

# CASE STUDY

Described for the project: "The Hexagonal Leader"

## Name of the organization

Orange Hill Sp. z o.o.

## Website of the organization

www.orangehill.pl

## Logotype of the organization



## Type of organization

- Business organization  
 Public administration  
 NGO's  
 Others (what kind?) .....

## Size of the organization

- Small  
 Medium  
 Large

## Economic sector

Service industry

## Brief description of the organization

Training and consulting company specializing in human resources management, over 10 employees, women led. Enterprise offers trainings on soft skills and tools for in-company analysis. Company is also UE grants beneficiary and runs several lifelong learning project at European level.

### Case study description (situation / the problem they are facing) [max 2000 characters]

Almost all women of the same nationality aged 23-35 work in the company. The employed people, like the owner, mostly have small children and understand each other well. There is a good, friendly atmosphere in the company. In recruitment, people without children, men or people over 40 years of age. they are rejected because they "don't fit" the team. The analysis of the situation showed that the owner is strongly influenced by unconscious attitudes, so that her decisions are not based on objective, substantive criteria and, as a result, she has built a very homogeneous team.

The owner's decisions consequently face the company with the following challenges:

- In recent years, the company has experienced a real "baby-boom" - absenteeism due to pregnancy, maternity leave and childcare has increased. The organization is not prepared to secure projects in terms of human resources (employment stability, insufficient number of replacements, etc.).
- The team is becoming less and less competitive - thinks in a conventional manner, repeats proven solutions - has not proposed a new project for a long time
- The potential of female employees is not properly used - people for projects are selected not on the basis of substantive criteria, but for example, the fact of having a child or subjective criteria (years of knowing the boss) decide
- More and more conflicts arise, and employees feel unfairly treated

### Suggested solutions (added pros and cons)

1. Immediately increase employee diversity - to replace the dismissed people, hire people who differentiate the team in terms of age, gender, and preferably also in terms of cultures (if possible). The solution, however, is not substantiated and will not eliminate the source of the problem, which are the strong unconscious bias of the owners
2. Implement a program of building awareness of unconscious attitudes and their negative impact on decision-making processes in the workplace. Develop managerial competences in the area of unconscious bias
3. Implement practices and decision support tools free of unconscious bias

### Chosen solution

Solutions 2 and 3 were selected:

2. Implement a program of building awareness of unconscious attitudes and their negative impact on decision-making processes in the workplace. Develop managerial competences in the area of unconscious bias
3. Implement practices and decision support tools free of unconscious bias

### Rationale of the decision taken

Solution nr 1 has no merit (there are no merit-based reasons for the dismissal of selected people) and will not eliminate the source of the problem, which is the strong unconscious bias of the owners.

Solutions 2 and 3 are adequate to the described challenges. The source of the diagnosed problems is the unconscious bias, which strongly drives the decisions of the owner of the company.

They go to the heart of the problem and are recommended in practice by experts dealing with the subject of unconscious bias: it is impossible to eliminate unconscious factors from decision-making processes, the intervention consists in becoming aware of their existence, the ability to recognize them and practicing techniques and methods limiting the influence of unconscious bias on decision-making processes.

### Solution implemented in practice

1. Building awareness of the cognitive processes and automatisms of the brain.
2. IAT test
3. Identifying unconscious bias and building awareness of their occurrence in your own decisions
4. Implementation of tools and techniques limiting unconscious bias in decisions (merit-based recruitment, debiased job descriptions, blind recruitment, collegial decision making, everyone at the table etc.)
5. Building a culture of bias-limiting organization: feedback culture, joint decision-making, consultation, verification of decisions by other people, etc.
6. Cooperation and surrounding with diverse people

### Lesson learned

Unconscious bias is one of the most significant barriers to people's decision-making in the workplace. They often decide for us who we surround ourselves with in our work environment, who we employ to manage people, and who to analyze data. As a result of the unconscious bias, the competences of the people we work with will be sidelined.

We will be subconsciously guided by stereotypes, which will translate into strong unconscious prejudices against people or entire social groups. In turn, we will prefer people who are similar to us, have similar experiences, share the same values, think in the same way. In this way, we will create homogeneous teams.

It gives a sense of security, a good atmosphere of understanding, mutual compliance. On the other hand, however, such teams have limited creativity, achieve a lower level of innovation, are less open to changes, and less flexible. Research shows that they perform less well.

### Connection to the six skills depicted in the project

The described case study relates to decision making process which is one of the six basis skills developed within the Hexagonal Leader project. The owner had to face the challenges that in recent years have reduced the creativity of employees' work, non-substantive assignments of tasks, decreased work efficiency, increased conflicts in the organization and deterioration of the working atmosphere. The owner faced a management dilemma and had to make some decision.

The owner implemented a program of building awareness of unconscious attitudes and their negative impact on decision-making processes in the workplace. At the same time, he developed his own managerial competences in the area of unconscious prejudices. He had to break down his own barriers and prejudices in the decision-making process. He also implemented practices and tools to support decision making free from unconscious bias. He applied a conceptual style of decision making that presents a social approach. He encouraged creative thinking and cooperation. The owner was oriented towards achieving long – term goals. As a consequence, he managed to build a team of people cooperating well with each other and bringing innovative ideas.