



Unconscious Bias from Root: Understanding Your Biases to Become a Better Leader

In his autobiography, Nelson Mandela tells of boarding a plane in Africa following his release from 28 years of imprisonment. The pilot of the plane was a black African. Mandela describes how he was frightened and nervous with a black African at the controls. The man who served decades in prison as an anti-apartheid revolutionary, who fought against racism and negative stereotypes his entire life, was experiencing the very thing he spoke out against. When he examined his fears, he realized he had internalized negative stereotypes of black incompetence. Even if we don't realize it, we all have internalized negative stereotypes of people of a different gender, ethnicity, age, etc. than our own, and even, as in Mandela's case, about people just like ourselves. As studies of brain function show, these biases operate in our unconscious.

Left alone, these negative stereotypes can bypass our normal, rational, and logical thinking and impact how we act. This can be especially harmful in the workplace. To help organizations raise awareness and learn strategies to minimize negative impacts, Root has developed a 2.5-hour interactive "Unconscious Bias" workshop that can serve as a companion to the Root Compass® Manager Development Program or stand alone as a way to help organizations empower their people with the insights and tools to overcome unconscious biases.

The Root approach leverages neuroscience to help participants identify their biases and learn how to manage them.

Through this highly interactive workshop participants will:

- Learn to recognize their unconscious biases
- Understand the impact those biases have on others
- Develop strategies to handle those biases to better manage others
- Minimize the dysfunctional impact of unconscious bias

Traditional courses focus on accepting our differences. The Root approach leverages neuroscience to help participants identify their biases and learn how to manage them. The end result is managers and individual contributors who have a better understanding of unconscious bias, who can exert more control over their decisions, and who can lessen the harmful effects of unconscious bias in the workplace.

Neuroscience tells us...

- *It takes less than 1/10th of a second to form a prejudgment, rational or not.*
- *Scientists estimate that we are exposed to 11,000,000 pieces of information in one minute – far more information than can be dealt with consciously.*
- *On average, our brains can consciously deal with only FOUR pieces of information at one time – we filter out all the rest by developing a perceptual lens that filters out certain things and lets others in ... our unconscious bias!*

How it works:

Step 1: Acknowledging Unconscious Bias. Individuals learn what a bias is and how it affects personalities and work style. Together – and without judgment – participants identify their own biases through interactive activities.

Step 2: Understanding Types of Bias. Several types of biases are common in the workplace. Working in small groups participants explore different types of bias and identify those that are more prevalent in their organization.

Step 3: Identifying the Impact of Unconscious Bias. Participants listen to two people comment on the impact unconscious bias has on their work relationships, and then work as a team to identify other impacts and repercussions.

Step 4: Mitigating Unconscious Bias. Last, participants review some effective tools and tips and consider additional actions that will lessen the risk of doing harm through unconscious bias.

By fostering open, honest dialogue, drawing on shared experiences, and offering simple lessons, this unique, powerful session brings this difficult and often misunderstood concept to life in a very helpful and practical way.



Is your team ready to think about how stereotypes and biases influence the workplace?

After completing Root's Unconscious Bias workshop, you and your team will be more empathetic and effective leaders and team players who are better able to identify and handle preconceived associations, biases, and misconceptions.



APG Partner

Contact Information

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About Root

Root is a strategy execution company that helps organizations engage people as a catalyst for change using a proven framework that consistently achieves clarity, ownership, and results.

