

# DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & ACCESS

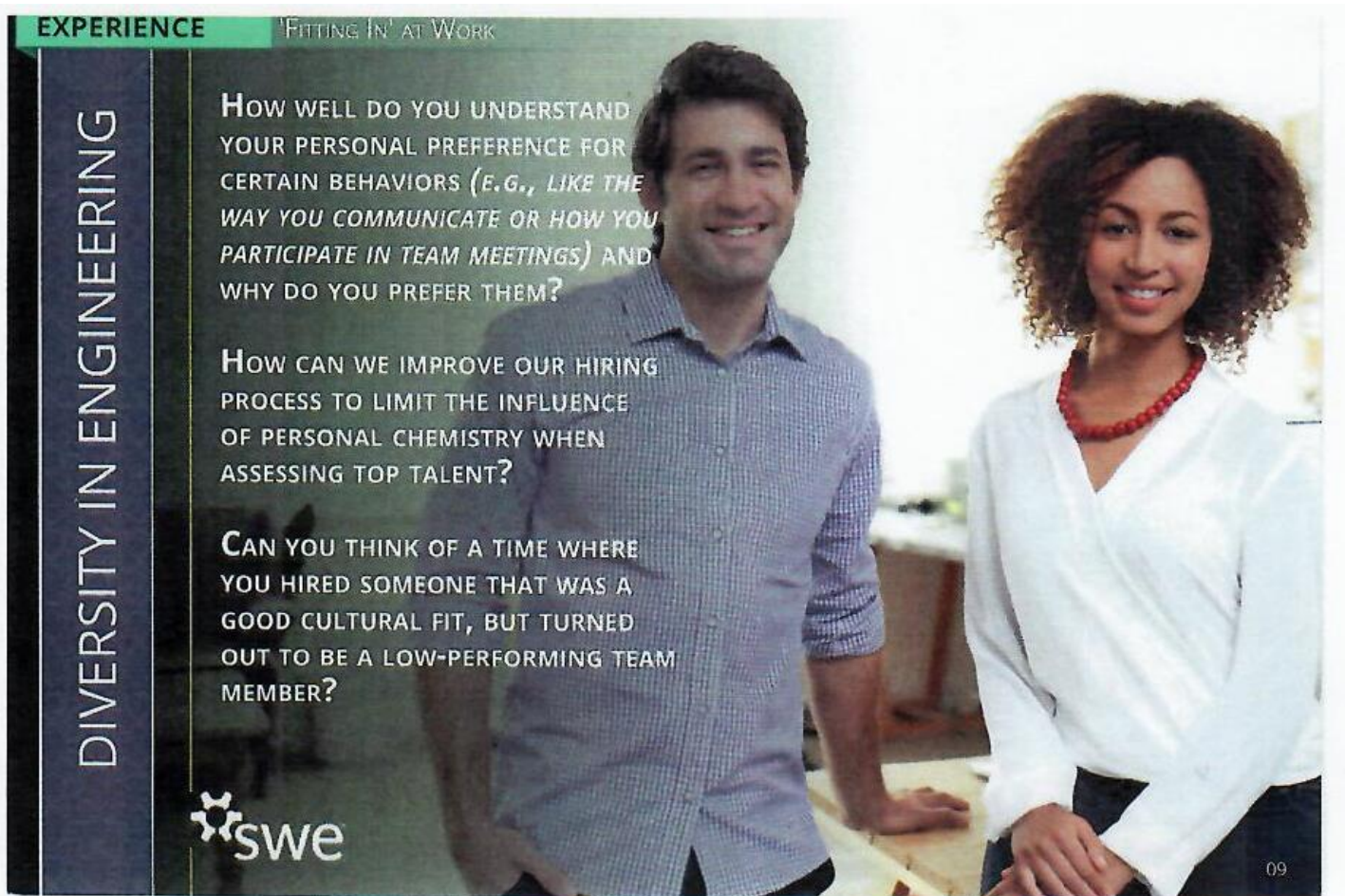
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## Inclusion Icebreakers: Biases

