



# Say This, Not That: A Manager's Guide to Hiring



## Welcome

If you're reading this, you're curious about how hiring managers can build teams where all employees can thrive without encountering age or generational biases.

The issue has never been more pressing. In a recent AARP study, 83% of employers said that creating a more multigenerational workforce would drive their success and growth.<sup>1</sup> They believe that their organizations need to do more to maximize the full potential of an age-diverse workforce. In fact, these executives highlighted age as a top area of diversity management that requires the most improvement.

Despite executives' good intentions, a recent UC Irvine study found that qualified older applicants are extended 40% fewer offers than their younger counterparts after in-person interviews.<sup>2</sup> This creates major opportunities for employers, who now consider it a key business strategy to address the needs and unleash the synergies of a workforce that can span as many as five generations. Hiring an age-diverse team is the first step in this strategy, and so a valuable tactic is to train hiring managers on how to successfully recruit and lead a mixed-age team.

You're holding a powerful guide that you can use to leverage your position as a recruiter or hiring manager to build an age-inclusive team, with employees across a range of ages, life and career phases. This guide can be used by all members of your interview panel, and by organizations of all sizes, from 5 employees to over 25,000. It can be adapted for organizations with all types of employees, and across all industries. Make it yours!

### You can use this guide to:

1. Collaborate with your own team to make your team's next hire an age-inclusive effort,
2. Win buy-in from key influencers in your organization to train managers on age-inclusive hiring, and
3. Start a new initiative to train managers to recruit and hire mixed-age teams

The guide has what you need to create a more age-inclusive hiring practice—from the data you need to garner support and win resources to the tactical training exercises you can use. We have even synthesized the best practices into a templated hiring kit for you to customize and use throughout your organization. As you use it, share your successes by emailing us at [employerpledge@aarp.org](mailto:employerpledge@aarp.org).

We are grateful to [Workable Concept](#) for their partnership in creating this toolkit for you as part of a suite of resources that includes the [Manager Toolkit: Leading Mixed Age Teams](#) and the [Intergenerational ERG Toolkit](#).

Warm regards,

Heather Tinsley-Fix  
Senior Advisor, Employer Engagement

<sup>1</sup> "According to the AARP Global Employer Survey 2020, 83% of employers state that it would be very or at least somewhat valuable to their organization's success and growth to create a more multigenerational workforce. Executives in large global companies recognize that their organization would need to undertake more efforts to maximize the full potential that an age-diverse workforce offers, listing age, besides disability, as the area of diversity management that requires most improvement (Forbes Insights, 2011[33])."

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nber.org/papers/w26623>

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# Why Should I Hire with Age Diversity in Mind?

## Managers of mixed-age teams are likely to create more value.

“Employers who can successfully combine the talents and diverse outlooks of their employees — whatever their age — generally find that their workforce is enriched and more productive as a result,” according to the OECD.<sup>3</sup>

How does this happen? On an age-diverse team, as in teams that are diverse in other aspects, people bring different skills, experiences and views to bear on the work at hand, and thus produce stronger end results.<sup>4</sup>

“Diverse teams have far more pathways to execute on an idea, which enables them to iterate faster and more cost-effectively... They can also navigate the enterprise on a tight budget and tap into networks they may not have otherwise explored on their own. This type of expansive, serendipitous collaboration is what drives fast action.”<sup>5</sup>

The OECD report continues “reaping these benefits will require putting in place tailored support at all ages and strengthening collaboration between generations.”<sup>6</sup>

The team unit is a natural environment in which to provide this tailored support and strengthened collaboration—and managers’ hiring decisions are the first step towards creating an age-diverse team. The issue is becoming more pressing for managers as the hiring landscape is changing quickly. By 2028, 25% of U.S. workers are expected to be age 55 or older. This is more than double the 12% in 1998. As the workforce changes, managers’ hiring practices must change as well.

Without age-inclusive hiring practices, it is unlikely a manager will be able to build a team that can harness the full breadth of experience for their team’s ability to innovate, solve problems and think creatively.<sup>7</sup> This is why it’s critical for employers to provide managers with resources and support to adopt age-inclusive hiring practices — like this guide.



<sup>3</sup> [https://www.aarpinternational.org/file%20library/llel/OECD\\_Promoting-An-Age-Inclusive-Workforce.pdf](https://www.aarpinternational.org/file%20library/llel/OECD_Promoting-An-Age-Inclusive-Workforce.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0927537112001236>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/why-diverse-and-inclusive-teams-are-the-new-engines-of-innovation>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.aarpinternational.org/file%20library/llel/OECD\\_Promoting-An-Age-Inclusive-Workforce.pdf](https://www.aarpinternational.org/file%20library/llel/OECD_Promoting-An-Age-Inclusive-Workforce.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.hbs.edu/recruiting/insights-and-advice/blog/post/actively-addressing-unconscious-bias-in-recruiting>

## Of course, hiring managers also want to stay on the right side of the law.

Finally, remember that age discrimination in hiring is illegal in the United States. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines it as “treating an applicant or employee less favorably because of their age.” The Age Discrimination in Employment Act forbids age discrimination against people who are age 40 and older.<sup>8</sup> So, while the “carrot” of the benefits of diversity and inclusion are motivating, so too is avoiding the “stick” of an age discrimination lawsuit against you by a candidate for hiring or promotion on your team. The U.S. Supreme Court has even ruled that “stray remarks” among the hiring team or to a candidate, or focusing recruiting on one specific group (e.g., recent college graduates) may be considered evidence of age discrimination.<sup>9</sup>

*“We give interview templates and guidelines to all our clients to help them stick to questions related to skills and work experience, rather than personal topics. The biggest piece is having each interviewer fill out an objective evaluation at the end of the conversation. Rather than concluding an interview and asking the hiring manager for her overall impression, it’s more helpful—and fair—to have her sum up her opinion of the candidate’s skills.”<sup>10</sup>*

*- Laurie McCann, Senior Attorney, AARP Foundation*



<sup>8</sup> <https://ideal.com/age-discrimination/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0218/pages/hiring-in-the-age-of-ageism.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0218/pages/hiring-in-the-age-of-ageism.aspx>

## Try it Now — What’s Your Personal Motivation to Reduce Age Bias?

We are more successful in reducing bias in our relationships and behaviors if we take time to reflect on our motivations for reducing it.

### Step 1: Read this list of possible personal motivations and add your own in the blank areas

- I’ve seen or experienced age bias personally and don’t want others to have that experience.
- I would like to have a reputation as a manager who strives to be inclusive, as that could make my teams function more effectively, make it easier to recruit into my team and improve my own chances of promotion.
- I believe we will better serve diverse customers by creating a diverse team.
- It’s just the right thing to do.
- I already try to build a diverse and inclusive team in other ways, but realize I need to take age into account in these efforts.
- I want to fill in because I know my organization doesn’t have any defined policies to help create a multigenerational workforce, such as defined unbiased recruitment processes.<sup>11</sup>
- (Add your own here) \_\_\_\_\_
- (Add your own here) \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 2: Now check the boxes next to the top 3 that are your core personal motivators.

### Step 3: Consider your top reason for wanting to reduce bias in your professional relationships and behaviors.

With it in mind, list three words to describe what it would feel like to manage your team *after* you have taken steps to reduce age bias within your team.

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<sup>11</sup> Only 5% of employers have defined policies to help create a multigenerational workforce, such as unbiased recruitment processes, phased retirement, or life-long learning opportunities. OECD. (2020). Promoting an Age-Inclusive Workforce. Living, Learning and Earning Longer, p.90. [https://www.aarpinternational.org/file%20library/llel/OECD\\_Promoting-An-Age-Inclusive-Workforce.pdf](https://www.aarpinternational.org/file%20library/llel/OECD_Promoting-An-Age-Inclusive-Workforce.pdf).

# How Can I Hire with Age Diversity in Mind?

**There are three key elements in age-inclusive hiring:**

1. Learning to recognize age bias in the hiring process,
2. Taking steps to prevent age bias in the hiring process, and
3. Practicing how to interrupt age bias when it does happen during an active hiring effort.

## How Can I Recognize Age Bias in Hiring?

As with any change, the first step is to see clearly what's in front of us — and in ourselves. All of us have likely encountered age bias in recruiting and hiring during our careers, but we may not have noticed it. Yet.

As you read this section, put a check next to the ideas that resonate most powerfully with you.

### What is age bias?

- “Age bias occurs whenever age is used to diminish the competency and capability of another. It can happen across all ages whenever age gaps exist — whether only a few years or a few decades separate the parties. It's important to address bias since it can often lead to discrimination. Simply put, age discrimination is unfavorable treatment as a result of one's age.”<sup>12</sup>
- As with any type of bias, it can play out both as conscious or as unconscious (or implicit) bias. It shows up in our assumptions, stereotypes and behaviors. “A person may even express explicit disapproval of a certain attitude or belief while still harboring similar biases on a more unconscious level.”<sup>13</sup>
- We likely all have some level of age bias, but we can all reduce it. To do so, we have to go beyond awareness into both action and self-reflection.

