Checklist for Managers | Performance Decisions

Because we are often unaware of our implicit biases, taking time to reflect on potentially biased thinking can help us avoid biased decisions. This guide will help you become more aware of the ways in which implicit biases can emerge in performance rating and promo decisions, and provide you tactics for checking those biases in the moment. This guide is intended for repeated use within and across cycles. We recommend you print this resource to help you consider potential bias at critical points:

- Promo Nominations and Pre-review / Flagging
- Calibration and Ratings

It's up to everyone to be mindful of their own and others' suggestions, comments, and behaviors, and to call attention to faulty decision-making. Read below for ten common pitfalls and recommendations for how to address them throughout Perf.

Pitfall 1: Looking the Part

Nominating, over-rating, or under-rating a Googler because of their educational background, social group, or other extraneous factor. (Stereotype Bias)

✓ Mitigation Tactic

Agree on **success criteria** at a **particular level** (e.g. decide what earns an "Exceeds Expectations" at L4). **Don't allow extraneous data** points (e.g. educational background, social group) to influence the decision. If someone's feedback is questionable, ask them to **clarify their terms**, e.g. "How are you assessing 'professional'?"

❓ Questions to Ask

Is this feedback **deviating** from our agreed role **expectations**?

Is an **extraneous** factor **influencing** the decision?

If this person were a **different race (or gender, age, etc.)** would the **feedback be the same**?

Pitfall 2: Using Info That's Top of Mind

Weighing recent performance more heavily than performance during the total assessment period. (Availability Bias)

✓ Mitigation Tactic

Consider **concrete examples** throughout the **entire assessment cycle**.

❓ Questions to Ask

Has this person **consistently** shown high performance across the **entire cycle**?

Has this person **consistently** missed role expectations across the **entire cycle**?

Pitfall 3: Instincts over Evaluation

Only considering data or examples that support your initial impression. (Confirmation Bias)

✓ Mitigation Tactic

❓ Questions to Ask

Play **devil's advocate**[1] when there are no significantly different perspectives raised. If someone's feedback is questionable, ask them to **clarify their terms**, e.g. "How are you assessing 'professional'?"

What are **concrete examples** to support both **strengths AND development areas** of this individual?

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[1] A person who expresses a contentious opinion to test the strength of the opposing position

Pitfall 4: Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Nominating or over-rating Googlers who immediately come to mind. Nominating or over-rating Googlers who you work with most frequently or are most verbal about their contributions. (Accessibility Bias)

✓ **Mitigation Tactic**

Seek information you do not already know and **consider the whole** bench of talent.

❓ **Questions to Ask**

Are there other people with **less visible projects or contributions** who have made **comparable impact**?

Pitfall 5: Playing Favorites

Over-rating your own reports. Over-rating Googlers with whom you share OKRS. (Self-Serving Bias, In-Group Bias)

✓ **Mitigation Tactic**

Play **devil's advocate** for people you are invested in.

❓ **Questions to Ask**

What are **concrete examples** to support both **strengths AND development areas** of this individual?

Pitfall 6: Ignoring Situational Circumstances

Attributing a Googler's performance to talent or character as opposed to specific workplace situational factors outside of their control. (Fundamental Attribution Error)

✓ **Mitigation Tactic**

Consider **situational factors** in the workplace that affected performance (e.g. lacked resources, manager change).

❓ **Questions to Ask**

Do **other (workplace) explanations** exist for why this person performed above or below expectations for that role?

Pitfall 7: Just Like Me

Over-rating Googlers who exhibit attributes similar to your own. Rewarding only one way of doing or being. (Affinity Bias, In-Group Bias)

✓ **Mitigation Tactic**

❓ **Questions to Ask**

Consider the benefits of complementary and supplementary skills to your own (i.e. the **benefits of being different**).

Are there other people with an **alternative style or approach** to the work who have made **comparable impact**?

Pitfall 8: Following the Crowd

Forming an impression of a Googler only after listening to others evaluate their performance. (Anchoring Bias)

✔ Mitigation Tactic

Write down your **own evaluation** of employees **prior** to promotion committee or calibration. Play **devil's advocate** when there are no significantly different perspectives raised.

❓ Questions to Ask

Do I know my **own evaluation** of each candidate?

Is this evaluation **consistent with everyone's experiences** working with this individual?

Pitfall 9: Getting Stuck in the Past

Referencing a Googler's performance in a past cycle, instead of sticking to the current rating period. (Anchoring Bias)

✔ Mitigation Tactic

Clarify accomplishments that occurred during **this cycle only**. **Don't anchor** to ratings from previous cycles or assume there are limitations to what rating a person could be assigned this cycle due to their rating in the previous cycle.

❓ Questions to Ask

Are we confident that we are considering performance from the **current rating period only**?

Pitfall 10: Unequally Weighing Mistakes

Identifying mistakes less often for in-group members and being overly critical of out-group members. (Stereotype Bias, Confirmation Bias, In-Group Bias)

✔ Mitigation Tactic

Ensure that success **criteria is applied consistently** across all roles and levels; **watch for patterns of inconsistency**. If feedback is being unevenly interpreted across people of the same role and level, **call out the inconsistency**. **Don't allow extraneous data** points (e.g. educational background, social group) to influence the decision.

❓ Questions to Ask

Whose mistakes are highlighted and whose are not? To what extent are the same mistakes being **interpreted and weighed equally**?

If this person were a **different race (or gender, age, etc.)** would the **feedback be the same**?

Is an **extraneous** factor **influencing** the

Appendix of Bias Types

Accessibility Bias:

We tend to rely on intuitions, guided by what we see or are focused on at a given moment, and ignore what we don't know.

Affinity Bias (aka Similar-to-me Bias):

We tend to have preferences for people with attributes like ourselves.

Anchoring Bias:

Our estimates are often influenced in the direction of a salient comparison value or "anchor."

Availability Bias:

We tend to weigh recent and/or readily available information more heavily when making evaluations.

Confirmation Bias:

We rarely seek out ways to falsify our own hypotheses; instead, we tend to go with what's easy or feels right.

Fundamental Attribution Error:

We tend to attribute people's behavior to dispositional causes (e.g. character, intention, talent) rather than to situational factors (e.g. lack of resources).

In-Group Bias:

We tend to favor people who belong to our group.

Self-Serving Bias:

We tend to attribute our own successes to personal characteristics (character, intention, talent), and our failures to factors beyond our control (e.g. lack of resources).

Stereotype Bias:

We often make assumptions about people based on visible or nonvisible characteristics.