LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

PERSONNEL EVALUATION FOR POLICE AGENCIES

A LEARNING CONTRACT

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

MODULE I

BY

G. SCOTT KNIFFEN

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CONSTABLES DEPARTMENT

CONROE, TEXAS

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What is the best type of personnel evaluation for your agency? Can you put L.A.P.D.'s system to work in your fifteen man department? What about BARS, forced choice, MBO? If these questions confuse, irritate, or intimidate you, you, join the ever-expanding group of law enforcement executives who are in the same boat.

The purpose of this research is to study and assess the several modes of personnel evaluation, examine their strong and weak points, and assist agencies in choosing a fair and responsible system for personnel evaluation.

Personnel evaluation. The words strike fear into the hearts of the most courageous police officers. Most police officers can face murderers, drug addicts, and the vilest individuals and situations imaginable with no concern for personal well-being, but the sight of a rookie sergeant with pen and appraisal form in hand will turn his legs to jelly and his stomach into an aviary.

Why do evaluations have this unintended effect on otherwise stalwart individuals? Perhaps a partial explanation can be found in the manner in which many evaluations have been performed in the history of Law Enforcement. Much like sea gulls, many supervisors, once every six months, will fly in, make a lot of noise, mess over everybody, and fly back out.

After fifteen years in Law Enforcement, I can state with

1.

assurance that "seagull" supervisors abound in our profession.

WHY EVALUATE?

Why, then, should we evaluate our personnel? Is it worth the trepidation, the anxiety, and the trauma to rater and ratee alike? The penultimate question, I guess, is, "Does it have to be this way?"

Andrew Grove; the president of Intel Corporation of Silicon Valley, California, has said "...if we want performance in the work place, somebody has to have the courage and confidence to determine whether we are getting it or not." [1]

The answers to the other two questions are obviously no and no. The evaluation process can, indeed must, be an informative, positive proceeding. The evaluation process is essential to a police department. It provides invaluable feedback on a wide range of functions such as employee performance, career development, and supervisory interest. It helps evaluate selection practices. [2]

In addition, the performance appraisal promotes a common understanding of work objectives and standards of acceptable performance. It provides feedback to subordinates, as to how well their supervisor feels they are meeting these expectations, and to supervisors as to how they can help subordinates in their professional growth and development. [3]

So the performance evaluation,

must serve many purposes, from evaluating the

success of selection decisions, to assessing
the effectiveness of a leader, to evaluating
training efforts, to determining the quantity
and quality of individual work effort. The
assessment of performance itself is a difficult
measurement task because so many factors influence
performance...(also) a great number of ethical
and emotionally charged issues arise when perform-
ance is evaluated...(however)...the results can
have profound influences on the jobs, careers,
attitudes, personal self-concepts, and general
sense of well-being of police employees.[4]

In short, every supervisor worthy of the name engages

constantly in the process of comparatively rating subordin-

ates. The apppraisal process, however, is an instrument, not

a tool. It must be used with surgical precision, not like a

bludgeon.[5]

A performance appraisal, then, is an instrument

for measuring employee capabilities and giving
management an inventory of them and will provide a
means for supervisors to record...their opinions
regarding the performance of subordinates...(and)
establish a basis for rewarding or penalizing
personnel and for explaining to them why they are
or are not progressing satisfactorily.[6]

PHILOSOPHIES FOR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Regardless of the official purposes or objectives of

evaluations, some police executives assess subordinate behav-

ior for one or more of the following reasons:

1. The department says it should be done "x" times
a year whether the officer needs it or not (fixed
interval philosophy).
2. It is the only way to justify a personnel
decision which has been, or will be, made (rubber
stamp philosophy).
3. If we only had a chance to sit down and talk it
out, everything would be all right (human relations
philosophy).
4. There are certain minimum standards for perform-
ance in this department and if individuals cannot
meet these standards, the sooner we weed them out,
the better (the selection philosophy).

