



Reducing Bias in Performance Conversations

Strengthening leadership clarity, fairness and accountability

Understanding Common Evaluation Biases

Recency Bias

Recency bias occurs when the most recent interactions overshadow the full span of someone's performance. **Leadership implication:** Leaders risk making short-sighted decisions that ignore patterns, progress, or long-term contributions.

Halo Bias

Halo bias happens when one positive trait or strong impression influences unrelated judgments about a person. **Leadership implication:** Leaders may unintentionally inflate evaluations, missing opportunities for targeted development.

Similarity Bias

Similarity bias is the tendency to favor individuals who share our background, communication style, or preferences. **Leadership implication:** Leaders may reinforce sameness rather than cultivating diverse, high-performing teams.

Bias-Resistant Evaluation Rubric

Designed to anchor leaders in observable behavior, not impressions.

1. Define Clear, Role-Aligned Criteria

Select 3–5 categories that reflect what success looks like in the role. Examples:

- Quality of Work
- Collaboration & Communication
- Initiative & Problem-Solving
- Reliability & Follow-Through
- Client/Stakeholder Impact

These categories should align with Innolect's leadership development pillars: **self-awareness, intentional communication, relational agility and accountability.**

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2. Use a Behavior-Based Rating Scale

Rating	Behavioral Description
4 – Exceeds Expectations	Consistently demonstrates the behavior with measurable impact; provides examples showing initiative, leadership or innovation.
3 – Meets Expectations	Regularly demonstrates the behavior at the expected level; examples show solid, reliable performance.
2 – Partially Meets Expectations	Demonstrates the behavior inconsistently; examples show gaps or missed opportunities.
1 – Does Not Yet Meet Expectations	Rarely demonstrates the behavior; examples show significant gaps or lack of progress.

This scale reinforces Innolect’s emphasis on **evidence-based leadership** and **growth-oriented feedback**.

3. Require Evidence for Every Rating

For each category, leaders document:

- **Specific examples** (projects, deliverables, interactions)
- **Observed behaviors**, not interpretations
- **Impact** on team, clients or outcomes

This step directly counters recency, halo and similarity bias by grounding evaluations in facts rather than impressions.

Sample Rubric

Category: Collaboration & Communication

Rating	Evidence-Based Notes
4	“Facilitated cross-team alignment for the Q4 launch; led two conflict-resolution conversations that resulted in shared agreements.”
3	“Regularly participates in team discussions; provides timely updates; collaborates effectively on assigned tasks.”
2	“Occasionally misses communication deadlines; examples show inconsistent follow-through with partners.”
1	“Rarely communicates progress; examples show repeated breakdowns in collaboration.”



Leadership Reflection Prompts

Encourage leaders to pause, reflect and recalibrate.

- **Recency Check:** Am I overweighting something that happened in the last few weeks?
- **Halo Check:** Am I letting one strong trait influence unrelated categories?
- **Similarity Check:** Would I rate this the same way if the person had a different style or background [from my own](#)?
- **Evidence Check:** What specific behaviors support this rating?
- **Impact Check:** How did their actions influence team dynamics, clients, or outcomes?

These prompts reinforce Innolect's commitment to **mindful leadership, inclusive decision-making** and **intentional growth conversations**.

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