

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/mitigate-biases-with-rubrics>

Software engineer Tracy Chou, a leading voice for more diversity and inclusion in tech, explains how identifying rubrics can standardize processes and remove biases. She sums up research showing how managers who specify hiring criteria before picking a job candidate made them less likely to stray from their stated preferences. Chou, a founding advisor to Project Include, speaks of improving existing processes, not necessarily creating new ones.



Transcript

a promotion, when I first started working at Quora and I was told an interview people, they just through me into a room with people, and told me to come out with a yes or no answer, which is very standard for startups.. It's like, just go, there is no processed yet.. But, much better practice would be actually having rubrics and having criteria for what you're looking for.. That helps to standardize.. It also helps remove a lot of bias.. There's been interesting academic research on this.. If you don't ask people to specify what they're looking for upfront, they'll let their biases come in, they'll justify it later.. There is a really interesting study about hiring for a police chief where people were shown resumes, one of a man, one of a woman.. And in one scenario, the man had more experience, the woman had more academic background.. The people choosing would chose the man..

They would justify it by saying, "Oh we want somebody with more work experience, "cause that's what this job needs." And then, the other scenario, the man had more academic experience, the woman had more work experience.. They still chose the man, and said, "Well, we just really need more "academic experience in this." So that would back into their choices with these justifications.. But when the people are choosing were told to write down their criteria ahead of time, they would be consistent with it.. So if they said they wanted to have the academic background, then when they were presented with the two resumes, and the woman had more of her academic background, they would choose her.. So there's actually a lot of really great research about how you can mitigate your biases.. And some of these things are just, they just make more sense.. It's not just about diversity and inclusion.. It's just making these processes better.. So writing down rubrics, around not just hiring, but also promotion very valuable.. A lot of times in companies when you're thinking about who's going to lead some new project, or who's going to work on this interesting new opportunity, there's not a lot of process around it..

People would just think who do I know who might be interested in this, who might be good at this, and would tend to fall in the same biases there.. If it's written out, when we're choosing a tech lead, these are the things we're looking for, This is our process.. We're gonna look at everybody who's at a certain level, and has been with the company for a certain amount of time, and consider them.. Then you actually end up with a much better decision.. And it has a side benefit of helping diversity and inclusion people from the underrepresented backgrounds...