

4.1: Performance Management Errors

Learning Outcomes

- Discuss common performance management errors

As alluded to in our discussion of appraisal methods, there are a number of factors that can distort appraisal results. In this section, we'll discuss perception errors and how to avoid them.

Indiana University's Human Resources identifies the following eleven perceptual errors:^[1]

- **The Leniency Error.** Giving everyone high ratings regardless of actual performance, in an attempt to avoid conflict or to make yourself look good.
- **The Central Tendency Error.** Clumping or clustering all employees in the middle performance categories in an attempt to avoid extremes.
- **The Recency Error.** Failing to take into account the entire evaluation period and focusing on a recent performance episode, positively or negatively.
- **The Halo Effect Error.** Letting one favored trait or work factor influence all other areas of performance, resulting in an unduly high overall performance rating.
- **The Horns Effect Error.** Allowing one disfavored trait or work factor to overwhelm other, more positive performance elements, resulting in an unfairly low overall performance rating.
- **Contrast Error.** Evaluating an employee in relation to another employee rather than relative to his/her duties, goals and stated performance standards.
- **Past Performance Error.** Rating on past performance rather than present performance.
- **Biased Rating Error.** Allowing personal feelings toward employee to influence rating.
- **High Potential Error.** Confusing potential with performance.
- **Similar to Me Error.** Similar to me and therefore feeling of comfort and compatibility
- **Guilt by Association Error.** Evaluation influenced by employee's associations rather than performance.

Practice Question

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...essments/18188>

Avoiding Errors

Three tips to avoid these errors:

- Cultivate awareness of potential errors
- Rely on the data and documentation you've compiled, rather than your perceptions. That is, focus on the performance, rather than the person.

Note that there is a tendency to avoid accurate ratings—particularly on the downside—when there's a significant amount at stake—for example, a promotion/demotion, raise or PIP. Let the person's performance make the decision.



Developing and practicing techniques—for example, participating in appraisal and feedback simulations—for having difficult conversations will help you develop skills that will pay off in a variety of work and life situations. On her website, author, speaker,

and trainer Judy Ringer provides a step-by-step checklist for having difficult conversations, including how to prepare yourself, 4 steps for a successful outcome and practice tips. For perspective, the four steps are highlighted below:^[2]

- **Step #1: Inquiry.** Cultivate an attitude of discovery and curiosity.
- **Step #2: Acknowledgment.** Show that you've heard and understood what the person is saying.
- **Step #3: Advocacy.** Clarify your position without minimizing the other person's position.
- **Step #4: Problem-Solving.** Begin building solutions.

? Learn More

Check out Dana Caspersen's "[Conflict is a place of possibility](#)" TED Talk to learn more about this subject.

1. "Evaluate Job Performance." Indiana University Human Resources. August 2018. Accessed August 20, 2019. ↩
2. Ringer, Judy. "↩

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