### Who does it affect?

- While workers at either end of the age spectrum (both younger and older) are most likely to experience age bias personally, nearly all of us are affected by it.<sup>14</sup> How? Bias against one group can reduce the level of inclusion for others — even if they are not a member of the group experiencing that type of bias.
- As a hiring manager, the age bias that already exists in your team, team members and/or process can make it hard for you to hire in an age-inclusive manner. You're in a position to shift how your team hires, and create positive effects for potential employees, current team members and your organization's leadership pipeline.

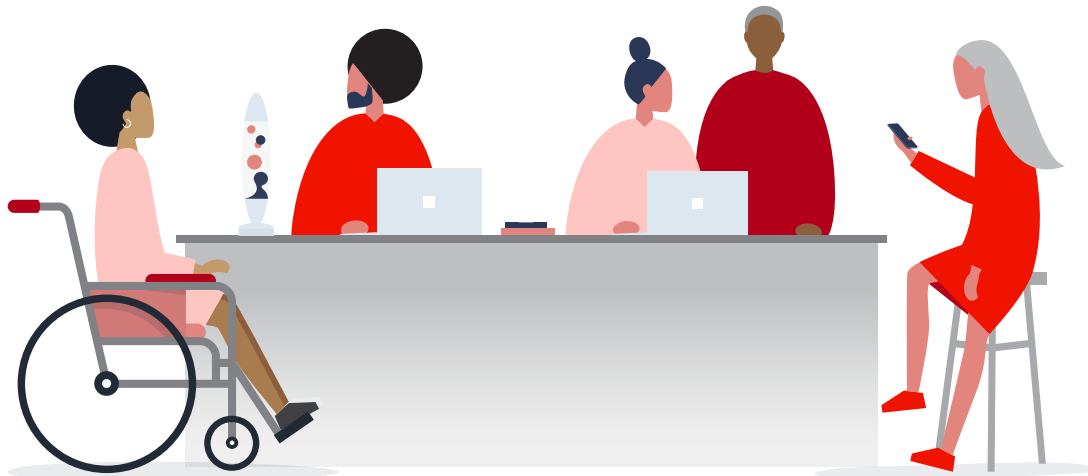
<sup>12</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sheilacallaham/2022/04/25/joking-about-age-bias-is-not-okayheres-what-to-do-about-it/?sh=525c5173c008>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.verywellmind.com/implicit-bias-overview-4178401>

<sup>14</sup> For more details and data on who age bias affects, see the *Intergenerational Employee Resource Group Toolkit* from AARP.

## □ How do I identify it?

- Assume age bias is present in nearly all of our hiring processes and the people participating in them, likely unconsciously rather than as blatant bias. Approach with curiosity and a willingness to adjust rather than with defensiveness or blame.
- Watch for flags in what IS said and what IS done.
- Watch for flags in what is NOT said, and what is NOT done.
- Consider both people and processes at each step of the talent acquisition process. The processes we inherit were likely created without specific anti-bias best practices. We can improve them as we use them in our own hiring efforts. The people involved from our organization (and a hiring manager's selection of who will participate and influence the hiring decision) also bring their own level of commitment to and preparation for contributing in a bias-aware manner.



*“Even if you head up your organization’s diversity committee, even if you are from an underrepresented community, you have biases that impact your professional decisions, especially hiring. Affinity bias — having a more favorable opinion of someone like us — is one of the most common. In hiring this often means referring or selecting a candidate who shares our same race or gender [or age], or who went to the same school, speaks the same language or reminds us of our younger selves.”<sup>15</sup>*

*- Ruchika Tulshyan, Author, Inclusion on Purpose*

<sup>15</sup><https://hbr.org/2019/06/how-to-reduce-personal-bias-when-hiring>



## ***Try It Now: How Can I Recognize Age Bias in Hiring? Say This, Not That.***

### **Step 1:**

As you read this sample job description, can you spot the keywords below that indicate bias? Underline any words or phrases that could dissuade an older candidate from applying for the position.

#### ***The Widget Company, Inc.***

At The Widget Company, we take great pride in our company culture. A large portion of our success stems from our people, who are talented, innovative, ambitious, creative and forward-thinking. The Widget Co. encourages our team to think outside the box and to voice ideas that foster growth and creativity.

The Widget Company is looking for a marketing strategist with up to five years of experience to support North America business development. With room to grow quickly, this position is perfect for fresh, young graduates looking to gain industry knowledge, marketing experience and those who want a chance to make their mark in a start-up environment.

*Requirements:* GPA of 3.8 or higher from a top university with marketing or related major preferred, advanced user of Salesforce's Marketing Cloud and Tableau tools, experience or ability to quickly learn to use all MS Teams tools and Slack for work collaboration, proven track record of promotion in a high-growth organization, cultural fit in a high energy team, ability to travel to U.S. client locations two to three times per quarter, sometimes on short notice.


*Salary:* Commensurate with experience

*About The Widget Company:* We know there's more to life than work. As a Widgeton, you'll work hard and play hard. Our teams enjoy free lunches, happy hours and a full social calendar. Among our benefits, we offer health, dental, student loan, pet care and commuter benefits. We strive to be a fully inclusive workplace.

*How to apply:* Submit a cover note with your LinkedIn profile to our job posting at [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)



## Step 2:

Now review this ***Say This, Not That*** cheat sheet. 

Use it to edit the language you underlined in the sample job description. Jot the replacement phrases above the language you'd want to replace.

<b>Say This:</b>	<b>Not This:</b>
<b>Entry level (even better, include salary range)</b>	Recent college grad
<b>List specific skills and required proficiency level</b>	Digital native
<b>List specific skills and required proficiency level</b>	Tech savvy
<b>Agile, creative thinker</b>	Fresh ideas
<b>Adaptable</b>	Young
<b>Education level</b>	Graduation year
<b>List company values, benefits, D&amp;I policies</b>	Cultural fit
<b>Productive</b>	Go-getter
<b>Highly engaged</b>	High energy
<b>At least 7 years of experience</b>	7-10 years' experience in...
<b>Examples of overcoming obstacles in academic or workplace environments</b>	High- potential
<b>Expectation of 3 days per week in office</b>	(Leaving it out of the job description)
<b>Flexible schedule with core team working hours of 10-2 EST</b>	(Leaving it out of the job description)
<b>Salary range xxx-yyy</b>	Salary commensurate with experience
<b>Active listener</b>	Energetic
<b>Evidence of ability to apply new knowledge</b>	Requesting GPA, SAT or GMAT/GRE scores
<b>Ability to cultivate and activate professional networks to achieve team goals</b>	Social
<b>Ability to build strong client relationships virtually and as needed, in-person</b>	Willingness to travel to client 3 times per quarter
<b>Clearly delineate between “required” and “nice to have”</b>	A long list without indicating if any or all are required, or if some are simply beneficial but not critical
<b>High-growth organization</b>	Start-up atmosphere, fast-paced
<b>Aligned with our company values (list them)</b>	Cultural fit
<b>List DEI efforts and contacts for Employee Resource Groups</b>	Inclusive
<b>Add something you've seen in a job description here:</b>	

# How Can I Prevent Age Bias in Hiring?

Once we can see age bias, and understand it may be happening unconsciously, we want to take steps to prevent it in our team’s recruiting and hiring efforts.

Stanford researchers have found that “many managers want to be more inclusive. They recognize the value of inclusion and diversity and believe it’s the right thing to aspire to. But they don’t know how to get there. For the most part, managers are not given the right tools to overcome the challenges posed by implicit biases. The workshops companies invest in typically teach them to constantly check their thoughts for bias. But this demands a lot of cognitive energy, so over time, managers go back to their old habits.”

Their research shows “there are two, small — but more powerful — ways managers can block bias: First, by closely examining and broadening their definitions of success, and second, by asking what each person adds to their teams, what we call their “additive contribution.”<sup>16</sup>

We can build these and other age-bias prevention strategies into both key elements of hiring: the people influencing the hiring and the processes they use during hiring.

## People Influencing the Hiring

As a hiring manager, you are a key influencer of every person involved in the processes and conversations you’ll use to recruit, hire and onboard your new team member. Use that leverage to encourage the team to learn to see, prevent and interrupt age bias. These people, whom you can engage to “examine and broaden their definitions of success” and to focus on the “additive contribution” of each potential job candidate, could include:



- ❑ HR team members/recruiters who support the job posting process and screen candidates
- ❑ Your own direct reports who will be peers of the new hire
- ❑ Functional leaders of teams with whom the new hire will collaborate, and who will participate in any element of review and selection of candidates
- ❑ A senior leader who may participate in a final round interview(s)
- ❑ HR decision makers who approve of the hire’s compensation and benefits package

<sup>16</sup> <https://hbr.org/2018/10/two-powerful-ways-managers-can-curb-implicit-biases>

To help prevent age bias throughout your work with the hiring team, you could:

- ❑ Convene the hiring team for a brief meeting to kick off the hire and talk through the bias-reduction strategies in this guide. Share it with them and use it together. Coach the team members on how to raise questions about potential bias during the hiring process rather than once it's completed; this will allow the team to course correct in real time.
- ❑ Ensure that at each phase of the hiring process, you have a group of people participating who themselves bring diverse experiences and perspectives to the conversation – even better if the group itself is age-diverse.
- ❑ Take a strong role as hiring manager to lead the hiring team's discussion of candidates using the structured approach described later in this section.

