Recognizing Bias

What is bias? A bias is to incline to one side; to possess a personal and sometimes unreasoned or unfair judgment.

Bias occurs when we allow our personal opinions of employees to influence our decisions. In order to address a bias, we need to try and identify the cause or root of the bias. Common types of bias can be grouped into three broad categories:

- Bias based on judgment of performance
- Bias based on personal preference or style
- Bias based on time factors

Bias Based on JUDGMENT OF PERFORMANCE

Type of Bias	Description
Horns/Halo Effect	Underrating in all areas an employee who does poorly in one area. Alternatively, overrating in other areas an employee who is outstanding in one area of performance.
Contrast Effect	Evaluating employees in comparison with other employees rather than against the standards for the job.
Central Tendency Error	Attempting to treat all employees equally by rating everyone in the middle of the scale even if some performances clearly warrant a substantially higher or lower rating.
Rotating	Rotating higher ratings to make everyone happy.
Negative and Positive Skew	The opposite of central tendency. Rating all individuals as higher or lower than their performance actually warrants.
Interpretation	Developing conclusions or making assumptions. Not based on facts but on the rater's opinion of the facts.

Bias Based on PERSONAL PREFERENCE OR STYLE

Type of Bias	Description
First Impression Error	Making an initial positive or negative judgment of an employee and allowing that first impression to distort later interactions.
Similar-to-Me Effect	Rating an employee higher than others, merely because they resemble you in personality, nationality, appearance, etc.
Attribution Bias	Attributing performance failings to factors under the employee's control and performance successes to external causes.
Stereotyping	Generalizing across groups and ignoring individual differences.

Bias Based on TIME FACTORS

Type of Bias	Description
Quick and Dirty Effect	Giving all employees the same rating regardless of their performance in order to get the evaluations done quickly.
Recency Effect	Allowing events that happened recently to have more influence on the rating than events of many months ago.
Time Delay	Forgetting the details of performance over the rating period.