

Press release
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Australian employers actively combating first impression bias

- 79% of Australian employers acknowledge that their initial impression of a candidate can influence their feedback or decision making during the recruitment process
- 84% of Australian office workers say they feel that a hiring manager's first impression of them has impacted their decision when being considered for a role
- 98% of Australian employers are actively taking steps to reduce the risk of unconscious bias affecting their hiring decisions

Sydney, 5 October 2022 – A hiring manager's snap judgement is highly likely to influence the likelihood of a candidate receiving a job offer. New independent research by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) finds that nearly eight-in-ten (79%) employers acknowledge that their initial impression of a candidate can influence their feedback or decision making during the recruitment process. Nearly one-third (29%) of employers say their initial impression 'always' influences their feedback or decision and half (50%) say it 'often' influences their decision or feedback.

First impressions are impacting job prospects

A separate Robert Half survey of Australian workers finds more than eight-in-ten (84%) Australian office workers say they feel that a hiring manager's first impression of them has impacted their decision when being considered for a role. Of this, more than half (55%) believe that the first impression they gave had a positive impact on the hiring manager's decision, while 28% believe it had a negative impact.

When are first impressions being formed?

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of hiring managers form a first impression of a job candidate within the first 15 minutes of an *in-person interview*, with almost one-third (32%) saying their first impression is formed within the first five minutes. About one quarter (27%) say they take 30 minutes and just 9% say they need an hour or more to form their first impression.

Initial assessment times are similar when conducting *virtual interviews* with 56% of hiring managers saying they form their first impression within 15 minutes, including 28% who say they do so within the first five minutes. About one third (29%) say they take 30 minutes and just 14% say they need an hour or more to form their first impression.

How companies are managing the risk of unconscious bias in decision-making

With many hiring decisions potentially impacted by fast first impressions, organisations are taking steps to minimise the risk of hiring managers being unconsciously influenced by initial opinions and views they might hold about individuals. The top strategies for tackling unconscious bias in the hiring process include:

- Asking the same questions at the beginning of the interview to every candidate (60%),
- Including multiple people in the hiring process (52%),
- Conducting a phone interview first (46%),
- Conducting an anonymous skills test (42%),
- Removing candidates' names, ages, background, and pictures from their applications before reviewing CVs (41%)
- Applying hiring quotas (31%),
- Using a scoring system to score candidates (29%),

- Replacing the CV with an anonymous screening task (10%).

“Despite the robust recruitment processes that many companies engage in, the survey results highlight that hiring managers are nonetheless forming quick first impressions about candidates’ suitability for roles. While hiring managers may be well-intentioned, the speed at which first impressions are formed raises the possibility that unconscious biases are creeping into the hiring process, and these can often cloud judgement in the decision-making process and cause employers to miss out on top talent,” said **Nicole Gorton, Director Robert Half Australia** in announcing Robert Half’s latest survey results.

“While many workers feel that a hiring manager’s first impression has positively impacted their likelihood of receiving a job offer, this can suggest an affinity bias which is creating a like-for-like talent pipeline. There are several ways employers can reduce the risk of unconscious bias affecting the recruitment process including conducting blind CV reviews, offering anonymous skills tests, and opting for structured, panel interviews. Working with a recruitment agency could also be an effective way to eliminate unconscious bias in the recruitment process with their ability to independently source quality candidates on a company’s behalf,” concluded **Gorton**.

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Notes to editors

About the research

The study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted online in June 2022 by an independent research company, surveying 300 hiring managers, including 100 CFOs and 100 CIOs, from companies across Australia. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management, and trends in the workplace.

The Australian worker study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted online by an independent research firm in June 2022, surveying 1,019 office workers from across Australia.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the global, specialised talent solutions provider that helps employers find their next great hire and jobseekers uncover their next opportunity. Robert Half offers both contract and permanent placement services, and is the parent company of Protiviti, a global consulting firm. Robert Half Australia has offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Mount Waverley, Perth, and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com.au.

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