*“I find the more employees that participate in an interview, the more balanced the approach – especially if you're deliberate about core values and reminding people what we're looking for in a role.”*

— Dave Martin, SHRM-CP<sup>17</sup>

## Processes Used in Hiring:

As a hiring manager, you likely inherit a set of hiring processes that your organization uses. As you use these processes, remain curious about where they may inadvertently exacerbate bias issues and use your agency to adjust and evolve them as needed. Ask yourself:

- What clear elements are here to prevent age bias from creeping into the hiring experience?
- Do I need to add or remove steps or tools?
- Are the questions or criteria built into the standard hiring approach fully inclusive? Can I adjust them?
- How can my HR partner be a great resource in this effort, which will make their own work to build an inclusive organization more effective?

To help prevent age bias, consider using research-backed best practices at each step of the hiring process. The *Try This* activity in this section will share them with you! Use this exercise with your own team and share it with the HR or a leadership team member in charge of your organization's hiring practices.

*“When Alicia Powell was managing chief counsel at PNC Bank, she made a point of listing the qualities that would make new team members successful in their roles: proactive in managing risk, self-disciplined, patient, customer focused and independent. Powell shared this information with the rest of her team and candidates, ensuring that everyone was on the same page. You should hold people accountable in the same way. Waive criteria rarely, and require an explanation for those exceptions; then keep track of long-term waiving trends. Research shows that objective rules tend to be applied rigorously to out-groups but leniently to in-groups.”<sup>18</sup>*

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0218/pages/hiring-in-the-age-of-ageism.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> <https://hbr.org/2019/11/how-the-best-bosses-interrupt-bias-on-their-teams>

## Try It Now: How Can I Prevent Age Bias in My Team's Hiring?

Ready for the tactics you can use with your team? We have done all the research review and gathered the top research-backed recommendations in one place for you.

**First:** Use this list of best practices as a self-assessment.

- As you read each best practice, choose whether you use it “Consistently,” “Sometimes,” or “Not Yet.”

**Second:** When you are done reading the full set of best practices, choose:

- One “Consistently” that you will celebrate with your team: \_\_\_\_\_
- One “Sometimes” that you plan to move to “Consistently:” \_\_\_\_\_
- One “Not Yet” that you can’t change on your own, so will raise to HR/other leaders for their consideration to change it: \_\_\_\_\_

**Third:** Jot a plan to take action on each of the items you selected in Step 2. This can be as simple as bringing it up in your next team meeting, sending an email or identifying whom to talk with about this topic.

- The one “Consistently” that you will celebrate with your team: \_\_\_\_\_
- The one “Sometimes” that you plan to move to “Consistently:” \_\_\_\_\_
- The one “Not Yet” that you can’t change on your own, so will raise to HR/other leaders for their consideration to change it: \_\_\_\_\_

## How Many Bias-Reduction Best Practices Can You Use in Your Hiring?

### Step 1: Create job description + recruit applicants

- Work with the hiring committee to determine the top 5 (10 maximum) qualifications** for the position, which can cover both business and technical skills. State them explicitly in the job description, listed in priority order so candidates know what you will be assessing.<sup>19</sup> Keep in mind that you should:
  - Clarify ambiguous criteria for success.** First ask, “What are my hidden preferences?” Then challenge your hidden preferences by asking what are the mindsets, skills and diverse experiences that actually lead your team to success. This may make you more effective at hiring people who will thrive in your organization. Instead of asking about prior project management experience, for example, you might seek someone who can discuss critical points effectively and respectfully in an environment of open debate.<sup>20</sup>
  - Beware of the “culture fit” criteria,**<sup>21</sup> which often is where unconscious bias plays out in preferring a candidate with whom you have things in common, or with whom you would be willing to socialize outside work. If you strongly feel that “likeability” is a key hiring criteria, ask yourself why. Use that insight to define

*continued*

<sup>19</sup> <https://hbr.org/2022/11/6-behavioral-nudges-to-reduce-bias-in-hiring-and-promotions>

<sup>20</sup> <https://hbr.org/2018/10/two-powerful-ways-managers-can-curb-implicit-biases>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.hbs.edu/recruiting/insights-and-advice/blog/post/actively-addressing-unconscious-bias-in-recruiting>

it and add it to the qualifications rubric so your hiring team will have a structured, informed conversation about each candidate’s “likeability.”<sup>22</sup>

- At the same time, use the same top skills/acumen criteria** to design the interview assessment rubric that all interviewers will use, and the work assignment that all interviewees will complete.<sup>23</sup> (More info on these is below.)



**Consistently**       **Sometimes**       **Not Yet**

- Remove language and images** from the job description/ad that include subtle age-based stereotypes.
  - Use the *Say This, Not That* chart from earlier in this toolkit to ensure your language does not accidentally create age-bias concerns.
  - Older workers are less likely to even apply to job advertisements that contain language with ageist stereotypes.<sup>24</sup> Keep in mind that three common age-based stereotypes in job ads are: implied communication skills, implied physical ability and implied technological ability.<sup>25</sup>
  - Also test the language by “flipping” it — if you are a man, how would your language be perceived by a woman, if you are under age 30, how might it sound to someone over 50, and if you are white, how might it read to a person of color?<sup>26</sup> Ask others with different perspectives to review it for you.



**Consistently**       **Sometimes**       **Not Yet**

- Add inclusive language and images** to the job description/ad.
  - In addition to focusing on specific skills, focus on the values you want in your organization and team. Frame the job’s purpose and opportunities for “meaningful work, personal growth and impact” to draw a diverse set of candidates motivated by these principles.<sup>27</sup>
  - Ensure the images on any websites or marketing materials used in recruiting reflect a diverse workforce, including both older and younger workers.



**Consistently**       **Sometimes**       **Not Yet**

- Include links to the benefits and policies available to the new hire — yes, even in the job description.**
  - It is especially important to include policies around hybrid/flexible schedule/remote work options and around support for parents and caregivers, as these can be filters for candidates choosing where to apply.<sup>28</sup>
  - Include details on retirement savings benefits such as company matching, which can be key to workers who want to accelerate their retirement savings in later career phases.



**Consistently**       **Sometimes**       **Not Yet**

<sup>22</sup> <https://hbr.org/2017/06/7-practical-ways-to-reduce-bias-in-your-hiring-process>

<sup>23</sup> <https://hbr.org/2022/09/when-hiring-prioritize-assignments-over-interviews>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/publications/economic-letter/2023/march/age-discrimination-and-age-stereotypes-in-job-ads/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/publications/economic-letter/2023/march/age-discrimination-and-age-stereotypes-in-job-ads/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://hbr.org/2020/03/write-a-job-description-that-attracts-the-right-candidate>

<sup>27</sup> <https://hbr.org/2020/03/write-a-job-description-that-attracts-the-right-candidate>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.beapplied.com/post/how-to-write-a-job-description>

## Recruit by limiting referral hiring and instead activating a diverse set of networks.

- Make a point to activate networks beyond your own personal and professional network, which are essentially referral hiring.
- Instead, share internally with all ERGs (and ask them to share in their own personal networks, which are likely diverse.) Share externally with multiple organizations that focus on different diverse candidate pools, for example, consider the AARP Job Board or organizations with a Return to Work/On-ramping focus.
- Monitor the diversity of your applicant pool and repost strategically to increase applications from more diverse candidates.



