

## 5.5: Selection

### Learning Objective

- Discuss methods of selecting the best candidate.

When reviewing a final slate of candidates, it's important to be aware of the potential for perception errors on the part of both interviewer and candidate. The onus is on the interviewer to check his or her assumptions and make sure a candidate understands the position, culture and operating dynamics.

Implicit or unconscious bias, covered in depth in Module 13: Social Diversity in the Workplace, is a factor in the selection process as well. Briefly stated, implicit bias reflects the fact that we are often unaware of the divergence between our conscious attitudes and our unconscious beliefs. This divergence is a blind spot that can distort our perceptions of candidates. Key perspective point: it's not always a matter of how we perceive those who are different from us. For example, research at Yale found that both male and female scientists rated “female” lab scientist applicants significantly lower than the “male” candidates in competence, hireability, and whether the scientist would be willing to mentor the student. The catch: the resume in both cases was the same; the only difference was the name: male or female<sup>[1]</sup>. The takeaway is that we all have internalized cultural stereotypes and need to cultivate an awareness of potential gender, ethnic, or other biases to avoid having those stereotypes distort our judgments.

Research also suggests that we tend to put too much faith in our ability to evaluate others. A common mistake is judging candidates based on a first impression or “likeability.” As IBM Smarter Workforce business development executive Jason Berkowitz notes: “It’s so easy to assume that a firm handshake and good eye contact means someone is competent across the board.”

Because the process can be complicated, it's important to have very concrete reasons for choosing one candidate over another. For example, saying “Mary fits into the team better than Sally” is likely to lead to Sally’s feeling that she has lost a popularity contest. A better option is to have a checklist of qualifications that can be shared with job candidates. If you can show Sally that Mary has stronger IT skills, more management experience, and important marketing knowledge, it will help Sally understand why Mary really is the better person for the job.

Here are a few additional tips to improve evaluation effectiveness:

- Focus evaluations on the job criteria to avoid being distracted by superficial factors
- Seek candidate evaluation input from multiple people; compare notes and discuss observations
- Be aware of any attempts to cater to interviewer interests and preferences or leverage common ground
- Be aware of making conclusions—either favorable or unfavorable—based on factors that aren’t related to job performance, i.e., application, resume, or GPA
- Related point: question assumptions about what factors (accomplishments and characteristics) correlate with employee success

Discussion of how to select the best candidate also has to factor in the candidate’s perceptions and potential perception errors. Given that, the final action item is doing a reality check; that is, providing the candidate with a realistic job preview. Failing to do this is a common hiring error that B2B Staff Writer Sammi Caramela refers to as “lacking in transparency.” In a series of posts on retail industry interview questions, Workforce management support provider Deputy emphasizes the importance of clarifying expectations, noting that a candidate’s attributes and enthusiasm are only part of the equation. Tip: “If the job involves a variety of shifts and incentive-based pay, it’s best to address that up-front.”<sup>[2]</sup> Sample questions:

- What type of schedule are you interested in?
- Would you be available to work extra shifts?
- Do you have any classes or other part-time jobs or commitments that may affect your work availability?
- Are you willing to work nights, weekends, and the occasional overnight inventory shift if necessary?

The upside of transparency: Research cited in *Fundamentals of Human Resource Management* indicates that providing candidates with a realistic job preview prior to extending a job reduces turnover without impacting acceptance rates.

1. <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/unofficial-prognosis/study-shows-gender-bias-in-science-is-real-heres-why-it-matters/> ↵

2. <https://www.deputy.com/blog/77-retail-interview-questions-to-hire-the-right-candidate#suitability> ↵

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