

## Reference Tool

# 5 Questions to Avoid Rater Bias

Managers often inadvertently include bias when completing evaluations for employees. Being aware of these common pitfalls can make the process more objective and reduce bias. Ask yourself these five key questions to reduce any bias when creating and finalizing performance evaluations for each of your direct reports.

### Halo Effect

**Key Questions:** Have I considered equally all components of my direct report's performance?

Halo effect occurs when a manager attaches too much significance to a single factor of performance and gives similar ratings on other performance elements. This leads to an unbalanced performance assessment of the individual.

### Tendency Bias

**Key Question:** Do I believe that I am rating my direct reports similar to other managers?

Managers differ in their tendency to evaluate people or performance. Some managers are very strict or conservative in their ratings and generally give low scores in their evaluations, while others either rate their subordinates very liberally or play safe. Ratings should be considered based on the definitions provided in the process.

### Recency Bias

**Key Question:** Have I considered all of my direct report's contributions since the last review?

Performance management involves assessment of employee performance for a specific period. People may not perform uniformly throughout the period due to numerous factors. Often, recent events tend to overshadow the overall performance.

### Contrast Effect

**Key Question:** Have I considered my direct report's performance on its own merits alone?

When supervisors rate employees one after another, rating of an distinguished performer or one that needs improvement could affect the subsequent ratings of other individuals.

### Personal Bias

**Key Question:** Am I evaluating my direct report fairly despite any differences we may have?

Personal beliefs, assumptions, preferences, and lack of understanding about a person can lead to an unfair evaluation. Be aware of and sensitive to personal biases, prejudices and stereotypes while evaluating performance. Restrict your evaluation to behaviorally-based observations only.