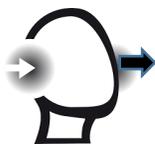


# 12 Cognitive Biases That Can Impact Search Committee Decisions

<p><b>1. Anchoring Bias</b> Over-relying on the first piece of information obtained and using it as the baseline for comparison.</p>  <p><b>For example,</b> if the first applicant has an unusually high test score, it might set the bar so high that applicants with more normal scores seem less qualified than they otherwise would.</p> <p><a href="http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2013/07/27/the-anchoring-effect-how-it-impacts-your-everyday-life/">http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2013/07/27/the-anchoring-effect-how-it-impacts-your-everyday-life/</a></p>	<p><b>2. Availability Bias</b> Making decisions based on immediate information or examples that come to mind.</p>  <p><b>If search committee</b> members hear about a candidate from Georgia who accepted a job and then quit because of the cold weather, they might be more likely to assume that all candidates from the southern U.S. would dislike living in Minnesota.</p> <p><a href="http://psychology.about.com/od/aindex/g/availability-heuristic.htm">http://psychology.about.com/od/aindex/g/availability-heuristic.htm</a></p>	<p><b>3. Bandwagon Effect</b> A person is more likely to go along with a belief if there are many others who hold that belief. Other names for this are “herd mentality” or “group think.”</p>  <p><b>In a search,</b> it may be difficult for minority opinions to be heard if the majority of the group holds a strong contrary view.</p> <p><a href="http://www.wisegeek.org/what-is-a-bandwagon-effect.htm">http://www.wisegeek.org/what-is-a-bandwagon-effect.htm</a> <a href="http://www.psyr.org/about/pubs_resources/groupthink%20overview.htm">http://www.psyr.org/about/pubs_resources/groupthink%20overview.htm</a></p>
<p><b>4. Choice-supportive Bias</b> Once a decision is made, people tend to over-focus on its benefits and minimize its flaws.</p>  <p><b>Search committee</b> members may emphasize rationale that supports decisions they have made in the past. “We hired someone from a prestigious university last time and it worked out really well.”</p> <p><a href="http://www.plexxi.com/2014/10/choice-supportive-bias-need-paranoid-optimism/">http://www.plexxi.com/2014/10/choice-supportive-bias-need-paranoid-optimism/</a></p>	<p><b>5. Confirmation Bias</b> Paying more attention to information that reinforces previously held beliefs and ignoring evidence to the contrary.</p>  <p><b>A search committee</b> member who believes that women are more intelligent might selectively focus on aspects of resumes that highlight the intelligence of female applicants.</p> <p><a href="http://psychology.about.com/od/cognitivepsychology/fl/What-Is-a-Confirmation-Bias.htm">http://psychology.about.com/od/cognitivepsychology/fl/What-Is-a-Confirmation-Bias.htm</a></p>	<p><b>6. Fundamental Attribution Error</b> Overemphasizing personal factors and under-estimating situational factors when explaining other people’s behavior.</p>  <p><b>For example,</b> if an applicant is late to an interview the committee might conclude he is irresponsible or lazy, rather than remember that a major campus access road was closed unexpectedly.</p> <p><a href="http://www.wisegeek.org/in-social-psychology-what-is-fundamental-attribution-error.htm">http://www.wisegeek.org/in-social-psychology-what-is-fundamental-attribution-error.htm</a></p>
<p><b>7. Halo Effect</b> Judging others similarly on all traits, assuming that because someone is good or bad at one thing they will be equally good or bad at another.</p>  <p><b>During a search,</b> if a candidate has strong educational credentials the committee might conclude that she is also a strong leader.</p> <p><a href="http://www.economist.com/node/14299211">http://www.economist.com/node/14299211</a></p>	<p><b>8. Ingroup Preference Bias</b> People tend to divide themselves into groups, and then attribute positive attributes to their own group.</p>  <p><b>Search committee members</b> who perceive commonalities with applicants are more likely to view them favorably.</p> <p><a href="http://www.understandingprejudice.org/apa/english/page7.htm">http://www.understandingprejudice.org/apa/english/page7.htm</a></p>	<p><b>9. The “Jerk” Factor</b> It’s not a cognitive bias, but research has shown an academic tendency to over-value individuals who display “brilliant but cruel” behavior and to attribute less intelligence to people with “nice” behavior.</p>  <p><b>Search committee members</b> can be unduly impressed by an academic star that builds himself up at the cost of behaving disrespectfully toward others.</p> <p><a href="http://bobsutton.typepad.com/my_weblog/2006/08/brilliant-but-c.html">http://bobsutton.typepad.com/my_weblog/2006/08/brilliant-but-c.html</a></p>
<p><b>10. Ostrich Effect</b> Avoiding bad news about a decision by ignoring data that might be negative.</p>  <p><b>For example,</b> a committee may choose not to pay attention to data about how their choice affects diversity goals or minority employment rates.</p> <p><a href="http://99u.com/articles/21387/the-ostrich-problem-and-the-danger-of-not-tracking-your-progress">http://99u.com/articles/21387/the-ostrich-problem-and-the-danger-of-not-tracking-your-progress</a></p>	<p><b>11. Recency Effect</b> Recent events are easier to remember, and can be weighed more heavily than past events or potential future events.</p>  <p><b>In a search,</b> candidates that were interviewed early in the process may be evaluated less favorably. A similar bias is the proximity effect, in which candidates interviewed in person are viewed more favorably than those interviewed via distance technology.</p> <p><a href="http://www.skybrary.aero/index.php/Recency_Bias">http://www.skybrary.aero/index.php/Recency_Bias</a></p>	<p><b>12. Zero-risk Bias</b> Preferring the choice that provides certainty of a smaller benefit as opposed to an alternative with more risk and greater potential benefit.</p>  <p><b>Search committees</b> may seek to avoid risk by hiring a “safer” candidate with a greater perceived likelihood of success rather than taking a reasonable amount of risk.</p> <p><a href="http://www.mydigitalfc.com/news/briskfactorb-zero-risk-bias-308">http://www.mydigitalfc.com/news/briskfactorb-zero-risk-bias-308</a></p>