



# Personal Perceptions & Bias in Performance Management

It's important to be consistent in one's approach to performance reviews.

Personal perceptions and biases can sometimes influence how supervisors rate an employee's performance. Often, supervisors are even unaware that these biases even exist. It is important for supervisors to be aware that these biases exist, understand them, and take steps to reduce them. There are six types of bias to be aware of.

## LENIENCY

*The tendency to evaluate all employees as "Exemplary" to give inflated ratings rather than true assessments of performance. It is also important to note that inflating ratings as a compensation tool is not the rating scale's intended use.*

## CENTRAL TENDENCY

*The tendency to evaluate every employee as "Meets Expectations" regardless of differences in performance.*

## STRICTNESS

*The tendency to rate all employees at the "Marginal" or low end of the scale, and be overly critical of performance.*

## CONTRAST EFFECT

*The tendency for a supervisor to evaluate an employee relative to other individuals rather than on the planned job duties/ responsibilities, goals, and development needs.*

## FIRST IMPRESSION EFFECT

*The tendency for a supervisor to make an initial favorable or unfavorable judgment about someone, and then ignore subsequent information that does not support this impression.*

## SIMILAR-TO-ME EFFECT

*The tendency to more favorably judge those people perceived as similar to the supervisor.*

Since bias can seriously undermine the value of the Performance Management Process, supervisors should work to eliminate it. There are some simple questions supervisors can ask themselves in order to avoid bias. For example:

- *Am I basing my rating on documentation of my observations or am I making judgment based on my perceptions?*
- *Am I looking at each of this employee's accomplishments and behaviors separately or have I generalized about their performance?*
- *Have I looked at the whole scope of work for the year and their behaviors over time or have I generalized according to my initial perceptions of them?*
- *Have I rated this employee on their actual accomplishments and behaviors or have I rated them compared to other employees?*
- *Have I recognized any biases I may have so I don't let them influence my judgments?*

Avoiding bias is another reason to engage in the year-long performance management process. Documenting and recording achievements and challenges allows supervisors to look back and remind themselves of performance highlights, ultimately improving the accuracy of their reviews.

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