

Do you judge workers fairly?

How would you rate your employees? You can probably identify your best and worst workers in an instant.

All managers form opinions of their team members, just as teachers assess their students. And those opinions tend to stick.

But problems erupt when you mark certain employees as “bad” or “unreliable” or “scatterbrained.” Even if they give you some concrete reasons for drawing such conclusions, harboring negative impressions can prevent you from acknowledging their strengths.

Follow these guidelines to ensure that you judge your staff fairly:

Commit facts to paper. Write down specific actions or behaviors when evaluating an employee’s performance. Like a reporter, describe what the individual did without tossing in your editorial comments. You should have three separate written entries to make a sound judgment about the person’s work.

Show a willingness to change your opinion. Once you’re convinced that an employee is failing in a particular area, don’t assume it’s permanent. Let the individual know what you’re thinking. Tell him exactly what he needs to do to change your view.

Create objective measures. You can ensure that merit matters more than mere perception by devising clear, measurable performance standards. Your judgment of talent should match others’ assessments because everyone should be drawing upon the same hard data to form their opinions.

Ask for input. Don’t analyze someone’s performance in a vacuum. To ensure your observations jibe with what others have observed, ask an employee’s co-workers or supervisors for their input. If the employee in question deals with customers or vendors, call them and ask for their feedback, too.