Fairness First: Avoiding Bias in Performance Management

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| **BIAS** | **EXPLANATION** | **PREVENTION STRATEGY** |
| Affinity/Alienation | Tendency to give higher/lower ratings based on common interests, beliefs, and background. | Objectively evaluate each employee on defined performance metrics. |
| Attribution | Tendency to interpret the performance of others on internal beliefs and opinions rather than external logic and fact. | Consider all factors that might affect performance, both internal (skills) and external (resources). |
| Centrality/  Central Tendency | Tendency to rate most items in the middle of a rating scale. | Objectively consider whether the defined performance expectations were met or not. |
| Comparative/  Contrast Effect | Tendency to rate based on comparison to others/the last person reviewed instead of on the ability to meet the defined performance expectations. | Objectively evaluate all employees on defined performance metrics. |
| Confirmation | Tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one’s existing beliefs or theories. | Think like a scientist. Pay close attention to the feedback that goes against your beliefs and remain objective. |
| Dispositional | Tendency to upgrade or downgrade employee ratings based on the supervisor’s opinion of personality and/or character. | Objectively evaluate all employees on defined performance metrics and avoid personal opinions. |
| Halo/Horn Effect | Allowing one good or bad trait to overshadow others. | Objectively evaluate each employee on defined performance metrics. Review at least 2-3 different aspects of performance for a holistic view. |
| Identity  (includes Gender bias) | Tendency to view and rate employee performance filtered through stereotypical assumptions about sex, gender, color, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, political affiliation, socioeconomic status, educational background, age, disability, genetic information, or veterans status. | Objectively evaluate each employee on defined performance metrics. Avoid personality, style, and any other stereotypical assumptions. |
| Idiosyncratic Rater/Rating | Tendency to evaluate based on the skills of the reviewer or toward personal eccentricities. | Objectively evaluate each employee on defined performance metrics and avoid personal eccentricities. |
| Law of Small Numbers | Tendency to believe that a small sample closely shares the properties of the underlying population. | Practice talent calibrations and review holistically based on defined performance metrics while using the same nomenclature. |
| Leniency | Tendency to consistently rate employees higher than deserved even with notable room for improvement. | Objectively evaluate each employee on defined performance metrics and recognize weaknesses. |
| Normative | Tendency to rate employees the same while ignoring individual differences. | Objectively evaluate each employee individually on defined performance metrics. |
| Primacy | “The first impression” - Tendency to focus on information learned early on in the relationship. | Practice frequent touchpoints to collect and document performance snapshots that include feedback from multiple points in time. |
| Proximity | Tendency to favor employees based on their physical workplace (works closest at hand) and/or most familiar to them. (Example: on-site, remote, hybrid) | Evaluate all employees on objective performance metrics regardless of their workplace location. |
| Recency | *“What have you done for me lately?”* - Tendency to focus on the most recent time period instead of the total time period. | Practice frequent touchpoints to collect and document performance snapshots with feedback throughout the year. |
| Refresh/Spillover | Tendency to ignore or continue patterns of positive or negative ratings based on previous performance cycles. | Practice frequent touchpoints to collect and document performance snapshots with feedback from multiple points in time. |
| Severity | Tendency to consistently rate employees lower than deserved. | Objectively evaluate each employee on defined performance metrics and recognize achievements. |
| Situational | Tendency to upgrade or downgrade employee ratings by attributing factors outside the employee’s control to the employee. | Objectively evaluate each employee on defined performance metrics and avoid measuring on uncontrollable elements. |