Types of Rater Bias

Rater biases are conscious or unconscious tendencies that affect how supervisors rate their employees. Ideally, ratings are based on actual performance and the ratings themselves are accurate reflections of that performance. Rater biases, however, operate to systematically distort the ratings. Some of the more common types of rater bias are the following:

- **Leniency** – The evaluator tends to evaluate everyone positively.

- **Severity** – The evaluator tends to avoid giving highly positive ratings.

- **Halo** – The person being rated has one very positive attribute that causes the evaluator to rate other attributes more positively than deserved; the rating of that one attribute "spills over" to influence the other attributes.

- **Horns** – The person being rated has one very negative attribute that causes the evaluator to rate other attributes more negatively than warranted.

- **Stereotyping** – Because the person being rated is perceived to belong to a particular group (for example, female, Hispanic, accountant, a casual dresser, a smoker, a vegetarian, etc.), the evaluator assumes that the individual possesses all the stereotypic traits associated with that group and allows these assumptions to color the rating of the person.

- **Recency** – The evaluator remembers best what has happened most recently and allows these recent recollections to unduly influence the ratings, rather than taking into account performance over the entire performance period.

- **Similarity** – Because the person being rated shares some attribute with the evaluator (for example, both are UK fans, wear similar fashions, enjoy the same music, etc.), the evaluator rates the person more favorably.

- **Spillover** – When a manager continues to provide positive or negative ratings for an employee based on the employee's performance in previous year.

- **Comparison** – The evaluator rates the person based on comparisons with other employees, past or present, rather than basing the evaluation on how the person performed compared to the expectations set in the work plan.