

SIX TRAPS IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

(How to avoid them to be consistent and fair)

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1. REVIEWING ANOTHER PERSON'S PERFORMANCE FROM AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

This occurs when we compare an individual's performance to how we performed in the same situation, rather than using the established standards or criteria. We tend to accept unsatisfactory performance or make excuses for inappropriate behavior.

Accept the Position, Accept the Responsibility

2. BEING THE TARGET OF "RESPONSIBILITY RICOCHET"

This occurs when a person turns the tables and shifts the responsibility for his/her actions onto others (e.g., "Why are YOU picking on me?" "Why are YOU giving me this grade/rating?" or "I was just..."). When this happens, we tend to backpedal and second guess ourselves.

Use 'Instructive Feedback' to Correct Mistakes

3. MAKING JUDGMENTS USING "NON-EDUCATIONAL" FACTORS

This occurs when we fail to stick to the established criteria and/or procedure by using other factors such as effort or likeability (e.g., "she is trying really hard" or "he is a really nice fellow"). We can also get sidetracked by issues related to student loan debt, personal finances, health problems, date or time of occurrence, etc., and fail to address the problem(s). We then use one or more of these non-educational factors to make academic decisions about an individual's performance or progress (or lack of progress) instead of the actual evaluation data that is available.

Stick to the Established Criteria, Avoid Arbitrary Decisions

4. USING ONLY ONE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

This occurs when we rely on one evaluation tool to assess complex clinical skills or one specific incident to identify a serious behavioral problem.

Complex Skills Require Multiple Measurements

5. INTRODUCING THE "HALO" (or "HORNS") BIAS

This occurs when we over-generalize an individual's performance and tend to see everything s/he does in a positive (can do nothing wrong) or negative (can do nothing right) light. This causes us to overlook mistakes (halo) or be unusually harsh (horns).

Focus on the Performance, NOT the Person

6. CREATING ARTIFICIAL BARRIERS OR OBSTACLES

This occurs when we give special treatment to an individual or a group, thereby arbitrarily changing the standards or process. Three examples of contrived obstacles (created by faculty) are "Senioritis," "Jobitis," and NOMS ("not our/my student"). We tend to give these individuals "breaks" that others did not receive, or we tend to ignore or minimize their mistakes.

Be Fair, Be Firm, Be Positive