

7 tips for a better employee performance review - Culture Amp

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Executive Summary

This article, authored by a Culture Amp content marketing employee, addresses the widespread dissatisfaction with traditional annual performance reviews and argues against their elimination in favour of reform. The author contends that performance reviews are not inherently flawed but are undermined by outdated implementation — specifically, an over-reliance on performance measurement at the expense of performance development. Key evidence cited includes SHRM data indicating over 90% of managers are dissatisfied with annual reviews, research linking satisfaction with performance management to financial and innovation outcomes, and studies on gender bias in evaluations. The article presents seven improvement tips: cultivating ongoing feedback culture, using clear and actionable language, mitigating cognitive and gender biases, training managers, selecting appropriate rating scales, linking performance to recognition, and choosing fit-for-purpose tooling. The author concludes that iterative improvement of performance reviews — rather than abolition — produces measurable organisational benefit. The article implicitly positions Culture Amp's platform as the preferred tooling solution, reflecting its promotional origins.

Key Insights

1. Organizations whose employees are more satisfied with performance management are statistically more likely to meet financial targets, manage change, encourage risk-taking, and innovate — citing research-backed multipliers.
2. Gender bias in performance reviews is documented: women's evaluations contain nearly twice as much communal language, and women receive 2.5 times more feedback about communicating too aggressively, while men are seven times more likely to be told their communication is too 'soft'.
3. Only one in three employees feel they are evaluated fairly, according to SHRM data, highlighting a significant trust deficit in current performance review practices.

Practical Takeaways

- Shifting performance reviews from an annual, isolated event to a continuous process — incorporating regular check-ins, 1-on-1s, self-reflections, and goal-setting — is associated with higher perceived fairness among employees.
- Auditing performance review language and forms for gender and racial bias, combined with structured manager training on bias patterns, is a documented organizational response to evaluation inequity.

Frameworks Mentioned

360-Degree Review — A multi-source feedback process referenced as one component of a holistic performance management system.

Critical Analysis

Strengths: The article synthesises multiple external data sources (SHRM, Harvard Business Review, unnamed gender bias studies) to build a case against performance review abolition. The distinction between performance measurement and performance development is a substantive conceptual contribution. **Limitations:** Several statistics are cited without direct attribution to named studies, making independent verification difficult. The article is authored by a Culture Amp marketing employee and explicitly promotes Culture Amp's product and practices — including its own twice-yearly review cadence and a recommended four-point rating scale — creating an inherent promotional bias. The 'research shows' framing is used repeatedly without identifying the originating studies, reducing evidentiary rigour. The seven tips are presented as evidence-based but vary considerably in the strength of evidence underpinning them. No counterarguments or limitations of the proposed approach are acknowledged.

Organizational Practice

The article describes Culture Amp's own practice of conducting performance syncs twice per year, incorporating growth check-ins, a performance sync, coaching, and regular 1-on-1 conversations. It also describes an unnamed organisation that audited performance reviews for gender and racial bias, redesigned its review form to require evidence-backed ratings, and delivered a one-hour bias awareness workshop to employees.

Strategic Implications

The article reflects a broader industry shift away from annual, measurement-only performance cycles toward continuous, development-oriented feedback models. The emphasis on bias auditing and structured manager training indicates growing organisational awareness of equity risks embedded in evaluation processes. The framing of tooling as a catalyst — rather than a solution — suggests recognition that technology adoption alone does not resolve systemic performance management deficiencies. The data on links between performance management satisfaction and financial outcomes positions PMS investment as a strategic lever rather than an administrative function.

Validation Status: passed