Consistently

Sometimes

Not Yet

## Step 2: Meet the top candidates

### Choose whom to invite to interview

- Insist on a diverse pool.** Whether you are working with recruiters or doing the hiring yourself, make it clear from the outset that you want true diversity, not just one female or minority candidate. Research shows that the odds of hiring a woman are 79 times as great if at least two women are in the finalist pool, while the odds of hiring a nonwhite candidate are 194 times as great with at least two finalist minority applicants.<sup>29</sup> This dynamic is also in play for older candidates. Be wary of “diversity bundling” where one interviewee “checks multiple DEI boxes” while all the rest are more homogenous.
- Use technology** to anonymize candidates for as long as possible. Research shows age bias starts as soon as the employer becomes aware of the candidate’s age. It suggests that using online applications rather than in-person applications, and an online assessment of ability to meet specific job requirements that provides a numerical score to select interviewees, can delay the start of age bias.<sup>30</sup> Software programs can help “blind” the resumes before you review them, so you won’t have indicators of age, race or gender.<sup>31</sup> These technologies can be valuable in your selection of candidates to invite for interviews.
- Embrace blind interviews** and remove demographic identifiers from resumes. “Batch” resumes using best practices to result in more diverse hires without any drop in candidate quality.<sup>32</sup>
- Resist the urge to look candidates up on LinkedIn** or other social media, which can trigger many different unconscious biases — wait and do that scan only for your top candidate after your final candidate interviews and before you make an offer if you really need to.<sup>33</sup>



Consistently

Sometimes

Not Yet

<sup>29</sup> <https://hbr.org/2019/11/how-the-best-bosses-interrupt-bias-on-their-teams>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/patriciabarnes/2020/01/06/age-discrimination-starts-when-an-employer-becomes-aware-of-an-older-workers-age/?sh=37b110d519ce>

<sup>31</sup> <https://hbr.org/2017/06/7-practical-ways-to-reduce-bias-in-your-hiring-process>

<sup>32</sup> <https://hbr.org/2020/07/research-a-method-for-overcoming-implicit-bias-when-considering-job-candidates>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0218/pages/hiring-in-the-age-of-ageism.aspx>

**Give a work sample assignment after the first screening interview, before advancing candidates to the full interview series.**

- One of the best ways to remove bias from hiring is to request a small work sample project. This lets you assess what the candidate’s capabilities are, rather than relying solely on what they tell you they can do. Request the same assignment from every candidate you are interviewing.
- Design the assignment specifically to show each of the top 5-10 business skills or functional acumen you have already defined. At Deloitte Consulting, these are framed as “minimally viable demonstrations of competence” and specifically designed to be “unfussy and brief and shows skills in action that are essential to the job.”<sup>34</sup>
- Ask a team member to provide all of the work samples to you “blinded” and be sure to use the same rubric to assess them. Do the same for any other members of the hiring committee who will review the work assignment.



**Consistently**

**Sometimes**

**Not Yet**

**Conduct interviews systematically**

- Schedule the non-majority candidates to interview first.** Our brains unconsciously anchor on the first 1-2 candidates we meet, and then compare any later candidates to the ‘presumed’ winner.<sup>35</sup>
- Conduct first-round interviews via phone or voice-only** online meetings.<sup>36</sup> If using a video interview, manage the unconscious assumptions you are likely to make about a candidate if you see them and their personal space in the background.
- Seek diverse perspectives on every candidate.** You can have multiple people join an interview, or schedule successive interviews for the candidate. Make sure everyone uses the standard set of questions and ensure diversity among the interviewers including both younger and older interviewers where possible.<sup>37</sup>
- “Standardize” the interview by asking the same set of questions in the same order**, designed “to align directly with what will define success in this role, and remove any that are superfluous or could exacerbate bias.”<sup>38</sup> These questions should move through your list of top qualifications that you included in the job description. Research shows this structured approach is more predictable than unstructured interviews for predicting success in the job — not just reducing bias in hiring.<sup>39</sup> “When creating the questions, focus on skills assessments. Rather than ask ‘How comfortable are you with Excel?’ say ‘Here’s a data set. How would you find out X?’ For more complex skills, such as project management, pose a problem or a task that candidates are likely to encounter on the job and ask them to describe in detail how they would handle it.”<sup>40</sup>
- Use a rubric of the top 5-10 qualifications you chose at the start of the hiring process as a scorecard during the interview**, and now assess “low, medium, high” or a score of “1-5” for each one. Each interviewer should fill out the same form for each candidate and do so independently – jotting the score for each question

*continued*

<sup>34</sup> <https://hbr.org/2022/09/when-hiring-prioritize-assignments-over-interviews>

<sup>35</sup> <https://hbr.org/2022/11/6-behavioral-nudges-to-reduce-bias-in-hiring-and-promotions>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.hbs.edu/recruiting/insights-and-advice/blog/post/actively-addressing-unconscious-bias-in-recruiting>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.hbs.edu/recruiting/insights-and-advice/blog/post/actively-addressing-unconscious-bias-in-recruiting> and <https://ideal.com/age-discrimination/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.hbs.edu/recruiting/insights-and-advice/blog/post/actively-addressing-unconscious-bias-in-recruiting>

<sup>39</sup> <https://hbr.org/2017/06/7-practical-ways-to-reduce-bias-in-your-hiring-process> and <https://hbr.org/2016/04/how-to-take-the-bias-out-of-interviews>

<sup>40</sup> <https://hbr.org/2019/11/how-the-best-bosses-interrupt-bias-on-their-teams>



immediately after it is answered, then adding comments immediately after the interview is complete.”<sup>41</sup> Harvard Kennedy School Dean Iris Bohnet explains that “evaluators who wait until the end of the interview to rate answers risk forgetting an early or less vivid but high-quality answer or favoring candidates whose speaking style favors storytelling.”<sup>42</sup> If it makes you more comfortable, you can explain to the candidate that pausing to jot notes after each set of questions is a best practice your team uses to reduce the potential for bias in the hiring process.



**Consistently**       **Sometimes**       **Not Yet**

### Step 3: Assess the Candidates

- Use a systematic approach to comparing ALL candidates** once all interviews are completed. Be sure your entire hiring team can participate. As the hiring manager, guide the team through a very structured approach. “It’s best to compare candidate responses horizontally. That is, if you interview five candidates, compare each of their answers on question one, then each answer on question two, and so on... [These] comparative evaluations not only help us calibrate across candidates but also decrease the reflex to rely on stereotypes to guide our impressions.”<sup>43</sup>
- Once your team has honed in on the top two candidates, ask curious questions** about each candidate’s perceived key strength and weakness. How might a weakness function instead as a strength? How might a concern about “fit” actually add value to team discussions and decision making? “What has this person learned from her experiences? Can he take risks and persevere through difficulties?” If your top two candidates vary considerably by age, ask deliberate questions regarding ageist assumptions.
- Then ask questions that assess each candidate’s “additive contributions”** that help us determine how a person adds to the portfolio of experiences and skills across our entire team. “Ask ‘how does this person’s approach help us get to better discussions and decisions?’ and ‘Does this person help me see outside my box?’ ‘What skills and experiences are missing on my team that this person has?’ Ultimately, ‘How can this person add to the total value (composition) of our team?’”<sup>44</sup>
- Reframe concerns about “overqualified.”** Consider that an “overqualified” candidate may be one who will step in quickly to add value, reframe major challenges and give you a chance to continually evolve the team if they are more quickly promoted. They may, in fact, reinvigorate your whole team. Don’t assume “overqualified” means they are not excited about the job or are “settling” for it. If your concern or assumption is a financial one, consider including a salary range in the job posting. Refrain from eliminating candidates based on assumptions about the salary and benefits they want due to their age.
- Before you finalize to whom you’ll offer the role, debrief with your hiring team to reflect on the team’s bias-reduction efforts.** Use this list of best practices to guide conversation about where your team consistently used bias-reducing approaches, where you did not and why. This is a great conversation to include your HR or DEI partner to help you link to the organization’s stated DEI goals.<sup>45</sup> Once you are comfortable that your hiring process has been bias-aware, congratulations — make that offer!

<sup>41</sup> <https://hbr.org/2022/11/6-behavioral-nudges-to-reduce-bias-in-hiring-and-promotions>

<sup>42</sup> <https://hbr.org/2016/04/how-to-take-the-bias-out-of-interviews>

<sup>43</sup> <https://hbr.org/2016/04/how-to-take-the-bias-out-of-interviews>

<sup>44</sup> <https://hbr.org/2018/10/two-powerful-ways-managers-can-curb-implicit-biases>

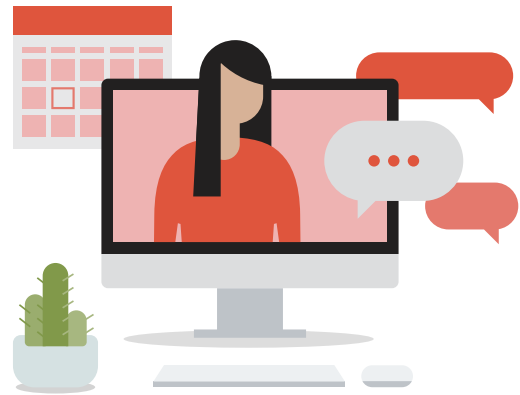
<sup>45</sup> <https://hbr.org/2017/06/7-practical-ways-to-reduce-bias-in-your-hiring-process>

## Step 4: Congrats! Make the offer

- **When you make the offer, personalize it to immediately create a sense of belonging on your team.** You may have a standard offer letter you must use based on company policy, and if so, simply create a supplemental document. You could include a welcome message from each interviewer, a note from each interviewer calling out a specific story or part of their experience with the candidate. Be sure to include a fully diverse set of voices in the “you belong here” messaging that you wrap around the official nuts-and-bolts HR offer letter.

