Addressing Gaps in the Employee Lifecycle

PURPOSE

This guide aims to identify common biases, stereotypes and forms of discrimination that occur in different settings of the employee lifecycle and how organizations can work towards addressing these issues. These concepts are heavily informed through the lens of experiences common to Black employees but also can be experienced by other individuals who identify as BIPOC or from other historically excluded groups.

ELEMENTS OF THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

Common Recruitment Challenges

Issue	Explanation
Affinity/Similarity Bias	**Definition:** Favouring someone who has similarities to you. Social bias based on stereotypes is common here. **Examples of Occurrence:** • Includes examples such as favouring someone from the same educational background, organizational experience etc. • Potential occurrence when interviewers hold bias in the interview stage in favour of certain candidates after reviewing resumes.
Confirmation Bias	**Definition:** Looking for information to justify what you think of someone (whether good or bad) **Examples of Occurrence:** • Holding bias after resume screening and looking for reasons that confirm this bias at the interview stage while ignoring reasons that refute it. • An example includes assuming there will be a language barrier when seeing a non-western sounding name or non-western experience on a resume.
Halo/Horn Effect	**Definition:** Two opposite biases where the initial impression you have of a person clouds your judgement in favour for or against them. **Examples of Occurrence:** • Examples in the resume review stage include bias related to job experience, employee background, education, job history etc. • Examples in the interview stage include bias related to speech, mannerisms, dress, level of "professionalism."
Conformity Bias (Groupthink)	**Definition:** Allowing one person's impression or what the "group" wants impact your own decision. **Examples of Occurrence:** • Typically, more likely to occur in the interview process when there is an unstructured process in which interviewers base their feedback off of what they believe the group wants.

	o Note: If there is an individual who has more influence, power or vocalness within the group then their opinion tends to have a greater impact on decision making.
Lack of Black Talent Perception	**Definition:** When it's assumed that the reason there are less Black people in the applicant pool is due to their not being enough Black talent with the desired skill set for the role. **Examples of Occurrence:** • Typically, more likely to occur when the employer rushes to hire and isn't intentional about the job applicant pools they reach out to.

Common Offer & Onboarding Challenges

Issue	Explanation
Pay Negotiations & Offers	**Definition:** When there are discrepancies in what candidates are offered for similar experiences. **Examples of Occurrence:** • Offering candidates different amounts for the same levels of experience • Offering some candidates more because they negotiated while others didn't. • Penalizing certain candidates for trying to negotiate where other candidates don't receive the same level of criticism for self-advocacy.
Training & Support Gap	**Definition:** When candidates aren't given the right support or tools to be successful once beginning their role. **Examples of Occurrence:** • Not providing new hires with proper time, tools and resources for training. • Not offering feedback or mentorship during the onboarding period.

Common Growth & Development Challenges

Issue	Explanation
Lack of Mentorship/Sponsorship	**Definition:** Providing inequitable opportunities for of mentorship and sponsorship support for individuals from historically excluded backgrounds. **Examples of Occurrence:** • Black team members not having the same access to potential stretch role opportunities and internal roles due to having less of a network with leaders in the organization. • Black team members pacing slower in their roles and receiving less feedback and learning opportunities than peers.
Angry Black Woman Trope	**Definition:** A stereotype that involves treating Black women as more aggressive, hostile, illogical and quick tempered than other individuals. **Examples of Occurrence:** • During conflict when there is a higher focus on a Black woman's emotions than on the points she is making. • During conflict if a Black woman is labelled as "scary, mean or aggressive."

Pet to Threat Phenomenon	**Definition:** A phenomenon more common to Black women in which they go from being mentored and supported to being seen as a threat to the status quo.
	Examples of Occurrence:
	• When there is a higher penalization rate and monitoring of the behaviours of a Black woman over peers as she progresses in her role. • When a former mentor is no longer advocating to support a team member who has been increasingly excelling within their role.
Glass Cliff Phenomenon	**Definition:** A phenomenon common to BIPOC women put into positions of power during moments when they are more likely to fail.
	Examples of Occurrence:
	• When a Black woman is the first and only in a position of leadership and remains in the role for a short period of time before deciding to exit. • When there is heavy criticism laid on the actions of a BIPOC woman in a recent leadership role without support from the organization.
Supertokenism	**Definition:** An extension of tokenism at more extreme levels in leadership where individuals who are the first and only personal from a marginalized background are brought into a leadership role but then not supported once in this role.
	Examples of Occurrence:
	• When a Black woman has the title of manager or leader and but receives no direct reports, minimal funding, or autonomy to act within her position. • When a Black woman is put in a position of leadership at an executive level but is still several reporting structures away from peers and more highly critiqued when sharing expertise.

Company Culture Challenges

Issue	Explanation
Microaggressions	**Definition:** Microaggressions are biased subtle acts of exclusion made towards individuals or groups that take the form of negative comment, behaviour or action. They can be intentional or unconscious.
	Examples of Occurrence:
	• Consistently mixing up the only two Black people in the office. • Using "well-spoken" or "articulate" when describing the speech of a Black person.
Tokenism	**Definition:** A performative action in which individuals from historically excluded or marginalized groups are given the illusion of being included without there being actual changes made to structures and processes to be more inclusive.
	Examples of Occurrence:
	• Expecting the Black person on the team to be responsible for running Black history month initiatives for the organization. • Using photos of the limited Black employees in the office in all the marketing campaigns.
Misogynoir	**Definition:** A term rooted in the words misogyny and noir to describe the unique discrimination Black women face.

