

ENGAGED Newsletter

● Issue 2025-02



Leadership Bias and Team Development

How Do You Compare?

In this article I discuss how Leadership Bias, both positive and negative, profoundly impacts team development and organizational performance. Their implications, and how leaders can potentially mitigate or leverage these biases to foster inspiring and effective leadership.

Examples from within Manufacturing, Financial Operations, Hospitals/

Healthcare, and Cargo Shipping are highlighted. Leadership bias manifests uniquely within these industries but universally shape team dynamics and outcomes. Potential mid, short, and long term impacts are assessed.

At the end, I provide a questionnaire for one to assess their leadership bias. But first what is "Leadership Bias?"

Inside this Issue



Leadership bias refers to the influence of personal preferences, beliefs,



Leadership bias has varying effects over time



Correcting and Enhancing Leadership Behavior

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What is Leadership Bias?

Leadership bias refers to the influence of personal preferences, beliefs, or unconscious tendencies on a leader's decision-making process. While biases can sometimes streamline decisions, they often result in flawed judgments, inefficiency, and diminished outcomes.

Positive Leadership Bias

Positive leadership bias occurs when leaders unconsciously favor individuals or groups, often based on past experiences, perceived competence, or alignment with their own values. While such biases can foster loyalty and alignment, they may inadvertently exclude others who could contribute valuable perspectives.

Negative Leadership Bias

Negative leadership bias involves prejudices that lead to undervaluing certain individuals or groups. This bias can hinder team morale and limit organizational potential by creating unequal opportunities.

The table highlights examples Leadership Biases for selected industries:

Industry	Positive Leadership Bias	Negative Leadership Bias
Manufacturing	In manufacturing, a leader might favor long-tenured employees, assuming their experience equates to better performance. While this bias rewards loyalty, it may overlook innovative ideas from newer employees, potentially stagnating progress. For example, a 2022 report by McKinsey & Company highlighted how embracing diverse perspectives in manufacturing teams led to a 30% increase in innovation output.	In manufacturing, leaders might hold biases against younger workers, perceiving them as less reliable or committed. For example, a supervisor might exclude a young engineer from a high-stakes project, assuming they lack the necessary experience, even if their skills are well-suited for the task. A 2020 Harvard Business Review article noted that companies embracing age-diverse teams reported 25% higher productivity levels.
Financial Operations	In financial operations, leaders may show bias toward employees with high sales figures, equating revenue generation with leadership potential. While this focus can drive short-term profits, it might neglect team members excelling in compliance or operational efficiency, creating risks of oversight in regulatory adherence. A 2023 Deloitte study found that organizations valuing compliance roles equally with revenue-focused roles achieved better long-term stability and reduced regulatory penalties.	Gender bias in financial operations often sees women overlooked for leadership roles due to stereotypes about assertiveness or work-life balance. For instance, a woman managing risk portfolios might be seen as less aggressive compared to male counterparts, despite her superior analytical skills. According to a 2022 PwC report, companies with gender-diverse leadership teams outperformed their peers by 15% in financial returns.
Hospitals/Healthcare	Healthcare leaders often favor staff with a strong rapport with patients, viewing them as exemplary employees. However, this bias may undervalue behind-the-scenes roles, such as data analysts ensuring accurate patient records or lab technicians critical to diagnostics. A 2021 study in the Journal of Healthcare Management emphasized the importance of equitable recognition, showing a correlation between balanced role valuation and improved patient outcomes.	In healthcare, biases against foreign-trained professionals can limit their career progression. A hospital director might hesitate to appoint a foreign-trained doctor to a senior position, assuming they lack familiarity with local practices, even if their qualifications are exemplary. A 2023 study in The Lancet revealed that diverse leadership teams in healthcare improved patient satisfaction by 20%.
Freight Cargo Shipping/Maritime	In maritime logistics, a captain might favor officers who excel in navigation and technical skills, assuming they're best suited for leadership roles. This bias can overshadow the importance of interpersonal skills needed to manage diverse crews and foster collaboration during long voyages. A 2024 article in Maritime Executive discussed how leadership training programs focusing on interpersonal skills improved crew cohesion by 40%.	Cultural biases are prevalent in maritime industries, where crews from diverse national backgrounds work together. A shipping company's leadership might favor officers from specific countries, assuming they're more disciplined or skilled, leading to resentment and reduced morale among other crew members. Research published in Maritime Policy & Management in 2025 highlighted that culturally inclusive policies enhanced operational efficiency by 18%.



Leadership bias has varying effects over time, influencing both leaders and employees differently across industries. Here are some examples:

Short-Term Impacts

Leaders

- Manufacturing: Leaders who show bias toward senior employees may initially achieve quicker results due to familiarity with processes but risk alienating younger workers.
- Financial Operations: Favoring high performers boosts immediate revenue but creates dependency on a few individuals, leaving other roles undervalued.
- Hospitals/Healthcare: Leaders focusing only on patient-facing roles may see a temporary increase in patient satisfaction but overlook systemic improvements.
- Freight Cargo Shipping/Maritime: A captain's favoritism might yield short-term efficiency but foster dissent among the crew.

