The above examples of errors that can be made in assessing performance are examples of **rater bias**, the influence our unconscious thinking processes can have on the decisions and judgments we make. Rater bias can substantially affect the ways in which supervisors evaluate employees' work. The supervisor's values, stereotypes, experiences, culture, background, personality differences with individual workers, understanding of the assessment process, or even simply being distracted can affect how he or she assesses individual employee performance. The supervisor's resulting biases can negatively impact the fairness and equity of performance assessment. Performance management consultant Leslie Traub instructs managers to "recognize any potential bias well before the review process begins. Recognizing our biases and their power over our decision making gives us the opportunity to pause, question and reassess our decisions so we may strive for objectivity".[15]Figure 12.7 provides strategies supervisors should take into consideration to reduce bias in the assessment process.

Rater bias
The influence unconscious thinking processes have on an individual's decisions and judgments.

The supervisor should ask what conditions exist when the job is done well. These conditions, called **performance standards**, are the job-related requirements by which the employee's performance will be evaluated. They should be described in terms of *how much, how well, when*, and *in what manner*. Effectiveness and efficiency measures are part of these standards. The positive and negative effects of performance also should be considered. Consider, for example, the most prolific salesperson in a store, whose product knowledge and selling ability are second to none. However, this salesperson always expects the cashiers to enter his sales first. The cashiers are frustrated, and the other salespeople are not as able to give good service. In addition, this salesperson always has the stockroom personnel running errands for him. This salesperson receives accolades on selling, but every one of his sales is a rush project, and others are expected to

Performance standards
The job-related requirements by which the employee's performance is evaluated

FIGURE 12.7 Strategies for preventing bias when assessing employee performance

- Know your biases and identify them before the review begins.
- When soliciting input from others about an individual's review, such as when using peer or 360 degree assessment, explore views that are opposite from your own. Adopt an open mind rather than dismissing opposing views.
- Check your assumptions prior to the performance appraisal meeting, especially those concerning work style and other differences.
- Give performance reviews the time and importance they deserve. Haste and distraction can negatively impact the assessment process.
- Be conscious of potential cultural or gender differences in self-ratings and look for accurate means of comparing accomplishments.
- Understand that employees can both overrate and underrate, and both can be damaging. Help employees use objective performance data to rate their performance.
- If ratings are weighted, have clear and transparent rating and weighting processes.
- Be conscious of informal groups and each group's dominance in the organization, avoiding bias toward one group over another.
- Create clear norms for decision-making that mitigate power dynamics.

Adapted from Leslie Traub, *Bias in Performance Management Review Process: Creating an Inclusive Talent Pipeline by Understanding Our Filters* (Silver Spring, MD: Cook Ross, Inc., 2013). This resource is available for download from Cook Ross, Inc., http://www.cookross.com/docs/unconsciousbiasinperformance2013.pdf