	Examples of Occurrence:
	• When the "angry" Black woman trope is in effect. • When the glass cliff phenomenon is in effect.
Colourism	**Definition:** When racial bias is amplified in correlation with how dark an individual's skin tone is. **Examples of Occurrence:** • When gaps in promotions and pay are amplified based on how dark an individual's skin is. • When Black people are treated like a monolith and their experiences are not being considered from an intersectional lens.
Weaponizing Professionalism	**Definition:** When the concept of professionalism is used as a tool to weaponize anti-Blackness by critiquing aspects of an individual's appearance and behaviour. **Examples of Occurrence:** • Deeming natural Black hairstyles at not professional enough. • Using "respectability" as a tool to dismiss racist actions committed towards Black people by expecting them to dismiss or act above harmful actions.
Tone Policing	**Definition:** A silencing tactic that focuses on critiquing the emotion behind what someone is expressing instead of on the actual content. **Examples of Occurrence:** • Telling a Black person, they are too loud or animated. • When the "angry" Black women trope is in effect.
Creating a Culture of Covering	**Definition:** Covering at work is when individuals feel the need to downplay parts of their identities to blend in. **Examples of Occurrence:** • Weaponizing professionalism in a way that forces Black team members to feel the need to codeswitch. • Not establishing organizational awareness, education and change around issues pertaining to the experiences Black team members face.

ADDRESSING EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE GAPS

Strategies to Address Employee Lifecycle Challenges

Stage	Strategies

Recruitment	**Strategies for Addressing:**
	• Set expectations early about timelines to hire.
	   o Don't immediately rush to fill a role.
	   o Spend time reaching out to both specialized and broad job networks.
	• Have multiple people review job descriptions.
	   o Check for biased language and unnecessary requirements for a particular experience (i.e. specific degrees or years of experience).
	• Provide standard criteria for reviewing resumes.
	   o Focus on skills-based needs.
	   o Train recruiters on common biases and what to avoid.

	• Standardizing the interview process
	    ○ Establish consistency in questions for all candidates.
	    ○ Create a standard process/metrics for evaluating candidates.
	• Ensure candidates meet with more than one interviewer.
	    ○ Establish a level of independent assessment each interviewer makes of candidates.

Offer & Onboarding	**Strategies for Addressing:**
	
	• Establish a clear and transparent process around pay and negotiations.
	    ○ Consider pay transparency on postings (already a requirement in certain provinces like BC).
	    ○ Ensure salaries are aligned for both external and internal team members.
	    ○ Have a clear process regarding salary negotiation decisions to ensure that team members are being paid equitably to each other.
	• Create a structured onboarding process for all new team members both from external hiring and internal movement.
	    ○ Offer mentorship and buddy support for onboarded team members.
	    ○ Provide opportunities for new hires to share feedback early on to be able to improve the process.
	    ○ Ensure that new team members are also provided with regular feedback and check ins, especially in the first few months of hire.

Growth & Development	**Strategies for Addressing:**
	
	• Expand mentorship and networking opportunities for team members.
	    ○ Train more senior team members on how to be effective mentors and what the difference is between mentorship and sponsorship.
	    ○ Offer more opportunities for broader teams to gain access to connect and network with leadership.
	    ○ Create tailored mentorship programs to support a specific employee group or demographic.
	• Provide more tailored training to managers on intersectionality and bias.
	    ○ Mandate training related to the nuanced experiences of Black employees and others from historically excluded backgrounds.
	    ○ Create ongoing dialogues for team members related to these topics.
	• Ensure that internal processes related to promotions, growth & development have been reviewed from multiple viewpoints.
	    ○ Create opportunities for team members to provide feedback on internal processes and establish a transparent process around how the feedback will be actioned.

Engagement Culture	**Strategies for Addressing:**
	
	• Create opportunities for employees to find community and shared experiences.
	    ○ Enable employee resource groups within the organization.
	• Provide ongoing company-wide training and learning opportunities related to EDI topics such as intersectionality, microaggressions, tokenism and more.
	    ○ Have team and manager related training specific to topics like psychological safety.
	• Establish channels for employees to submit feedback and concerns outside of discussions with their manager or one on ones with HR (i.e. feedback forms, EDI related surveys).
	    ○ Ensure that confidentiality and a transparent process for an outcome are kept top of mind.
	• Review and adjust inequitable policies and processes.
	    ○ Ensure that multiple reviewers can provide prospective (i.e. focus groups).

Recruitment & Onboarding Resources
- Common Biases
- Tips on Inclusive Recruitment
- Racial Bias in Negotiations & Pay
- Establishing More Inclusive Hiring Practices

Growth & Development Resources
- Unpacking Pet to Threat Phenomenon
- Black Employees More Penalized for Self-Promotion
- Decrease in Mentorship and Support for Black Women at Work
- Harmful Stereotypes & Black Women
- Combating the Angry Black Woman Trope
- Mentorship vs Sponsorship
- How to Be An Advocate

Culture Resources
- Tone Policing Against People of Colour
- Remote Work & Racism
- Professionalism as a Racist Construct
- Bias of Professionalism Standards
- Effects of Colourism
- Addressing Microaggressions
- Tips to Avoid Tokenism
- Understanding and Empowering ERGs