

Recruiting in tech

Finding and keeping diverse candidates

By [Clémentine Pirlot](#)

Why hire diverse candidates?



Many studies have proven that diverse teams perform better.

35%

One study found that companies in the top quartile for ethnic and racial diversity in management were 35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry mean .

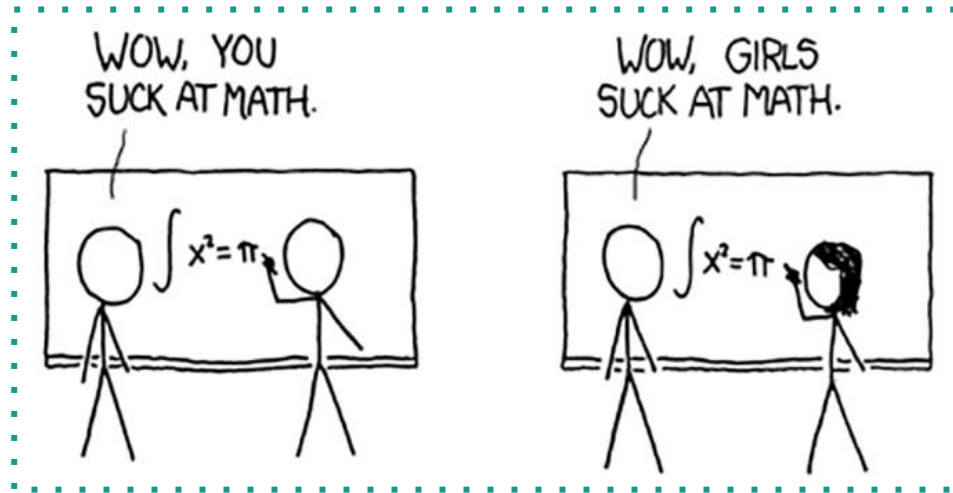
87%

Another study shows that Inclusive teams make better business decisions up to 87% of the time.

60%

The same study also shows that decisions made and executed by diverse teams delivered 60% better results.

Women's work is perceived very differently than men's



If a white man fails an exercise you're not going to think white men can't code.

Stereotype threat



Stereotype threat is a concept in sociology where the performance of individuals who belong to negatively stereotyped groups is impacted.

> One study found that when women were reminded — even subtly — of the stereotype that men were better than women at math, the performance of women in math tests measurably declined. Students in one condition were told that the test showed no gender differences, while those in the other condition were told that the test generally showed gender differences.

> Another study African American students underperformed on a difficult verbal test in comparison to white students when they were told the verbal test was diagnostic of their intellectual abilities. In contrast, their performance improved drastically if they were told the verbal test was not reflective of their abilities.

Imposter syndrome



A condition where individuals feel unable to acknowledge their accomplishments, skills and talents, and consequently feel as though they've arrived in their current situation by accident.

- > Men and women experience imposter syndrome but studies tend to show higher rates for women. One study found that men overestimated the quality of their work relative to women.
- > Another study found that men overestimate their intelligence in STEM courses, while women underestimate their abilities.
- > Imposter syndrome can result in 2 people with the same qualifications looking or sounding unequal.

Double standards

[A study of feedback](#) found that in the 83 critical reviews received by men, just two included comments on personality. In the 94 critical reviews received by women, 71 included negative comments about personality.

[An entire book](#) about double standards just came out: *How to Be Successful Without Hurting Men's Feelings*.



Excerpt from "How to Be Successful Without Hurting Men's Feelings" by Sarah Cooper

Unconscious bias



Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing.

35%

One former engineer at Facebook collected [data showing](#) that female engineers received 35 percent more rejections of their code than men.

60%

[In one study](#) in which women and men voiced the same presentations word for word, investors funded male-voiced ventures 60 % more often than female-voiced ventures.

49%

When sent 2 identical resumes, [recruiters found](#) 79% of applicants with the male name and only 49% of applicants with the female name “worthy of hire”.

Gendered vocabulary

Wanted: Ninja Rockstar Code
Monkey Hacker Unicorn



Randall Koutnik   Mar 19 Originally published at rkoutnik.com on Apr 29, 2016

This study found that *women felt that job adverts with masculine-coded language were less appealing and that they belonged less in those occupations.*

All these factors combine everyday

How can we solve this ?

Compassionate better values in tech

- ▶ ~~EGO~~ HUMILITY
- ▶ ~~ELITISM~~ INCLUSION
- ▶ ~~COMPETITION~~ COOPERATION
- ▶ ~~BEING "SMART"~~ BEING KIND
- ▶ ~~BEING A "ROCKSTAR"~~ BEING A MENTOR

@AprilWensel

Slide borrowed from April Wensel's presentation. April Wensel is the founder of Compassionate coding, an organization that helps companies become more inclusive and advocates for better values in tech.

