

Quick Guide

Reducing Bias During Performance Reviews

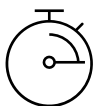
As individuals, we are all biased, whether we realise it or not. Biases stem from the shortcuts our brains have created over thousands of years to help us make faster decisions. But these mental shortcuts can actually prevent us from making the correct decisions when we don't rely on logic or review all the facts available to us.

When it comes to performance reviews, unconscious bias can severely impact on our objectivity and affect the credibility of performance reviews in the eyes of employees. When performance reviews are viewed as unfair and biased, they negatively impact engagement, employee performance and

Fortunately, we can take steps to limit the impact of unconscious bias by learning more about the types of bias we could fall prey to and building measures into the performance review process to mitigate against these mental shortcuts.

COMMON TYPES OF BIAS IN PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

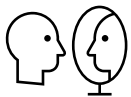
Here are some of the biases that show up most often in performance reviews and ways to keep unconscious bias from derailing performance discussions.



RECENCY OR EXPEDIENCY BIAS happens when we judge people primarily on their most recent performance or failures. When performance reviews are done annually, the process may be especially vulnerable to this bias.



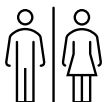
HALO/ HORNS EFFECT happens when someone is really good or poor at one aspect of their role or have a particular trait that overshadows all other aspects of their performance.



SIMILARITY BIAS -When we are more likely to give people with similar interests, backgrounds and skills a higher rating than others don't share these characteristics with us, the similar-to-me bias can be at play.



CONFIRMATION BIAS happens when we look for or interpret new information that confirms our existing beliefs about someone. To address this bias,



GENDER BIAS during performance reviews happens when women are more likely to receive feedback on character traits and behaviours and men on their achievements



CENTRALITY BIAS, or sometimes also called central tendency, happens when all employees are rated as average performers.



LENIENCY BIAS -When a reviewer tends to rate all employees at either the positive end of the scale or the negative end of the scale, leniency bias could be at play.



IDEOSYNCRATIC RATER BIAS occurs when managers rate skills which they are not good at higher or rate skills which they excel at lower in employees.

STEPS TO REDUCE BIAS DURING PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

To limit the impact of bias on a performance review, follow these steps ensure a more objective process:

1. **Build awareness of bias** in your team to help everybody understand what bias is and how bias can show up during performance reviews.
2. **Set clear targets and expectations** upfront and write these down. When performance is reviewed against clearly defined and agreed targets, it reduces bias.
3. **Track and review performance against goals often** and document the feedback to reduce the effect of recency bias.
4. Encourage employees to **request and collect feedback throughout the year** as they finish projects.
5. Where possible **use analytics and data as an input** into the performance review process to improve objectivity.
6. **Ensure that performance is evaluated against multiple aspects** including individual performance, their contribution to team performance and 360-degree feedback reviews to reduce the impact of the halo/horns effect.
7. **Ask for specific examples and data points** when line managers give performance feedback to reduce the impact of similar-to-me bias or stereotypes, leniency bias and centrality bias.