### Affinity Bias

How to use this Inclusion Solution card in a group setting:

- Review the questions on the front of the card to help anchor the topic
- Extend a few minutes of personal reflection
- Ask individuals to relate the topic to the current work environment and/or campus climate and what a future state might look like
- Create a dialogue on how the topic might create innovative thoughts, new direction for programs/classroom instruction/services, or ways to address challenges in the work environment and the campus climate




**EXPERIENCE** 'FITTING IN' AT WORK

**DIVERSITY IN ENGINEERING**

**HOW WELL DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR PERSONAL PREFERENCE FOR CERTAIN BEHAVIORS (E.G., LIKE THE WAY YOU COMMUNICATE OR HOW YOU PARTICIPATE IN TEAM MEETINGS) AND WHY DO YOU PREFER THEM?**

**HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR HIRING PROCESS TO LIMIT THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONAL CHEMISTRY WHEN ASSESSING TOP TALENT?**

**CAN YOU THINK OF A TIME WHERE YOU HIRED SOMEONE THAT WAS A GOOD CULTURAL FIT, BUT TURNED OUT TO BE A LOW-PERFORMING TEAM MEMBER?**

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# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

## EXPERIENCE

### 'Fitting In' at Work

*As a managing director at an investment bank put it, "Would I want to be stuck in an airport in Minneapolis in a snowstorm with them?"*

Hiring for cultural fit is an important part of the selection process. Assessing a candidate for cultural fit around company values is also important. However, the concept of 'cultural fit' often includes some unintended consequences. According to Lauren Rivera, a sociologist at Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management, "cultural fit has shifted from systematic analysis of who will thrive in a given workplace to snap judgments by managers about who they'd rather hang out with." In her research, Rivera conducted 120 interviews from 2006-2008. Participants included hiring partners, managing directors, mid-level employees at elite professional service firms such as bankers, lawyers, and consultants. Her interviews revealed that participants commonly looked for someone like themselves in interviews.

Where you grew up, the sports you played at school or similar interests all help to create chemistry. Yet it also creates a danger in the selection process when thinking about hiring people that act, sound, look, and think "just like us." Research demonstrates that our tendency to hire individuals similar to ourselves contributes to the prevalent gender segregation of jobs, such as male engineers hiring more male engineers and female teachers hiring more female teachers. It also impacts the diversity needed on our teams to truly be innovative. We have to consider that sometimes top talent may share our values and be excellent candidates and top performers, even if they look, sound, or behave differently than what we're used to.

A way to interrupt this tendency to pick the familiar is by understanding our personal preference for certain behaviors or style points we promote on our teams and why we prefer them. Oftentimes, these preferences are rooted in our personal experiences or how we were rewarded or penalized by previous managers or roles. The key is to evaluate people in their own context and create an opportunity to stop ourselves from automatically judging differences as wrong, ineffective or not being a good fit. Rivera reminds us that "managers often discount the power of shared experiences on the job, especially working interdependently on a high-stakes project. The more time we spend with co-workers, the more similar to them we tend to become."

### ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO ENSURE THE RIGHT FIT

“Are you more successful working in a group or by yourself?”

“Do you think the best decisions come from collaboration or from strategic initiatives?”

“Can you describe what the traits are that you feel like emulate a good manager, co-worker, and work environment?”

“What is your ideal work environment?”

### ASSESS THE RESPONSES IN A WAY THAT IS UNBIASED

SOURCE: Lauren Rivera, "Hiring as Cultural Matching, The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms," *American Sociological Review*, December 2012 vol. 77 no. 6 999-1022. Lauren A. Rivera, "Guess Who Doesn't Fit In at Work", *New York Times*, May 2015.

Reference:

"Inclusion Solutions: Discussing a Diverse Culture is in the Cards," *Lessons Learned Consulting, Inc.*, 2016.