*“You can’t be a great manager without becoming a bias interrupter.”<sup>46</sup>*

*— Joan Williams, Distinguished Professor of Law, UC-Hastings,  
and Founding Director of the Center for WorkLife Law*



<sup>46</sup> <https://hbr.org/2019/11/how-the-best-bosses-interrupt-bias-on-their-teams>

# How Can I Help My Team Interrupt Age Bias?

Once we can see age bias, and understand it may be happening unconsciously, we can take steps to interrupt it in our own team's recruiting and hiring efforts. Hiring managers who use the best practices described earlier will have less need to interrupt age bias during the hiring process. Still, moments will pop up and each member of the hiring team needs to be willing and able to interrupt age bias as it happens so the team can self-correct.

We can use strategies to interrupt age bias during an active hiring scenario by addressing both key influences of hiring: people and processes. This is a particularly important area for you to train your full team, as each person will see and be willing to interrupt different situations of potential age bias. The good news is that the same strategies that reduce other types of bias, and may already be embedded in your efforts, are also effective for reducing age bias.

## People Influencing the Hiring:

As a hiring manager, you are a key influencer of every person involved in the processes and conversations you'll use to recruit, hire and onboard your new team member. Use that leverage to encourage these people to learn to see, prevent and interrupt age bias. You could:

- At a kickoff meeting with the hiring team, have a conversation about the value of diversity on the team, including age diversity. This anchors everyone in the positive benefits of building an age-inclusive team. To guide discussion, you can use Section I of AARP's [Managing Mixed Age Teams Guide](#), and consider using Activity #1 of this guide too.
- At the same kick off meeting, talk about the ubiquity of age bias so that everyone understands they are expected to both self-reflect and to help others do the same. This makes it easier for those same hiring team members to raise concerns (and accept constructive feedback themselves) about age-related bias in their hiring process as it unfolds. For example, you might take ten minutes to complete the free [Harvard Implicit Bias Test \(Age IAT\)](#) and briefly discuss your reactions to the results.
- Practice as a group HOW to interrupt age bias in the hiring process. Some simple role plays with your hiring team may feel awkward and even silly at times, but the practice of having a live conversation makes people more likely to speak up when the stakes are higher. You could ask pairs to take turns speaking/reacting to the situational activity.
- Encourage team members to listen and amplify a concern that someone else flags, and to provide examples of ways they can do so. For example, "Ari encouraged us to follow up with the candidate about our concerns that she might not stay long in the role because she is 'overqualified.' I think he made a great point. What is under the concern about 'being overqualified,' and what else could we learn about the candidate to address that concern?"
- Ask people to raise concerns about potential age bias during, not just after, the hiring process. That way you have time to course correct. For example, you might pre-assign one member of the hiring team to do a quick 1:1 check in with each hiring team member right before key decisions — whom to interview, whom to invite back as finalists and whom to offer the role. Having someone whose clear role is to ask about potential bias in the process makes it more likely that people will both ask and answer honestly.

- Anticipate varying levels of participation based on psychological safety perceived by each person within this team and organizational setting and be cognizant of how and why members of the hiring team are participating.<sup>47</sup> Remember that members of the hiring team who are at either the younger or older range of the group may be less likely to feel comfortable raising concerns about age-bias among the hiring team.

## Processes Used in the Hiring:

As a hiring manager, you are using processes and tools you have inherited from the organization or relied on yourself in the past. To encourage your team to interrupt age bias as they see it embedded in the hiring processes and tools they are actively using, you could:

- Before you start a new hire process, ask each member of the hiring team to choose one standard process or tool that your organization provides for hiring efforts, and review it for improvements that could signal age inclusion and reduce potential age bias. (Note, this step may be best done when you are fully staffed, and it could address all types of potential bias in the hiring processes and tools you are given.)
- Ensure the hiring team adds a final “debrief, reflect and adjust” step to the hiring process to continually improve, and to reinforce team member learning and practice on age bias. Celebrate wins big and small, not just things that need to be improved or changed. Use your learnings to make improvements to your tools and processes after each hire, so they are constantly, incrementally improving.
- Integrate age bias reduction conversations into your existing team norms, structures and meetings throughout all hiring efforts on your interview panel. Extend it into your overall team culture beyond hiring, as with all behavior changes, “one and done training” is not effective. Repeated application of the ideas is what sustainably changes behaviors and outcomes.
- Include feedback on age-inclusive hiring and onboarding contributions in performance assessments for hiring team members. If a member of the hiring team is not your own direct report, consider sending a “kudos” email to their manager after the hiring process is complete, to positively reinforce their efforts to make the hiring process more age-inclusive.

*“It’s been my experience that while people react very quickly and rightly to negative comments about race, ethnicity and sex, they still chuckle about the ‘old dog, new tricks’ comments.”<sup>48</sup>*

*— William Milani, Vice Chair Board of Directors, Epstein Becker and Green*

<sup>47</sup> To learn more about how to increase psychological safety within your hiring team, see <https://hbr.org/2021/06/4-steps-to-boost-psychological-safety-at-your-workplace> and <https://hbr.org/2022/12/a-guide-to-building-psychological-safety-on-your-team>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0218/pages/hiring-in-the-age-of-ageism.aspx>

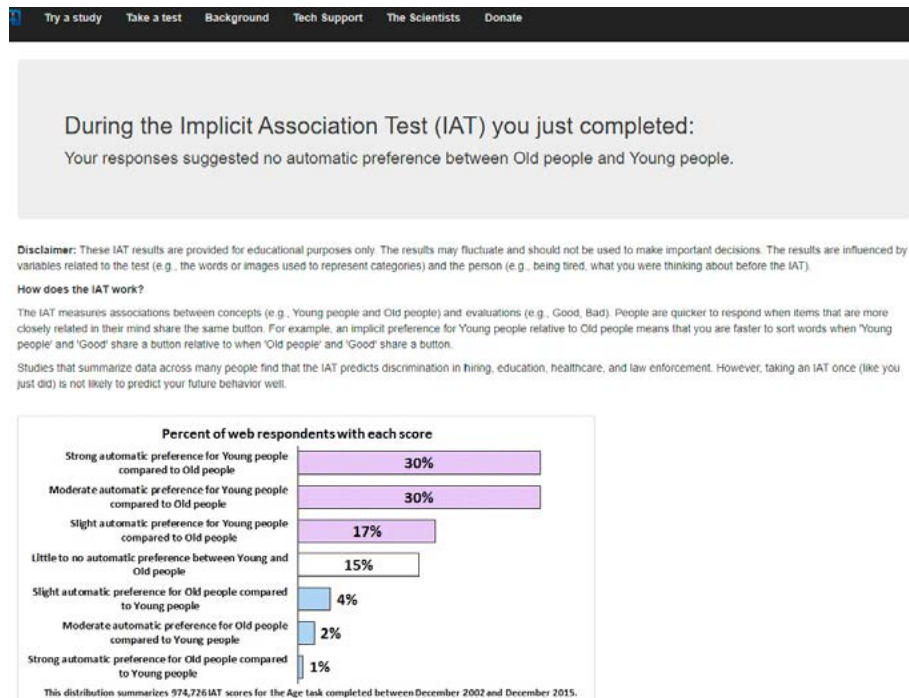
## Try It Now: How Can I Interrupt Age Bias in My Team's Hiring?

Interrupting age bias as it occurs needs first to start with becoming comfortable with a little bit of discomfort. As the hiring manager, take a moment to increase your own capacity for feeling a little uncomfortable. It will help you lead the team more effectively in your shared efforts to reduce age bias in hiring.

- **Reflect on your own possible implicit age bias.**

- Take ten minutes to complete the free [Harvard Implicit Bias Test \(Age IAT\)](#). Read through the results and the summary of web respondent scores on key indicators. After you have read the results twice, reflect on these questions. Jot thoughts if you want to.
  - In what work relationships may implicit age biases have played out in your own professional life — 5 years ago, 5 months ago, 5 days ago?
  - In what ways might my implicit biases have led to hiring/project assignment decisions to minimize my own potential discomfort? Do my own managerial decisions seem to show a pattern of affinity bias (preference for colleagues who are a similar age as I am)?
  - How do you think your level and type of implicit age bias might have evolved over time?
  - If your results suggested no automatic preference for either old or young people, what does this mean for how you lead the hiring process?

- **Sample Age IAT results:**



- **Reflect on your current post-hire debrief process**

- Think of the last hire you made for your team. Below, jot notes about the post-hiring steps you used:
  1. **Debrief:** Once you'd made the hire, did you talk with the others involved in the hiring process about what went well? What didn't go as well as hoped? Was this a casual conversation, or a defined step in the hiring process? Was age bias part of your debrief? If so, in what way?
  2. **Reflect:** How did you reflect on the hiring process? On your own and/or with others? Mentally, in conversation and/or in writing? Was age bias part of your reflection? If so, in what way?
  3. **Adjust:** What did you decide to adjust or change about the people and/or process you used in your last hire? How will this change make your next hiring process more successful for you, your team and your potential recruits?



# Put It All Together in Your Custom Hiring Kit

Now that you've learned how to see, prevent and interrupt age bias in your hiring processes, take a few minutes to customize your own hiring kit. You can download this as a template, edit it for your own content, then share it with your hiring team to use a new version for each role you hire. The best practices embedded in this kit reduce age bias, but also are likely to reduce many other types of hiring bias.

