

16 RATER ERRORS TO AVOID DURING PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

A barrier to the accuracy and credibility of performance measures is by a number of rater errors that are to be avoided. They are perceptual biases and other sources of distortion in the employee's performance ratings.

1. **Halo Effect** - Halo effect is when an employee is rated the same across all performance dimensions due to a positive or negative rater impression. This typically is when the rater either likes or dislikes the employee and allows those feelings to influence their performance rating of them.
2. **The Horns Effect** - The opposite of the halo effect -- letting one negative work factor or behavior you dislike color your opinion of other factors.
3. **Leniency Error** - Managers who over-emphasize either negative or positive behaviors make leniency errors. This is when employees are rated either at the low end of the scale (negative leniency) or at the positive end (positive leniency).
4. **Grouping** - Excusing below-standard performance because it is widespread; "everyone does it."
5. **Central Tendency Errors** - Managers who are uncomfortable with making "extreme" judges of performance tend to rate their employees in the middle of the scale. This central tendency error happens with managers who don't deal well with behavioral issues and avoid conflict.
6. **Recency Error** - Recency error happens when a manager allows recent incidents of employee behaviors to influence the performance rating over the entire rating period. This can be extreme on either end of the spectrum where by an employee has had a successful project or a negative event right before the performance evaluation. Keeping accurate performance records during the year helps to provide evaluation data for the rating period.
7. **First Impression Error** - Managers who allow their first impressions of employee performance to influence their evaluation make the first impression error. New employees tend to have a "honeymoon" period and perform at high levels but often lose some of that momentum over time.
8. **Similar-to-me Errors** - Everyone relates to people who are like them but that should not influence the evaluation of employee performance. Managers who are biased toward employees who are similar to themselves make this similar-to-me rater error.
9. **Favoritism** - Overlooking the flaws of favored or "nice" employees, especially those whom everyone likes.
10. **Guilt by Association** - Rating someone on the basis of the company they keep, rather than on the work they do.
11. **Holding a Grudge** - A dangerous luxury that may result in your ending up in court. Never try to make employees pay for past behavior.
12. **Bias** - Allowing your bias to influence the rating. Bias can come from attitudes and opinions about race, national origin, sex, religion, age, veterans' status, disability, hair color, weight, height, intelligence, etc.
13. **The Sunflower Effect** - Rating everyone high, regardless of performance, to make yourself look good or to be able to give more compensation.
14. **Contrast Error** - Supervisors who rate subordinates as they compare against each other rather than how they compare against the performance standards commit contrast error. This error can cause an employee who is performing average against performance standards to rate high because his peers are under performing.
15. **False Attribution** - False attribution is the tendency to attribute bad performance to internal causes and good performance to external causes. In other words, if an employee performs well, it's because the employee had help, such as a good leader; and if the employee performs badly, it's because the employee did something wrong, such as procrastinate.
16. **Perceived Meaning** - Perceived meaning becomes an issue when appraisers do not agree on the meaning of the rating criteria. For example, one supervisor may perceive an employee's constant reporting of problems as initiative, while another supervisor may feel this behavior demonstrates dependence on supervisory assistance instead of initiative.