5. Every individual has both strengths and weaknesses; every individual seeks performance improvement; every individual seeks information necessary to maintain strengths and eliminate weaknesses (the individual differences philosophy).[7]

There are more, naturally, but these five are representative of some of the more common value systems operating. Some of the positive and negative effects of each are worthy of brief explanation.[8]

The Fixed Interval Philosophy has a dramatic effect on individual behavior in that employees will concentrate their energy in the period of time immediately preceeding the evaluation. This is not as serious as the possibility that the employee will be evaluated without his knowlege. Private industry is famous for this type of appraisal. In Law Enforcement, however, it is common practice for the employee to sign his appraisal form after he is evaluated. [9]

If the Rubber Stamp Philosophy is in practice, the evaluation process will be without credibility, since it will become evident that the information is being manipulated to fit a decision. [10]

The Human Relations Philosophy focuses on under-achievers and assumes that the most efficient workers have no problems and need no feedback to continue with high quality performance. Very few individuals can maintain a high level of high quality work without positive reinforcement. [11]

The proponent of the Selection Philosophy assumes that the selection process should provide good performers, that people cannot change their behavior, and that the work role

is static. He doesn't realize that it would be more efficient

to reform the worker than to replace him; that just about

anyone can change his behavior, given the appropriate incen-

tives; and that the job description in Law Enforcement is

subject to immediate and drastic change.[12]

The Individual Differences Philosophy is the most sup-

portable from experience and research.

> It specifies that performance evaluation is a
> problem-solving process involving collaborative
> energy expenditures on the part of both the
> evaluator and the employee. It addresses both
> strengths and weaknesses, and, consequently,
> good and poor performers. The credibility and
> acceptance of the process...are increased and
> the organization is capable of making rather
> immediate changes in the behavior of individuals
> to accompany redefinitions of work roles.[13]

TRENDS

Several trends regarding personnel evaluations have come

under consideration in the past few years. The interview

between the employee and the supervisor is seen as more

important to the process than any other aspect. The rating

system based on multiple objectives (promotions, transfers,

demotions, discharges, etc.) is likely to fail. The process

should be used as an administrative tool or a supervisory

tool. There is a shift away from rating personal or subjec-

tive traits and toward rating objective and more easily

observed characteristics. Finally, there is a tendency to

regard performance evaluations as opinions and attitudes

rather than as scientific measurements of the quality of

employees. [14]

TYPES OF EVALUATIONS

With so many philosophies and trends evident in the appraisal process, it stands to reason that there would be as many different types of evaluations. The table shown in Appendix 1, illustrates the various methods of appraisal divided into the two categories: Person-Oriented and Results-Oriented, and gives both examples and descriptions of each method. This table is extremely concise and needs little improvement to be considered complete. One method not cited needs to be mentioned since it is utilized more often than we would like to admit. For lack of a better term, we will call it the "Lazy Method". It is characterized by subordinates being rated on the basis or the supervisor's memory, not documentation, and certain characteristics that the supervisor likes or dislikes.

Neither category of evaluation is perfect because ratings are developed, administered, tabulated, and cataloged by men who may be biased or make errors which inevitably find their way into the appraisal process. Some errors can be eliminated by designing a proper instrument; others may be lessened by training the raters. [15]

ERRORS IN PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

The Halo error is the tendency to judge a person on the basis of one factor that is considered important by the rater. The principle also works in reverse; that is, the ones who are

rated extremely high in one area are rated high in most others. This is due to supervisors who are not usually inclined to utilize one extreme without "adjusting" others to prevent the appearance of inconsistency. [16]

Central Tendency error results when a supervisor refuses, even when it is appropriate, to use extreme scales on the rating form. It is seen as a way of playing it safe.[17]

The error of Related Qualities occurs when a rater assumes that a subordinate who exhibits one strength automatically possesses others. This is particularly dangerous because it may fail to turn up subtle deficiencies.[18]

Inter-rater inconsistency, too much variance in the evaluations between two or more supervisors; and the Recency phenomenon, basing the evaluation on activity in the month to six weeks prior the evaluation, are two other errors that plague the system.[19]

Many supervisors who command officers who are not particularly competent, but who try hard, are often tempted to give them a higher than deserved evaluation, based on energy expended, not performance, traits, or potential.[20]

Psychological blocks; the desire to avoid "playing God", the belief that appraisals destroy morale, resentment of increased paperwork, or the unwillingness to take corrective action against closely knit subordinates; all place the evaluation process in danger of losing credibility. They are also difficult to overcome. Again, training seems to eliminate some blocks.[21]

AVOIDING EVALUATION ERRORS

Police agencies desiring to avoid these tendencies will pay careful attention to several areas. First, the program will be successful only if the raters want it to be successful. The failure to train the raters will result in rating abuses and slipshod procedures. These, in turn, will result in lost confidence in the evaluation system and in management. Thus, the ratings will become "administrative trivia." It is the responsibility of management to train the raters under proper supervision and maintain their edge with regular conferences.[22]

Next, management must avoid shortcuts. Any system worthy of the cost should not be compromised by shortcut methods. An abbreviated version designed to save time at the expense of accuracy is doomed before it is started.