Most of what you need is already here. All you need to add are the job description for the role you're hiring, the key skills/areas of acumen needed to succeed in the role and the interview questions you'll use. Make it your own!

## Define the Role

### Define the Role

#### 1. Choose a role

This could be a role for which you are currently hiring, one you are designing as an addition to your team or maybe your own, so it's easy to hire a replacement when you get promoted.

#### Job Opening Basic Information

Title of the role: \_\_\_\_\_

Hiring manager name: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of hire:

- Replacement for currently defined role
- Replacement for role being redefined during this hiring process
- Hire into a new role

\*The type of hire is important to keep in mind as you define the Top 5 Skills in the following steps. If it is #1 or #2 above, gather input from team about the skills they believe are most critical to succeed in this role.

#### 2. Carefully draft definitions of the Top 5 Skills for this role

These should be specific skills or types of acumen that will enable the new hire to be successful in the role. Keep these as succinct as possible, as you will be using them in many ways throughout the rest of the hiring process. If you really can't stick with five, you can add up to eight skills. Keep in mind that more than five will create more work for your team throughout the process.

#### Top 5 Skills/Acumen Areas Needed to Succeed in this Role DRAFT

As hiring manager, draft the top skills or types of acumen you believe are critical to success in the role.

Skill or Type of Acumen	How might the candidate show they have this?	Why is this a key to success in the role we are hiring?
(try to stay to 5, but up to 8 is ok)		

#### Top 5 Skills/Acumen Areas Needed to Succeed in this Role FINAL

We the drafted Top 5 Skills with the full hiring team to ensure everyone is on the same page and understands each one. This is very important because the hiring team will interview to assess a candidate's work samples and determine the final candidate assessment against these specific skills/acumen requirements. Take time to have a meeting to discuss and confirm before moving ahead in the process. Copy the final version here.

Skill or Type of Acumen	How might the candidate show they have this?	Why is this a key to success in the role we are hiring?

#### 3. Draft a job description

The job description should be concise, reflect the final Top 5 Skills and use the best practices described in this guide. Remember that the more qualifications you list, the less likely you are to receive applications from candidates who assume they need to have all of these to successfully compete for the role. Stay focused on the most important qualifications. Take care to use non-biased language and images, and to signal inclusion of all ages and career phases in the benefits and policies area, as explored earlier in this guide.

#### Job Description DRAFT

As hiring manager, draft the job description.

Job title	
Job responsibilities	
Desired skills/acumen	1. Copy directly from the list you've finalized in Step 2
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
How to apply	
Salary range	
Benefits and policies	
About our organization	

#### Job Description FINAL

Solicit feedback from your hiring team on the draft job description. If appropriate, also solicit input from the members of your team who will be peers of this new hire. Paste the final job description here:

Job title	
Job responsibilities	
Desired skills/acumen	1. Copy directly from the list you've finalized in Step 2
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
How to apply	
Salary range	
Benefits and policies	
About our organization	

# Select and Complete First Round Interviews

## Select and Complete First Round Interviews

### 1. Use a Top 5 Skills scorecard to select applicants to invite to first round interviews.

#### Step 1: Review applications.

#### Interview Selection Scorecard

For candidates whom you consider inviting for first round interviews, make an initial assessment of the Top 5 Skills based on their resume and cover letter. The rating scale is as follows:

1. Minimal evidence of this area of skill/acumen
  2. Low evidence
  3. Moderate evidence
  4. Strong evidence
  5. Exhibits complete mastery of this skill/extremely high acumen
- N/A. No information available to assess this skill area

Refer to this list of Top 5 Skills here for easy reference when reviewing candidates:

Desired skills/acumen	1. (copy directly from the list you've finalized)
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.

Candidate Name for Potential 1st Interview	Skill Area #1:	Skill Area #2:	Skill Area #3:	Skill Area #4:	Skill Area #5:	Candidate Age*	Candidate Race/Ethnicity*	Candidate Gender*	Candidate Disability*
J. Doe									

\*These are important to track because they are the four most common types of employment discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Of course, you can add in any other demographic information that enhances your ability to recruit a fully diverse team.

**Step 2: Run a quick anti-bias check on the candidate pool selected for a first-round interview.** AFTER you have filled out the list of potential interviewees and selected interviewees from the list, do a quick anti-bias check. Ask an HR team member who is NOT on the hiring committee to add demographic information for the candidates you selected. Ask them to share the summary (gray box info only) with you, without attaching it to specific candidate names. Why do we need to do it this way? We should try to keep the “blind selection” in place as long as possible, while also doing checks for implicit bias along the way.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eeoc.gov/data/charge-statistics-charges-filed-eeoc-fy-1997-through-fy-2021>

**Step 3: If you do not have a diverse pool of candidates to invite for interviews, consider reexamining your application process** to see if you missed people who are highly qualified. To the end of the hiring process, offering this can be especially strong, as some of your interviewees may very much prefer to be invited to interview than to be rejected from the pool.

**Step 4: Gather the resumes and cover letters from the candidates you are inviting to the first interview.** Before sharing them with anyone on the hiring team, remove black and white boxes that reveal their demographics. Color, gender, dates, etc., coloring is acceptable in the first round of the hiring process, but the Women's Employee Resource Group (WERC) asks to keep the process "blind" as much and as long as possible, which will reduce the opportunity for possible age and gender bias to occur into your hiring decision-making.

**Step 5: Plan first round interviews.**

**First Round Interview Schedule**

Remember that the best practice is for non-majority candidates to be interviewed first. For candidates who are more likely to experience implicit bias in the hiring process, we don't ask them to sign the consent to be interviewed and "watch out" to the candidate who interviews first.

Interview Order	Candidate Name	Interview Interviewer	Interview Panel Members
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

**Standard First Round Questions and Interview Schedule**

Remember that the standard suggests that to ensure gender or racial bias in screening candidates, it's best to do the first interview via phone but video is preferred, and with a consistent panel of interviewers rather than by one individual.

All interviewers should use the same questions in the same order. Interviewers should get a score on the table below for each response and then give scores to all interviewers after the interview concludes.

When creating the interview questions, focus exclusively on assessing the top skills your team has defined as key to success in the role. Resist the natural inclination to keep general conversational and small talk, which make it much more likely to trigger implicit bias. To test skills, consider how you have conducted an interview with a candidate who, like a candidate who is likely to encounter on the job and ask them to describe in detail how they would handle it. Consider how you would ask each skill area using two questions from interview questions, with examples to guide you.

The rating scale is as follows:

1. Minimal evidence of the area of skill/acumen
2. Low evidence
3. Moderate evidence
4. Strong evidence
5. Exhibits complete mastery of this skill/extremely high acumen

**Step 6: Review the interview questions and interview schedule.**

Remember that the standard suggests that to ensure gender or racial bias in screening candidates, it's best to do the first interview via phone but video is preferred, and with a consistent panel of interviewers rather than by one individual.

All interviewers should use the same questions in the same order. Interviewers should get a score on the table below for each response and then give scores to all interviewers after the interview concludes.

When creating the interview questions, focus exclusively on assessing the top skills your team has defined as key to success in the role. Resist the natural inclination to keep general conversational and small talk, which make it much more likely to trigger implicit bias. To test skills, consider how you have conducted an interview with a candidate who, like a candidate who is likely to encounter on the job and ask them to describe in detail how they would handle it. Consider how you would ask each skill area using two questions from interview questions, with examples to guide you.

The rating scale is as follows:

1. Minimal evidence of the area of skill/acumen
2. Low evidence
3. Moderate evidence
4. Strong evidence
5. Exhibits complete mastery of this skill/extremely high acumen

**Selecting Candidates to Advance to the Next Round**

Asking for things: make sure that you are the person who asks the questions about the results. For each of the Top 5 Skills, identify and discuss who are the top three candidates. Once you have done so for all five of the top skills, identify which candidates performed the strongest overall. These are the candidates whom you have to contact to the next round.

Since the interview findings do discuss each candidate individually before discussing the new candidates, by instead focusing on each skill, will allow to compare candidates' relative strength, will reduce the likelihood that implicit bias will affect your assessment of the candidates.

Interview Order	Candidate Name	Interview Interviewer	Interview Panel Members
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

**Step 7: Review the interview questions and interview schedule.**

Remember that the standard suggests that to ensure gender or racial bias in screening candidates, it's best to do the first interview via phone but video is preferred, and with a consistent panel of interviewers rather than by one individual.

All interviewers should use the same questions in the same order. Interviewers should get a score on the table below for each response and then give scores to all interviewers after the interview concludes.

When creating the interview questions, focus exclusively on assessing the top skills your team has defined as key to success in the role. Resist the natural inclination to keep general conversational and small talk, which make it much more likely to trigger implicit bias. To test skills, consider how you have conducted an interview with a candidate who, like a candidate who is likely to encounter on the job and ask them to describe in detail how they would handle it. Consider how you would ask each skill area using two questions from interview questions, with examples to guide you.

