

‘Please provide examples’: Amazon looks for specifics in performance reviews - HR Reporter

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Executive Summary

The article examines Amazon's revised 'Forte' performance review process, which requires corporate employees to provide specific examples of accomplishments and growth plans. Academic Christian Cook from Mount Royal University analyzes this development, highlighting critical gaps in performance management systems. Cook argues that organizations commonly fail to train managers in effective feedback delivery, creating anxiety for both parties. The analysis explores tensions between innovation encouragement and failure tolerance in performance systems, warning against 'gotcha' reviews through inadequate ongoing coaching. Cook identifies recency and visibility bias as persistent challenges in annual review cycles and emphasizes the need for performance systems to align with long-term organizational needs, including mentoring and knowledge transfer activities that may not appear in short-term metrics.

Key Insights

1. Manager training in feedback delivery represents a widespread organizational blind spot, with many assuming managers inherently possess these skills
2. Performance systems encouraging innovation must genuinely tolerate failure, as contradictory signals between guidelines and consequences undermine risk-taking behavior
3. Recency and visibility bias significantly affect annual review accuracy, with strategic employee behavior changes occurring before review periods

Practical Takeaways

- Organizations implementing accomplishment-based reviews should tie employee self-nominations to specific job requirements to avoid clarity gaps
- Annual reviews function more effectively as synthesis and celebration tools rather than first-time problem identification sessions

Critical Analysis

Strengths include Cook's systematic analysis of performance review challenges and practical insights from academic perspective. The discussion of bias types and manager training gaps reflects established research. Limitations include reliance on secondhand Business Insider reporting for Amazon specifics, lack of quantitative data, and absence of employee perspectives on the Forte system. The analysis would benefit from comparative data on performance review effectiveness and empirical evidence supporting the

training recommendations.

Organizational Practice

Amazon's Forte process requires corporate employees to list three to five achievements with specific examples and growth plans, feeding into formal year-end assessments for overall ratings and pay decisions

Strategic Implications

The analysis suggests organizations face fundamental tensions between encouraging innovation and maintaining performance accountability, with manager capability development emerging as a critical factor in system effectiveness across different review models

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