



Avoiding gender bias in recruiting



This information sheet is based on research funded by Wayfinder industry sponsors and FIAL in 2020.

Industries where males are in the majority in the workforce are particularly prone to gender bias in recruitment and unconscious bias is often communicated unintentionally in the way position descriptions and job ads are written.

Avoiding gender bias in language

Job ads are low hanging fruit when it comes to addressing gender diversity. There are two easy ways to reduce gender bias. The first is to review the language for unconscious bias, avoiding masculine adjectives like 'target focused', 'ambitious' or 'assertive' – opting for gender-neutral terms such as 'adaptive', 'collaborative' or 'customer centric'.

The second is to limit the number of mandatory requirements, listing only those skills that are absolutely necessary for the role. The problem with including lots of 'nice to haves' is that many women won't apply for a job unless they meet all criteria (research suggests that many women won't apply for a job they do not 100% qualify for, whereas men will apply for a position they feel they're only 60% qualified for).

Recruiters also often insist on industry-specific experience (in automotive, mining or maritime for example) when the particular skills required can readily be learned on the job and the key requirements are a set of hard or soft skills the candidate has in spades.

Another way in which Position Descriptions favoured males was that they insisted on warehouse floor experience, the sort of operational experience that many men will have but is quite rare for women (as a forklift driver for example).

Marketing a supply chain career to candidates

While COVID has certainly helped raise the visibility of the sector and the key role it plays in our economy, the supply chain sector continues to have an image problem. Supply chain is an exciting, dynamic, demanding job, integral to a company's economic success and critical to an environmentally sustainable future for Australia – but ask people outside the industry and they know little about it. COVID 19 may have raised people's awareness of the word supply chain and its importance to our economy, but not about the breadth and depth of career opportunities.

The supply chain workforce is no longer a dirty, unattractive profession requiring physical strength. In today's world of Big Data, IoT, digital buyer-seller relationships, and robotic process automation, modern supply chain workers must navigate social, cultural, and geographic differences with ease.

When asked about the skills they saw as important to success in a supply chain career, the women in our research study were uniformly positive about the advantages of a supply chain career – they saw it as a high tech, high speed, high stakes game, managing multiple interactions and requiring a rich mix of skills. The salary can be excellent, it often involves opportunities for travel and the work is interesting, exciting and rarely ever boring.