The rating scale is as follows:

1. Minimal evidence of the area of skill/acumen
2. Low evidence
3. Moderate evidence
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Interview Order	Candidate Name	Interview Interviewer	Interview Panel Members
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			



# Request and Assess a Work Sample from Second Round Candidates

## Request and Assess a Work Sample from Second Round Candidates

### 1. Design a work assignment that is a brief, unfussy way for candidates to demonstrate that they have these Top 5 Skills

Signal to candidates that you respect their time and are looking to understand how they can show and apply the desired skills/acumen listed in the job description. Specify that the assignment should only take 60-90 minutes total. This is a work sample, not a project output you would expect from a current team member. Having candidates *show* you how they work is much more valuable than simply asking them to *tell* you how they work. Ideally, all candidates have submitted their work sample before any of them participates in a second round interview. In any case, ensure that no candidate has an unfair advantage by finishing their second round interviews before starting their work sample, unless all candidates have this advantage. A staggered interview process could result in a candidate's unfair ability to apply what they learned in interviews to the work sample project.

#### "Show Don't Tell" Work Assignment

The purpose of the assignment	This assignment is intended to help us understand your strengths and ability to apply the core skills we believe are necessary to succeed in this role. It is intended to be a short 60- to 90-minute exercise that gives us a sense of how you gather information you need, how you think, how you work and how you communicate your ideas. We do not expect an exhaustive, perfect deliverable. Think of it as a way we can see what you can do, rather than simply assess what you've done to date in your past professional and academic life.
How we will assess it	The full hiring team, including everyone with whom you interview, will review your submission. They will each assess it against a rubric of the top skills we believe will enable you to succeed in this role. These include: [list your Top 5 here].
How do we use it in our hiring process	When the team discusses your candidacy, they will draw on your resume, their interview with you and their review of this assignment.
The assignment	The assignment: [Describe your assignment clearly here. Be sure it is designed specifically so the candidate can show, and you can assess, the strength of the Top 5 Skills your hiring team believes will help them succeed in the role.]  Guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may gather information in any way that works for you. We expect that any analysis, writing or development of the deliverable is solely your work and completed without asking others to suggest, review and/or edit. You'll have plenty of time in the role to show us how you collaborate — this assignment should help us understand how you work as an individual.</li> <li>Please plan to spend only 60-90 minutes preparing and creating the deliverable.</li> </ul>
If you have questions	If you have any questions as you work on this, please don't hesitate to reach out to [add name and email here.]
How to submit it	Please submit it to [name, email] by [5 p.m. PT on July 1, 2023.]  In the body of the email, please include the following statement: "This work represents solely my own efforts. I did not ask other(s) for advice, input, editing or assistance in producing it. The estimated total time that I spent in all aspects of this assignment, including research, preparation, drafting and finalizing it — is [xxxx]."

### 2. Use a standard rubric to assess the work assignment

The rubric is designed to guide each hiring committee member through a structured assessment of the Top 5 Skills/Areas of Acumen that defines a new hire's success.  
When you provide the work assignment sample to the reviewers, do not attach the candidate's name, instead assign each sample a number that's easily traceable. As always, we are trying to "blind" as much of the assessment as possible to reduce the likelihood of bias creeping in.

#### Work Assignment Scorecard

Each reviewer should use a copy of this scorecard to review each candidate's submission.

Candidate	Notes on evidence in this assignment of this skill/acumen area	Rating on this skill/acumen based on the responses to these questions	Notes to help me remember details about the hiring committee consensus
[Did your 1 <sup>st</sup> key skill/area of acumen here]		1 2 3 4 5	
[Did your 2 <sup>nd</sup> key skill/area of acumen here]		1 2 3 4 5	
[Did your 3 <sup>rd</sup> key skill/area of acumen here]		1 2 3 4 5	
[Did your 4 <sup>th</sup> key skill/area of acumen here]		1 2 3 4 5	
[Did your 5 <sup>th</sup> key skill/area of acumen here]		1 2 3 4 5	

# Complete Second Round Interviews

## Complete Second Round Interviews

### 1. Plan Second Round Interviews

#### Second Round Interview Schedule

Remember that the best practice is for non-majority candidates to be interviewed first. For candidates who are more likely to encounter implicit bias in the hiring process, we don't also want to layer in the natural bias to favor and "anchor on" to the candidate who interviews first.

The same set of interviewers should interview the candidates, ideally in the same order.

Candidates often appreciate interviewing with the hiring manager last, when they can apply what they learned from earlier conversations and can ask questions about the role and the team that have arisen during earlier conversations. This timing also helps give the manager the chance to ensure every candidate's final interview experience inspires them to feel positive about the organization, the role and their potential direct manager.

Interview Order	Candidate Name	Candidate Interview Schedule	Interviewers
First			Panel #1: Panel #2: Hiring Manager
Second			Panel #1: Panel #2: Hiring Manager
Third			Panel #1: Panel #2: Hiring Manager
Fourth			Panel #1: Panel #2: Hiring Manager

### 2. Select Second Round Interview Questions

#### Standard Second Round Questions and Interview Scorecard

All interviewers should use the same questions in the same order. Interviewers should jot a score on the rubric immediately after the responses and can jot notes for all areas immediately after the interview concludes.

The rating scale is as follows:

1. Minimal evidence of this area of skill/acumen
2. Low evidence
3. Moderate evidence
4. Strong evidence
5. Exhibits complete mastery of this skill/extremely high acumen

Advice from the first round of interviews applies again here: When creating the interview questions, focus exclusively on assessing the top skills your team has defined as key to success in the role. Resist the natural inclination to have personal conversations and small talk, which make it much more likely to trigger implicit biases. To test skills, "rather than ask 'How comfortable are you with Excel?' say, 'Here's a data set. How would you find out X?' For more complex skills, such as project management, pose a problem or a task that candidates are likely to encounter on the job and ask them to describe in detail how they would handle it." Define follow-up questions on each skill area using best practices from behavioral interviews, with examples [here](#) to guide you.

Candidate Name:			
Interviewer Name:	Interview question(s) to assess this skill/acumen area	Rating on this skill/acumen level based on the responses to these questions	Notes to help me remember details when the hiring committee convenes
	[Insert your 1st key skill/area of acumen here] <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about a time when...</li> <li>2. Tell me more about...</li> <li>3. If you could do it again, what would you do differently?</li> </ol>	1 2 3 4 5	
	[Insert your 2nd key skill/area of acumen here] <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about a time when...</li> <li>2. Tell me more about...</li> <li>3. If you could do it again, what would you do differently?</li> </ol>	1 2 3 4 5	
	[Insert your 3rd key skill/area of acumen here] <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about a time when...</li> <li>2. Tell me more about...</li> <li>3. If you could do it again, what would you do differently?</li> </ol>	1 2 3 4 5	
	[Insert your 4th key skill/area of acumen here] <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about a time when...</li> <li>2. Tell me more about...</li> <li>3. If you could do it again, what would you do differently?</li> </ol>	1 2 3 4 5	
	[Insert your 5th key skill/area of acumen here] <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about a time when...</li> <li>2. Tell me more about...</li> <li>3. If you could do it again, what would you do differently?</li> </ol>	1 2 3 4 5	

# Assess Interviews and Work Samples to Choose the Top Candidate

Now come the final steps — considering your candidates and choosing to whom you will offer the role. Before you start this section, it is critical here to remind the team that anyone with concerns about potential bias at any point in the process should share their question with others.

## Summary: Second Round Interview and Work Sample Scores

### Summary: Second Round Interview and Work Sample Scores

**Step 1:** As the hiring manager/HR partner, gather all rubrics from the interview team to synthesize the scores each candidate received from each member of the hiring committee.

Skill #1: [List here]	Interview rating	Work sample rating	Indicate top 3 candidates for this Skill Area
[Candidate #1 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #2 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #3 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #4 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	

Skill #2: [List here]	Interview rating	Work sample rating	Indicate top 3 candidates for this Skill Area
[Candidate #1 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #2 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #3 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #4 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	

Skill #3: [List here]	Interview rating	Work sample rating	Indicate top 3 candidates for this Skill Area
[Candidate #1 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #2 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #3 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #4 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	

Skill #4: [List here]	Interview rating	Work sample rating	Indicate top 3 candidates for this Skill Area
[Candidate #1 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #2 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #3 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #4 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	

Skill #5: [List here]	Interview rating	Work sample rating	Indicate top 3 candidates for this Skill Area
[Candidate #1 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #2 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #3 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
[Candidate #4 name]	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	

**Step 2:** As hiring manager (or with assistance from your HR partner), check the demographics of each candidate (age, race, gender, etc.) and scan for patterns that raise questions about potential implicit bias within the hiring effort so far. Does one hiring committee member have patterns you want to better understand? Are you surprised at the demographics of the top scoring candidates? Are there any conversations you want to have with hiring committee members before you finalize and share these results with the team in the team meeting?

