

BIAS INTERRUPTERS

*small steps
big change*

BIAS INTERRUPTERS FOR PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

Writing an Effective Self-Evaluation Guide

Some people feel more comfortable with self-promotion than others. Partly it depends on how you were raised: some people were taught to be forthcoming about their accomplishments. Others grew up with the “modesty mandate”—to be self-effacing and underplay their accomplishments. The modesty mandate is particularly prevalent among women, mid-westerners, first-generation professionals, and people of Asian descent.

Regardless of how you were raised, it’s important to learn to engage in deft self-promotion. Research has shown that professionals who self-promote generally are more successful than those who don’t. When asked to provide a self-evaluation as part of your organization’s performance evaluation process, the first step is to understand what’s expected.

Here are a few simple steps to help. They’ll prove useful for all groups, helping you to tone it down a bit if you tend towards bluster or to step it up if you were raised with the modesty mandate.

1. Don’t hold yourself to higher standards: “Am I ready?”

Research shows that women often hold themselves to much stricter standards than men, and often underestimate their own contributions. Women also are less likely to question negative feedback. The same may be true of other groups. Make sure you have a sufficient network at your organization so you know how other people are judging themselves. It’s not fair to yourself—or your organization—to judge yourself too harshly. You are not perfect—but no one else is, either.

2. Identify what objective metrics are important in your context.

If you have a sales goal, it’s easy to identify what objective metrics matter at work. Often metrics are subtler, but most workplaces have objective metrics that matter. Do you know what they are? If not, ask someone you trust. (If you don’t have anyone to ask, ask someone in Human Resources—and work on building your network within your organization.)

3. Show that you’ve met and exceeded the objective metrics that matter.

It may be time-consuming to identify and gather the relevant evidence to show you’ve met the objective metrics that matter. Spend the time. Start collecting this evidence early in the relevant review period. Keep a folder with relevant accomplishments and create documents to track progress.

4. Keep track of compliments.

“Good job”—that’s not the kind of compliment we’re talking about. But if someone told you something like, “That’s the best memo I’ve seen in years from a first-year associate,” you need to find some way of getting that into your self-evaluation. Try this: “I know I still need to develop my skills in X area, but when Y said Z it gave me the confidence to believe my efforts will succeed.”

5. Lose the doubt raisers.

Everyone has doubts. But if you don't show confidence in yourself, why should others show confidence in you? Reread your self-evaluation and take out phrases such as "I just wanted to tell you," "I think maybe," "I wonder if..." Display quiet confidence that you can succeed with hard work. (If that's not true, you can leave later—but even if you leave you want to leave a good impression.)

6. No need to brag; just state the facts.

It's generally better to avoid characterizing yourself and just provide the facts. "I was pleased to be asked to work with team X so early in my career" versus "I am just that brilliant that I am the most junior person ever invited to work on team X." Let others draw the conclusions. Research shows that people who engage in blatant self-promotion tend to put others off.

7. Be comprehensive.

Take the time to include all the facts that make you look good.

8. Be honest and specific about your drawbacks—and how you intend to address them.

Someone who believes they have no room for improvement is difficult to work with. Nobody's perfect; someone who thinks so is deluding themselves. *"I believe that the next step for me is to develop my own accounts, and look forward to working on that next year."* *"I had a few instances this year where my proofing was not as accurate as it should be, and I have taken steps to ensure that never happens again."* Ideally show that you're making progress in areas of improvement by describing corrective steps you've taken and providing evidence of improvement (if possible). For example:

"I had a few instances this year where I missed meetings due to calendaring errors and received feedback I needed to improve in this area. I implemented a new calendaring system to ensure more reliable schedule-keeping and have not missed any meetings since. I will continue to ensure my attendance meets expectations."

9. What if you made a big mistake?

Be straightforward, acknowledge the mistake, and explain the steps you've taken to make sure it never happens again. But first be sure it *is* a big mistake. Apologizing over and over again for the kinds of small mistakes everyone makes at one point or another shows as poor judgment, as does failing to sufficiently apologize when one does make a Big One.