solely on facts is not always as straightforward as you might think.



Everybody has unconscious bias. It simplifies everyday life and reduces complexity – but it also affects our ability to make fair decisions and can lead to bad choices.

Our 'Chefsache' initiative helps us to reduce the impact of Unconscious Bias and thus make decisions more fairly.

The conscious design and wording of your job advertisement is a decisive step in avoiding Unconscious Bias. You can help to bring about change in our society.

CHEFSACHE : Make equal opportunity job advertisements your top priority.

Here are some practical tips:

1. Pictures

Let's start with the design: be sure that photos of the job advertisement show both women and men.

- Show either a woman and a man or a mixed group.



2. Language:

Use gender-neutral job titles.

- For example: 'engineer (m/f)' .

Make sure the advertisement's wording consistently focuses on both women and men.

- For example: 'High level of communication skills' or 'distinct ability to work in a team' instead of 'good negotiator' or 'good team player'.

3. Requirements:

When describing the position, focus on tasks and formal demands.

- When recruiting, it is often challenging to differentiate between a job and the ideal candidate that you have in mind. Often we have an ideal image of a person with certain attributes and competencies. To ensure equal opportunities, it is important to focus our minds solely on the job requirements.

List mandatory requirements only.

- Women, in particular, will often only apply if the list of requirements perfectly matches their qualifications.
- If you mention a requirement that's desirable but not mandatory, use the expression 'Ideally, you have ...'



Describe attributes using gender neutral terms.

- Research indicates that significantly less women apply for jobs that are described with typically male attributes. At the same time, men don't apply less to jobs that are described with gender-neutral attributes.
- Use so-called agentic attributes, such as *assertive*, only if they describe an obligatory prerequisite for the respective position.
- So-called communal wording, on the other hand, is perceived as gender-neutral and appeals to both men and women. Examples here include *proactive, structured, responsible* and *committed*.



4. Conditions:

The job advert contains options for employees to reconcile work, family and private life.

- It is established that more men and women apply to job adverts that announce a job not as full-time only. The same applies to job sharing, working from home and benefits such as childcare.



Highlight existing diversity awareness in your organization as a particular benefit for employees.

- We recommend the development of a standard text for your company. For example, 'We are an international team' or 'we offer a challenging working environment with a high level of responsibility. We incorporate you on the job as part of an engaged, competent and diverse team.'

For further reading:

Banaji, M. R., Greenwald A.G. (2017). Vor-Urteile. Wie unser Verhalten unbewusst gesteuert wird und was wir dagegen tun können. München: dtv Verlagsgesellschaft.

Bohnet, Iris (2017). What works: Wie Verhaltensdesign die Gleichstellung revolutionieren kann. München: C.H. Beck.

Hentschel, T., Braun, S., Peus, C., & Frey, D. (2014, August). Wording of advertisements influences women's intention to apply for career opportunities. Angenommen für das 74. jährliche Meeting der Academy of Management, Philadelphia, USA.

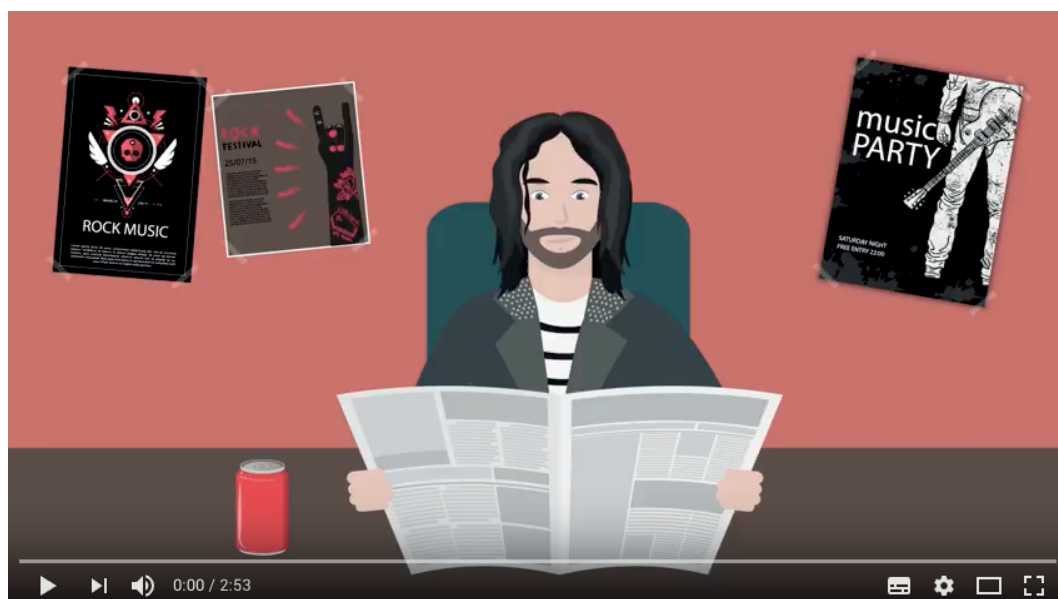
Kanning, U.-P. (2015). Personalauswahl zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit. Eine wirtschaftspsychologische Analyse. Berlin: Springer.

Spies, Rainer (2012). Hartnäckige Stereotype im Spiegel der Wissenschaft, Das Thema Frauen und Karriere auf dem Herbstworkshop der Kommission Personalwesen, in: Personalführung 11, S. 56–59. Ort/Verlag

Steffens, M. C. & Ebert, I. D. (2016). Frauen – Männer – Karrieren. Eine sozialpsychologische Perspektive auf Frauen in männlich geprägten Arbeitskontexten. Ort/Verlag

Here's the link to our video:

Chefsache – Equal opportunities in the recruiting process: tips for HR professionals



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wptjjwPoXKI>