**Step 3:** Bring this summary to share live in the hiring committee meeting; do not share beforehand. This ensures that reactions and conversations provide input for all members of the hiring team in the decision-making process. The best practice would be to create a slide for each Top Skill Area results table and reveal the next only when the first has been discussed and top candidate identified. In addition, paper-based copies of this sensitive HR information can be hard to track and destroy afterwards.

## ↓ Gather the Hiring Team and Select the Final Candidate

### Final Hiring Team Meeting Agenda

#### Create and use a clear agenda for the final hiring team meeting

As hiring manager, it is your role to ensure that the final team review and decision-making process is bias-free and efficient. Keeping to a structured agenda can accomplish both.

Agenda Item	Goal/ Outcome
Refresh of the Top 5 Skills list.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure shared understanding on the criteria, so we can use them fairly and consistently across all candidates.</li> </ul>
<p>Introduce the summary spreadsheet of all interviewers' rubric scores for interviews and work assignments.</p> <p>Review summary of scores for each Top 5 Skills area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Skill Area #1:</b> Review all candidates' interview and work assignment scores for this skill. Discuss. Identify top two candidates for this skill area.</li> <li><b>Skill Area #2:</b> Review all candidates' interview and work assignment scores for this skill. Discuss. Identify top two candidates for this skill area.</li> <li><b>Skill Area #3:</b> Review all candidates' interview and work assignment scores for this skill. Discuss. Identify top two candidates for this skill area.</li> <li><b>Skill Area #4:</b> Review all candidates' interview and work assignment scores for this skill. Discuss. Identify top two candidates for this skill area.</li> <li><b>Skill Area #5:</b> Review all candidates' interview and work assignment scores for this skill. Discuss. Identify top two candidates for this skill area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain how we will use this data.</li> <li>Identify which candidates will bring the most to each of our Top 5 Skills/Areas of acumen.</li> <li>Identify areas where we need further discussion due to inconsistencies.</li> <li><b>Why do we need to do it this way?</b> "It's best to compare candidate responses horizontally. That is, if you interview five candidates, compare each of their answers on question one, then each answer on question two, and so on... [These] comparative evaluations not only help us calibrate across candidates but also decrease the reflex to rely on stereotypes to guide our impressions."<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Self-check for any areas where candidates interviewed may have experienced implicit age bias and/or other types of implicit bias.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask about each candidate specifically, and what may trigger implicit bias among the hiring team members.</li> <li>This is a key point to make note of any "waivers" you've given to these candidates and chosen to advance candidates who are not the strongest based on the criteria we defined and agreed to at the outset. Are you comfortable with this "waiver" or want to circle back to discussion?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce potential for bias to negatively affect our best decision.</li> </ul>
<p>Full discussion of the top two candidates who show highest results in Top 5 Skills/Acumen.</p> <p>Before beginning discussion, ask each member to jot their own thoughts on the following for each candidate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assumptions I make about the candidate</li> <li>Concerns I have about the candidate</li> <li>Strengths I see in the candidate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the top two candidates holistically and decide on who to offer the role.</li> </ul>
Decision on who to offer the role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure team buy-in to the decision.</li> <li>Determine next steps with candidates.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> <https://hbr.org/2016/04/how-to-take-the-bias-out-of-interviews>

## Make an Offer That Shows You Believe the Candidate Belongs On Your Team

In your offer email, cite specific examples of why team members felt the candidate would be successful in the role. Beyond the standard HR language, these details help launch your new candidate with an immediate sense of belonging to your team. For example:

Dear [Name,]

While your official offer letter is coming separately, our team wants to share with you a few thoughts on why we think you belong here.

Whether telling us about [insert an example from a story interview], reflecting on [insert an example from a story in an interview] or sharing that you [insert something from an interview story], we can tell that you have the skills and acumen that will enable you to succeed in this role.

Moreover, we have a belief that with you on our team, our entire team will think more creatively, collaborate more productively and make better decisions. When you told us about [xxx] and how you creatively addressed [name a part of the work assignment], we could see that you bring a unique perspective that will make our team stronger. In short, we look forward to learning with and from you, and to helping you learn throughout your career with us.

Our interview process is designed specifically to help us — and you as a candidate — focus on the role and how it advances the purpose of our organization. With that said, we're sure you have questions about what it's really like to work on our team and in our organization. You are welcome to reach out directly to any member of the hiring committee with any questions you still have, to our HR partners to better understand our benefits and policies (and how people really use them) and to the leaders of our ERGs for fresh perspectives on what it's like to work here. [Insert list of ERG leaders/contacts here.] We already believe you belong here, but we want you to feel confident about that before you choose to join us.

All the best,

[Hiring Manager Name]

# Build Momentum for Age-Inclusive Hiring in Your Organization

## Need to Use This Guide in a Team Training Session?

This guide can be used either as an individual hiring manager, or in a team training session with a group of hiring managers, recruiters and/or HR team members. In a group setting, consider an agenda with this flow:

- Intro/why are we here
- Warm up activity: [How Much Do You Know about Age Discrimination Law?](#) (online quiz)
- Review of each section, using the *Take Action* worksheets together — either as a group, or in pairs with some level of report out and reflection with the group
- Lead a guided exercise for individuals to begin to see the need and opportunity to reduce age bias in their own team's hiring. For example, prompt private jots on:
  - In your last hiring effort, what were the rough ages of each candidate you interviewed?
  - What were the ages of your last five hires?
  - What have you seen as the contributions of the youngest and oldest recent hires, and did you find you had made mistaken assumptions about them?
  - How comfortable would you be as a manager of someone older than you?
  - How might this affect your hiring decisions?
- Put yourself in the hot seat: Edit/write your own job description, then swap with a peer to provide input on each other's drafts to make them both more age-inclusive. (Now your own job description is ready to go when you get promoted!)
- Create and share a personal action plan — what will I do after this session with my direct reports, with my own supervisor and where will I ask for support from HR to reduce age bias in our hiring?

# Need More Activities Ideas?

## To explore specific topics covered in this guide:

- Use the ideas in this guide to help you discuss the two case studies included in the article [7 Practice Ways to Reduce Bias in Your Hiring Process](#).
- Meet with your HR partner to discuss the resources for inclusive hiring from other organizations to inspire you with ideas to improve your own team's efforts to reduce age bias. [Harvard Center for Workplace Development](#).
- In your next unconscious bias training event, ask to specifically discuss recruiting and age bias. This article can help guide discussion. This [re:Work Unbiasing Workshop Toolkit](#)<sup>49</sup> can be valuable if you focus your inquiry specifically on age bias.
- For your next upcoming hire, gather the hiring committee for a kick-off meeting to choose two ideas the team will try from the article [6 Behavioral Nudges to Reduce Bias in Hiring and Promotions](#). Make a plan to use these ideas to address specific types of bias, including age bias.

## To continue making your workplace more age-inclusive:

- **AARP's Managing Mixed Age Teams Guide:** A manager can make or break your diversity, equity and inclusion strategy. Download our latest guide and equip your people managers with best practices and practical tools to ease intergenerational collaboration and boost retention.
- Invite a **Guest Speaker from AARP** to join your manager training event(s), HR leadership events and/or Senior Leadership team events.
- Extend your managerial skills to reduce bias beyond hiring and throughout your development and promotion of your team using the concepts in [How the Best Bosses Interrupt Bias on Their Teams](#).

*“The most effective UB training does more than increase awareness of bias and its impact. It teaches attendees to manage their biases, change their behavior and track their progress. It gives them information that contradicts stereotypes and allows them to connect with people whose experiences are different from theirs.”*

*- Francesca Gino and Katherine Coffman, Harvard Business School<sup>50</sup>*

<sup>49</sup> <https://rework.withgoogle.com/print/guides/6264191547604992/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://hbr.org/2021/09/unconscious-bias-training-that-works>

# Need More Data? Use These Key Research Sources

The OECD and AARP report, [Promoting an Age-Inclusive Workforce: Living, Learning and Earning Longer](#), offers strategies businesses can use to ensure that all employees are getting the opportunity to fully contribute and grow. The same project developed the [Growing with Age](#) digital learning platform for employers.

**AARP Research** uncovers compelling insights on the 50+ population through groundbreaking research. We inform thought leaders internally and externally with strategic insights about the needs, market conditions and trends impacting the 50+ to fulfill AARP's mission of providing Real Possibilities for Americans 50+. Visit <https://www.aarp.org/research/> to learn more.

## Acknowledgements



AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation's largest circulation publication, AARP The Magazine, and the AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit [www.aarp.org/employers](http://www.aarp.org/employers), [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org) or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocate on social media.

## Workable Concept

We consult with employers nationwide to create caregiver-friendly workplaces, coach employees to create strategies that let them thrive at work and home, and to collaborate with business and social sector leaders to create the products that make it all possible. Our approach is grounded in a belief that all parents and working family caregivers deserve to work in an environment where they can achieve bold career goals, and to come home to the support and partnership that makes life sustainable. To learn more, visit [www.workableconcept.com](http://www.workableconcept.com).