Last, employee groups; unions, associations, etc., sometimes bring formal, organized pressure to bear on departments. This may encourage indifference or rating abuses. Indifference can be overcome. Under no circumstances should the evaluation be used for any purpose other than the intended and announced purpose.[23]

DEPARTMENTAL USES OF EVALUATIONS

Those objectives or purposes vary from department to department. They also vary from device to device. Administratively, the data are useful in a progressive personnel management program which may include input from subordinates on the goals and objectives of the department. Evaluation may

also be used to determine who earns or retains merit pay. When

used clinically, appraisals give employees credit for superior

performance or afford an opportunity for calling attention to

inadequate performance. Compilations of the results can effec-

tively be used to reveal training needs department-wide. [24]

Personnel evaluation also serves as an audit to facili-

tate control and motivation. It serves some of the following

purposes:

1. Justification for promotion, transfer, and
separation decisions
2. Justify rewards such as merit pay
3. Sets the criteria for evaluating the effective-
ness of the selection and placement process
4. Sets the criteria for evaluating the success of
training and development decisions
5. Develops information upon which scheduling
plans, budgeting, and human resources planning
can be based
6. Evaluates the relative contributions made by
individuals and entire departments in achieving
higher level organizational goals and
7. Provides feedback for employees regarding how
the organization views his performance.[25]

These last two items directly relate to employee devel-

opment. This has become more important, given the increased

demand for professionalism in Law Enforcement. Management has

the opportunity to enrich jobs, stimulate career development

with job rotation or training, and facilitate new innovations.[26]

STATE-OF-THE-ART

In recent years several developments in personnel evalua-

tion have been introduced into the Law Enforcement field.

Although they are not necessarily state-of-the-art, they repre-

sent attempts to apply private sector devices and methods into

the public sector.

The Forced-choice method "uses psychological scale and test construction" and must be designed for the individual agency. In this method, the supervisor is allowed to select two items from a group of four. One should be the most descriptive of the ratee, the other should be the least descriptive characteristic. A reduction in rater prejudice is expected as a result of the use of the forced-choice method but it is expensive and time consuming. [27]

The performance domain rating scale is more relevant to an operating task environment such as police work. They have often succeeded in designing "highly valid and reliable rating scales...produced in conjunction with the performance domain". In other words, what the officer is supposed to be doing in his work assigment is what is appraised. Depending on the agency, three to six performance domain rating scales may be required to ensure job-related evaluations. The PDRS elicits narrative comments from the rater. Unfortunately, this key feature is often ignored by supervisors. When this occurs, it starts to show signs of the deficiencies of the other methods.[28]

A behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS) incorporates all the important benchmarks of an effectiveness measure.

    1) It is derived from experienced observers'
    report of actual behavioral episodes.
    2) It samples behavior over the long term.
    3) It specifies with precision the myriad
    information-processing activities that constitute
    the multiple facets of effective police behavior.

4) It implies many possible configurations or patterns of effective officer behavior.
5) It focuses attention on what the employee does on the job.
6) It takes account of an employee's membership in several organizational units, and of his or her potential impact on their continued function- ing. [29]

Additionally, BARS "focus on detailed evaluation of specific acts or behaviors, rather than global aspects of performance." They treat performance on the job as multi-dimensional and use real-life incidents to illustrate good or bad performance. The instructions accompanying a BARS are usually very specific, allowing the rater to specify the exact value that was in mind when the ratings were assigned.[30]

DEVELOPMENT OF A PERSONNEL EVALUATION SYSTEM

The procedure for developing a personnel evaluation system may be summarized as follows:

1) Determine why an appraisal system is desired.
2) Conduct a job analysis of the positions which fall within the scope of the performance apprai- sal system.
3) Evaluate the various devices which are available.
4) Provide opportunities for input from supervisors and subordinates during the developmental phases.
5) Determine the properties of the evaluation devices which are chosen or have developed.
6) Set up a mechanism for information gathering and feedback.
7) Determine a probationary period for the system.
8) Set up a mechanism for keeping up to date on developments in the field of performance appraisal.[31]

Before the listed procedure can be implemented, however, two items must be considered. First, it will take a lot of time to research, develop, implement, and follow-up a workable appraisal system. "Quick and dirty" methods of development

will do more harm than good and will quickly lose any credi-
bility that is inherent. The ultimate value of the system
is directly relational to the professionalism devoted to its
construction.