Write gender neutral ads

[Research](#) shows that job descriptions that contain such language get fewer applications overall and fewer from women.

You can use tools such as [Textio.com](#) to analyze how gender coded your job ads are or paste them on this free [gender decoder](#).

“At Slack, male-biased terms such as “rock star” and “ninja” are no-no’s, along with words such as “brilliant” that convey the belief that intelligence, talents, and abilities are innate, rather than traits that can be developed.”

– Excerpt from [Brotopia](#) by Emily Chang

03.24.15 | STRONG FEMALE LEAD

How Changing One Word In Job Descriptions Can Lead To More Diverse Candidates

When the social media platform Buffer removed the word “hacker” from their job titles they noticed a change in who was applying.

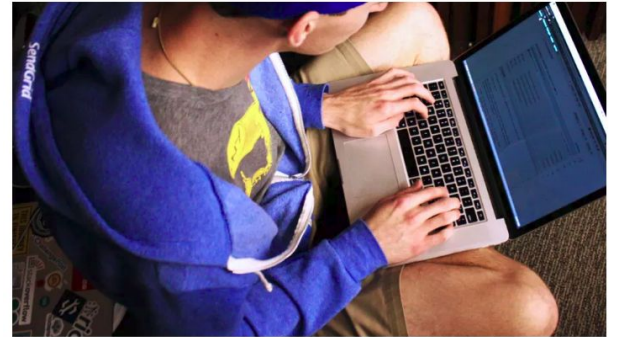


PHOTO: FLICKR USER HACKNY.ORG1

Check your requirements



“Slack also removed explicit requirements like number of years of experience and specific degrees necessary, in the hope that candidates wouldn’t opt out prematurely.”

- Excerpt from [Brotopia](#) by Emily Chang

- > **Research shows** that men apply for a job when they meet only 60% of the qualifications, but women apply only if they meet 100% of them.
- > A long list of requirements will exclude women and prevent you from meeting great candidates.
- > Examine each of your ad’s requirements and ask yourself: if a good candidate doesn’t have this requirement, is that a deal breaker? If not, remove the requirement.

Avoid unconscious bias



Remove gender from resumes

Tools like [TalVista](#) can help you check for gendered language, review applications without any gender or race information and structure your interviews.

Judge on very specific criterias

Determine what skills and attributes are needed and stick to them. Hiring is often very subjective and that allows bias to rule.

Structure your interviews

Ask the same questions to all candidates, and only ask questions that concern the skills you determined the candidates should have.

Avoid excluding valuable skills

Don't disregard “soft” skills:

Don't just list coding skills. Communication skills and empathy are very important to work in a team, name variables, explain code to colleagues, etc.

April Wensel suggests to call them catalytic skills rather than soft skills.

CATALYTIC SKILLS

the fundamental human skills that help us acquire other skills and engage more effectively with the world

@APRILWENSEL

LIVE

Technical interviews

**AVOID WHITEBOARD
OR LIVE CODING TESTS!**



Technical interviews

- Has nothing to do with the day to day job: [data](#) suggests that there is very low correlation between interview scores and actual job performance.
- Will only favor very confident people, excluding humble and insecure people.
- Stereotype threat, imposter syndrome, double standards and unconscious bias all converge here.
- Only 25% of interviewees are consistent in their performance, but the rest perform very differently at live coding.
- When people think they did poorly, even if they actually didn't, they may be a lot less likely to want to work with you.
- After a poor performance, women are 7 times more likely to stop practicing interviews on interviewing.io than men.

Better technical interviews



Many companies use take home tests or online platforms like HackerRank to test candidates, and have an interview to talk about it .

Employees spend less time on interviews and candidates can code in the comfort of their homes.

Have 2 people do the interview to be more impartial. Two people in the same interview can experience it very differently.

Better technical interviews

Do not look for people who would solve a problem the same way you would, unless you want to end up with a clone army that will only see the same solution to every problem.



April Wensel
@aprilwensel

When interviewing engineers people love to say, "I want to see how the candidate solves problems," when what they really mean is, "I want to make sure the candidate solves problems like I do, or I'll assume incompetence."

And sadly, this perpetuates the monoculture.



April Wensel
@aprilwensel



Having now conducted many interviews, I can tell you that in interviewing debriefs, you'll often hear something like, "That was a weird approach to that problem. She should have just used _____."



Her brain is not your brain! That's why we need to hire her.

How to structure interviews



- Is the program correct?
- Are there shortcomings in the solution?
- Are there obvious corner cases that should have been covered or commented on?
- Can the candidate explain the solution (data model, algorithm)?

You can find [here](#) a complete interview template example.

After the interview, make sure the 2 interviewers do NOT talk to each other until after they both send their written feedback.

Talking to each other could influence the feedback.

Write the feedback immediately after while it's still fresh in your mind.