Performance reviews are the least favorite experience at work by both managers and employees. Sometimes they can be agonizing for all parties. It doesn’t have to be that way! Here are some common mistakes managers make that destroy the performance process and make it difficult for everyone.

**Mistake #1: Seeing the performance review as an EVENT rather than ongoing performance communication**

Managers spend way too much time preparing for performance reviews once a year. Performance review is the end of a process that goes on all the time - a process based on coaching and communication between manager and employee. So, more time should be spent engaging in performance conversations throughout the year than evaluating at the end of the year. A performance review should be easy and comfortable with no surprises.

**Mistake #2: Comparing employees with each other**

Use a ranking system to destroy teamwork and foster unhealthy competition. Want to create bad feelings, damage morale, get staff to compete so badly they will not work as a team? Then rank staff or compare staff. An added bonus to this approach is that the manager becomes the target of hostility.

**Mistake #3: Losing sight of improvement and focusing on blame**

The entire performance process is about IMPROVEMENT. Managers who forget this end up with staff that don't trust them and dread the performance review meeting. Blaming is pointless, and doesn't help people work together to make the team better.

**Mistake #4: Thinking a form is the answer**

It is SO not about the form! Here at Ohio State we use a variety of rating forms to evaluate employees. It helps keep track and provide a framework.

The problem is when managers get caught up on what form needs to be completed by when. Performance management at Ohio State is really about the conversations employees and managers are regularly engaging in. Use a form but don’t make it about the form!
Mistake #5: Believing they are in position to accurately assess staff

Managers delude themselves into believing they can assess staff performance, even if they don’t see their staff doing their jobs or even know what their staff’s jobs entail. Not possible. Without an ongoing partnership, no manager is in a position to objectively assess performance. While no employee wants their manager perched over them watching their every move, it is important for managers to ask for input from others like customers, peers, etc.

Mistake #6: Cancelling or postponing evaluation meetings

Nobody likes to do performance reviews so managers postpone them at the drop of a hat. This sends a message to employees that the process is unimportant, painful and/or phony. Employees are too smart not to notice a low priority placed on reviews.

Mistake #7: Surprising employees during review

Blindside employees – effective method to have a performance review blow up. If you want to waste your time and create bad performance, don’t talk to staff during the year and when they mess up, don’t deal with it at the time but SAVE it up. Then at the review meeting, plop it all in their lap and see what reaction you get.

Mistake #8: Thinking everything should be assessed in exactly the same way using the same standards

One size does not fit all. A mistaken attempt to be “fair” makes some managers think everyone should be assessed in exactly the same way. Do all employees need the same things to improve their performance? Of course not.

Positions are different and each employee most likely is interested in growing and developing in different ways. So take your time with each review remembering they are all individuals with different needs, skills, and interests.