

# Managing Bias Checklist

## CHECKLIST

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A cognitive bias is a mistake in reasoning, evaluating, remembering, or other cognitive process, often occurring because you hold on to preferences and beliefs regardless of contrary information. Recognizing that we all have unique biases is the key to overcoming their potential negative effects. Use the checklist to help you manage bias in your day-to-day work.

**Recognize that we are all human beings and that our brains make mistakes.**

- Simply being aware of unconscious bias can immediately start to reduce our reliance on generalizations or stereotypes.

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**Check for anchoring bias. Anchoring bias is our tendency to overemphasize the first piece of information we learn by using it as our criteria to make a decision.**

- If you latch on to the first pain point a client mentions and believe it's a higher priority than anything you learn afterwards, they've fallen victim to anchoring bias. The first pain point a prospect raises might not be the most important. Spend time learning as much as you can about your clients as you can. You can't provide clients with valuable advice unless you have an accurate understanding of your prospect's goals and pain points.

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**Check for confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is interpreting information in a way that confirms what you already believe.**

- Salespeople can fall victim to this bias if they ask prospects loaded questions because they're in search of a specific answer. For example, if a salesperson thinks a prospect could benefit from new sportscar, they might ask, "Would you like to drive a state of the art, cool vehicle?" The answer is yes, but that does not confirm the prospect *needs* the new sportscar – maybe they have children, and a family vehicle would be more appropriate.
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**Check for the clustering illusion. When you notice a pattern in a completely random series of events, you've fallen for the clustering illusion.**

- This happens in sales when you have success with a few prospects using a specific selling strategy, so you use that technique in every sale going forward. This bias is likely how the sales script came to life: If it worked with one prospect, the thinking goes, it will work with all of them. While a pattern of success with a few prospects is great, it shouldn't drastically influence how you approach every client going forward. Having a one-size-fits-all mentality will result in more lost clients than won deals. Try to connect with potential clients in a genuine way.

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**Check for the cognitive bias known as the "curse of knowledge." The curse of knowledge cognitive bias occurs when you're unable to relate to an uninformed person's problems, because you have better information.**

- Salespeople who know their product can benefit a prospective client might fall prey to this bias by dismissing a prospect's objections because of their expertise. Instead of listening to objections and taking time to explain points of confusion, this bias causes reps to revert to, "But it is the best option! Trust me!" Instead of insisting that the product addresses your client's concern, try to respond to objections through sound reasoning, customer reviews, and testimonials. If your prospective clients are still asking questions disguised as objections, they may not understand your product's value well enough. The prospective client isn't interested in whether the product works, they want to know how it will work *for them*.

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**Check for choice bias. The choice bias leads us to retroactively view our past choices in a positive light while overemphasizing negative attributes of options we didn't select.**

- In sales, choice bias impacts your response to making a mistake. If a prospective client turns out to be a bad fit, the bias influences the speed at which you come to terms with the mistake. It also protects you from being too hard on yourself because you're likely to remember the positives and look past the negatives.

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**Be aware of the empathy gap. The empathy gap is a phenomenon where we have difficulty putting ourselves in other people's shoes.**

- When salespeople and prospects are in completely different states of mind, salespeople need to be hyper-conscious of putting themselves in their prospective client's shoes instead of dismissing or minimizing their feelings. The empathy gap makes it more difficult for them to reach common ground, and can create disdain between the rep and prospect, souring the relationship before it even begins. Ultimately, we don't know which unconscious biases we have and how they're affecting our behavior at any given moment. But we can learn to identify bias and adjust our behavior accordingly.
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