

# Creating HR success: Key factors in training assessors for enhanced performance ratings

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New research [published](#) in *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* from University of Alabama at Birmingham Collat School of Business faculty is examining how organizations can improve their training programs by customizing frame-of-reference training to emphasize identifying negative behaviors critical to their goals.

While assessors naturally identify [positive behaviors](#), C. Allen Gorman, Ph.D., associate professor in UAB's Department of Management, Information Systems and Quantitative Methods, says targeted training helps them recognize harmful actions that can hinder organizational objectives.

Involving assessors in defining important performance dimensions and examples of behaviors, both good and bad, enhances the effectiveness of the training and increases their buy-in.

"Our research suggests that assessors may naturally be able to evaluate positive behaviors in the absence of training, but the value of FOR training may be in helping assessors identify key [negative behaviors](#)," Gorman said.

To ensure assessors receive effective training, Gorman suggests they become involved in identifying performance dimensions important to the organization, discuss key examples of both positive and negative behaviors, and use practice scenarios with immediate feedback to enhance accuracy.

"As the name suggests, the idea is to create a common 'frame of reference' so that everyone has a shared understanding of performance dimensions and behaviors, so allowing assessors to practice and receive feedback helps to foster that 'mental model' of performance," Gorman said.

Gorman added that, when the performance level of the person being evaluated, the "ratee," is high, there is minimal difference in ratings between FOR-trained assessors and those who did not receive FOR training. The results suggest that performance level matters and should be considered during training; however, training protocols might need to focus more on addressing negative performance.

Gorman says that, while findings about FOR training's effectiveness in controlled lab settings are robust, there is a gap in our understanding of how it is practically implemented in real-world organizations.

"We know FOR [training programs](#) are used in practice, but we don't know much about how they are actually used or the specific components of an effective training program in practice," Gorman said. "I'm working on a paper demonstrating that FOR training can reduce [gender differences](#) in performance ratings. However, more research is needed to explore its practical relevance beyond the existing knowledge that it improves rating accuracy."

Co-authors on this publication include Tanya Contreras, a student with UAB's Collat School of Business, and Joseph Himmler.

**More information:** C. Allen Gorman et al, Beyond rating accuracy: unpacking frame-of-reference assessor training effectiveness, *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (2024). [DOI: 10.1017/iop.2024.6](https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2024.6)

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