

FACTSHEET

ANONYMOUS RECRUITMENT: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Business in the Community's (BITC) [Opening Doors campaign](#) has an ambition to make two million jobs more inclusive by 2025. It identifies a series of actions businesses can take to make their roles more accessible to diverse talent and asks campaign signatories to commit to taking forward at least three. The actions are grouped into [five keys for inclusive recruitment](#).

This factsheet considers how anonymous recruitment can help businesses become more inclusive, looks at the opportunities and challenges that blind CVs present and informs decisions as to whether anonymous recruitment might help a business meet its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) goals. Although anonymous recruitment is not a specific action identified by the Opening Doors campaign, it can be a valuable tool to help businesses implement actions under keys 4 and 5.

- Key 4: focus on the essential skills needed for the job.
- Key 5: prioritise accessibility and eliminate bias.

Introduction

Anonymous recruitment, also known as blind recruitment, is a hiring process designed to eliminate bias and promote a fair selection of candidates based on their skills, rather than personal characteristics, life experiences or background. It does this by removing certain identifying information from candidates' applications which could lead to bias.

Anonymous recruitment may take place at different stages of the recruitment process and could include practices such as online interviews with cameras turned off or AI-run assessments. This factsheet focuses solely on the removal of personal information from CVs and application forms.



Bias within the recruitment process:

- 96% of recruiters think that unconscious bias is a problem.ⁱ
- Names of Indian, Pakistani, or Chinese origin were 28% less likely to get an interview than an Anglo-sounding name.ⁱⁱ
- Women are 123% more likely to have personally experienced gender discrimination when applying or interviewing for a job than men.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Older job applicants are three times less likely to be selected for interview than younger people.^{iv}

Anonymised CVs: how they work

An organisation will decide which identifying information to remove from a jobseeker's CV or application form, depending on its inclusive recruitment ambitions. Typical exclusions include a candidate's name, age, address, and educational institution.^v

The information will be redacted manually or using appropriate software tools before the application is reviewed by the recruiter or hiring manager. The intention is that this will enable the decision-maker to focus solely on the candidate's skills, minimising the risk of bias.^{vi}

How the CV can lead to a biased perception

CV bias can be based on factors such as age, gender, race, sexual orientation, employment gaps, education and even the candidate's name. This bias can be intentional or unintentional, leading to suitable candidates being passed over for employment opportunities.

Lack of anonymisation: Personal characteristics can be inferred from a name – for instance, race and gender. This can trigger explicit and implicit bias.

Employment gap: Returning candidates may face bias from employers due to missing time in employment.

Halo effect: Candidates with work history within a more prominent or popular organisation could be seen as "good candidates" based on organisational reputation.

Stereotype bias: Education and dates of study can lead to bias based on age and university reputation.

Affinity affect: Preferences for "like-minded people"-candidates who may have similar qualifications.^{vii}

The benefits of anonymised CVs

Mitigates unconscious bias: Redacting identifying information from CVs and application forms encourages the recruiter to decide a candidate's suitability based on their skills, rather than their personal characteristics and life experiences.^{viii}

Increases diversity: Ensuring candidates are evaluated on merit rather than personal characteristics can lead to a more diverse and representative workforce.^{ix}

Encourages fairness: Blind CVs contribute to a fairer selection process, giving all applicants an equal opportunity to showcase their abilities. This fosters a more transparent and equitable hiring environment.^x

Enhances employer brand: Companies embracing anonymous recruitment demonstrate a commitment to diversity and fairness, enhancing the employer's reputation and attractiveness to a wider talent pool.^{xii}

77% of candidates believe that blind recruitment makes things fairer.^{xiii}

The challenges of anonymised CVs

They only remove bias at the front-end: If a bias exists in the first place, blind CVs are limited in that they often hide information only during the initial stages.

Although blind recruitment can lead to a more diverse pool of candidates, as soon as further information is revealed, biases may come into play at the final and most critical stage of the recruitment process. The candidate will usually

still need to be met face-to-face (or screen-to-screen).^{xiv}

They don't address the root problem:

Even if anonymous recruitment works to get more diverse talent into the workplace, bias may exist elsewhere, including around reward and promotion decisions, which may lead to diverse employees leaving the workforce.^{xv}

"A lack of career progression and poorer experiences within a company increase the likelihood of Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women leaving their company. Ethnic minorities are 25% more likely to quit their job than their white colleagues."^{xvi}

They can work against diverse shortlists:

Removing identifying information from CVs and application forms can make it challenging for employers to ensure a diverse pool of candidates is put through to the next stage of the recruitment process.^{xvii}

They can disadvantage individual candidates and create the potential for discrimination shift: Blind CVs deny individuals the opportunity to provide a narrative around 'red flags', e.g., gaps in work history. They can also inadvertently shift bias towards other personal characteristics, such as education and work experience.^{xviii}

Mitigating the risks

Make blind CVs part of a broader inclusive recruitment strategy: Anonymous recruitment should only ever be one tool in your armoury. Consider and embrace a whole plethora of other

initiatives, including diverse evaluation teams and structured interviews that focus on skills.^{xix}

Measure and track progress: Businesses should collect and analyse diversity data to ensure that their anonymous recruitment practices have the desired impact and that any adverse consequences are identified quickly.^{xx}

Communicate your ambition: Employers should communicate the purpose of blind CVs to candidates and be transparent about the steps they are taking to ensure a fair recruitment process.^{xxi} They must ensure that hiring managers are trained on the benefits of anonymous recruitment and how to implement it properly, and they should communicate their commitment to diversity and inclusion throughout the workforce, helping to create a work environment and culture where everyone feels safe, has a sense of belonging and is empowered to achieve their full potential.^{xxii}

Summary

For some businesses, anonymous recruitment is a useful tool in helping them to focus on skills, rather than personal characteristics and life experiences, and in that way can support the creation of a more inclusive workforce. However, it can only be effective when implemented alongside transparent communications and diversity data analysis. It is also not a silver bullet; even if it helps to bring more diverse individuals into the business, it cannot by itself deliver an inclusive culture, which is essential to the retention of talent.

HOW BITC CAN HELP BUSINESSES TAKE ACTION TO ACHIEVE A MORE DIVERSE WORKFORCE

Opening Doors: By committing to [Opening Doors](#), employers benefit from a wealth of BITC expert content, events and advice, as well as peer-to-peer support, helping them meet their inclusive recruitment ambitions.

Advisory services: BITC's advisory services can help businesses identify their organisation's inclusive recruitment ambitions and support them in achieving them. We can help employers go beyond protected characteristics into topics such as anonymous recruitment, neurodiversity, and socio-economic inclusion. Our issue area experts support organisations at a strategic level – reviewing strategies, policies, and data collection. They also deliver a wide range of employee training and lunch-and-learn sessions on key inclusion topics, which include conscious inclusion and inclusive recruitment for HR and hiring managers.

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