Employees

- Manufacturing: Younger employees may feel demotivated if their ideas are dismissed, leading to reduced creativity.

- Financial Operations: Employees in non-revenue-generating roles may experience a lack of recognition.
- Hospitals/Healthcare: Behind-the-scenes staff may feel undervalued, affecting team cohesion.
- Freight Cargo Shipping/Maritime: Crew members not favored may disengage, reducing collaboration.

Mid-Term Impacts

Leaders

- Manufacturing: Bias limits team adaptability, as overlooked employees may seek opportunities elsewhere.
- Financial Operations: Overemphasis on specific roles leads to operational inefficiencies and regulatory risks.
- Hospitals/Healthcare: Leadership gaps emerge as undervalued staff leave or underperform.
- Freight Cargo Shipping/Maritime: Tensions within crews can escalate, impacting operational harmony.

Employees

- Manufacturing: Marginalized workers might disengage, leading to higher turnover rates.
- Financial Operations: Overlooked employees may underperform or fail to contribute to long-term goals.
- Hospitals/Healthcare: Staff retention challenges increase as undervalued roles experience higher attrition.
- Freight Cargo Shipping/Maritime: Cultural biases create long-term morale issues, affecting efficiency.

Long-Term Impacts

Leader

- Manufacturing: Persistent bias erodes innovation, stagnating industry competitiveness.
- Financial Operations: Leadership bias results in uneven team development, leaving organizations vulnerable to market and compliance shifts.

- Hospitals/Healthcare: Systemic issues surface, affecting patient care quality and organizational reputation.
- Freight Cargo Shipping/Maritime: Bias undermines crew dynamics, affecting safety and operational success.

Employees

- Manufacturing: Long-term exclusion of diverse ideas stifles career growth and team resilience.
- Financial Operations: Unequal opportunities lead to diminished organizational loyalty and expertise loss.
- Hospitals/Healthcare: High attrition rates of undervalued roles create critical skill gaps.
- Freight Cargo Shipping/Maritime: Persistent cultural inequity hinders talent retention and international competitiveness.



Correcting and Enhancing Leadership Behavior

To address leadership biases and enhance inspiring leadership behaviors, leaders must adopt specific strategies tailored to their industries:

Manufacturing

- Correction: Implement rotational leadership opportunities to expose all employees to high-stakes projects.
- Enhancement: Encourage diverse teams for problem-solving initiatives, blending experience with fresh perspectives. The World Economic Forum's 2023 report on manufacturing diversity highlights this as a critical driver of innovation.

Financial Operations

- Correction: Use blind evaluation processes for promotions and rewards to reduce gender or performance biases.
- Enhancement: Recognize and reward non-sales contributions such as compliance, customer satisfaction, and operational efficiency. A 2022 study by EY confirmed that balanced recognition leads to higher employee satisfaction.
- Hospitals/Healthcare

- Correction: Standardize performance evaluations to value behind-the-scenes roles equally with frontline positions.
- Enhancement: Create mentorship programs pairing senior staff with diverse professionals to bridge gaps in understanding and appreciation. A 2024 article in Healthcare Leadership Review found mentorship programs increased retention rates by 30%.

Freight Cargo Shipping/Maritime

- Correction: Promote cultural competence training for leadership to address and reduce national or cultural biases.
- Enhancement: Establish anonymous feedback channels to identify and address crew concerns related to bias. The International Maritime Organization's 2025 guidelines recommend such practices to improve morale.

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Questionnaire

Leadership Bias Awareness and Improvement

The following questionnaire can help leaders identify their biases and adopt strategies for improvement:

Identifying Positive Bias

1. Do I consistently favor employees with specific traits (e.g., tenure, performance metrics, rapport)?
2. How often do I seek input from employees outside my usual circle?
3. Have I overlooked innovative ideas from newer or less visible team members?

Addressing Positive Bias

- What mechanisms can I implement to ensure equal access to growth opportunities?
- How can I create more objective criteria for assigning roles and responsibilities?

Identifying Negative Bias

1. Are there individuals or groups I unconsciously undervalue or overlook?
2. Do I rely on stereotypes when assessing an employee's potential?
3. Have I created an inclusive environment where all team members feel valued?

Addressing Negative Bias

- What training or resources can help me recognize and mitigate biases?

- How can I involve diverse perspectives in decision-making?

Creating Inspiring Leadership

1. What actions have I taken recently to empower my team members?
2. How do I model the behavior I want to see in my team?
3. Do I provide consistent and constructive feedback that motivates improvement?

Enhancing Leadership Disciplines

- Regularly solicit feedback from peers and subordinates.
- Set measurable goals for personal development in inclusive leadership.
- Foster a culture of collaboration by actively celebrating diverse contributions.



At xNxTnP, we are more than just a business; we are a community united by a shared belief in the power of human connection. Rooted in the principles of humanism, we strive to foster meaningful relationships and promote understanding in an ever-evolving world.