Second, a system that works for one agency may not work
for another. The "determination to use someone else's system
should be based on the technical, philosophical, and practical
foundation of the system, not on who is currently using it."
Borrowing one department's system may incorporate their
errors into yours. [32]

CONCLUSION

Personnel appraisals are needed. They are done on a
daily basis, whether formally or informally. They supply
the needed feedback for subordinates and supervisors alike.
Through careful planning and execution of a logical plan, a
concise, effective, and fair system can be developed for
any agency. Then, with courage and confidence, we can
evaluate effectively and fairly.

Person-Oriented Methods of Performance Appraisal

Method	Definition
1. Discrete Category Scales	Identification of personal or job traits which are evaluated in terms of a series of categories such as:

Needs Improvement	Standard Performance	Outstanding Performance

The number of categories usually ranges from 2 to 5, but there can be more.

Method	Definition
2. Graphic Scales	Identification of traits, but evaluated on the following type of scale:

Unsatisfactory	Poor	Good	Superior	Excellent

This is a more flexible version of the discrete category scale. Responses can be placed anywhere on the continuum.

Method	Definition
3. Adjective Scales	Identification of traits that are more complete in evaluative response.

Handles situations clumsily.	Judgement often illogical.	Acts judici- ously under most circum- stances.	Judgements impartial and logi- cal.	Thinks soundly and log- ically.

This is a more descriptive version of the graphic scale.

4. Simple Ranking:

	Method	Definition
a.	Simple Order	Ranking of "best" to "worst" employee.
b.	Alternative Ranking	Employees halved into "highest" and "lowest" performing groups. Highest half ranked from top down; lowest half from bottom up.
c.	Group Ranking	Criterion groups established to rep- resent specific levels of performance. Employees being evaluated are placed in groups appropriate to their level of performance.

Method	Definition
5. Paired Comparison	Every employee compared with all others being evaluated. Employee receiving highest number of favorable comparisons is ranked highest; fewest favorable comparisons results in lowest ranking.
6. Forced Distribution	The "bell-shaped curve" or normal frequency distribution is employed; an example would be allocating 10% for highest and lowest rankings, 20% for

next highest and lowest groups, and 40% for the middle group.

7. Free Response   Evaluation of employee in "rater's own
   Reports   words."

8. Performance   Checklist of desirable traits is pro-
   Checklists   vided. Rater checks those that apply to
                   employee. Items checked can be given
                   different weights to determine total
                   rating.

9. Forced   Sets of descriptive statements concerning
   Choice   performance are used and the rater
                   selects those which "best describe"
                   the employee's performance.

Results-Oriented Methods of Performance Appraisal

Method	Definition
1. Output Data	Measurement of such output as cases cleared, people interviewed, complaints received, etc.
2. Efficiency Indexes	Establish indexes concerning tardiness, absences, accidents, complaints. Indexes should be correlated and selected for a particular situation.
3. Financial Indexes	Measurement of costs, budget performance; compared with some performance yardstick.
4. Field Interview	Personnel specialist interviews supervisor of employee to determine performance, problems, developmental plans, etc.
5. Critical Incident	Critical incidents related to successful job performance are identified. Rater observes employee behavior during incidents and records observations for review with employee.
6. Performance Standards	Specific job requirements established for each employee.
7. Management by Objective	Joint establishment of individual objectives, preferably quantifiable, between superior and subordinate. Individual objectives should be integrated with employee's organizational unit objectives and overall organizational goals. Periodic review of objectives is established. [33]

ENDNOTES

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3. Lt. Jeffrey R. Cameron, "Performance Evaluations Reevaluated," The Police Chief, February 1989, 53.

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15. Bopp, 218.

16. Ibid., 219.

17. Ibid., 220.

18. Ibid., 222.

19. Lawrence R. O'Leary and Myron E Scafe, "The Performance Appraisal: From Albatross to Motivational Tool," The Police Chief, February 1989, 46.

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22. Iannone, 257.

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24. Ibid., 254-255.

25. Ibid., 191-192.

26. Ibid., 282.

27. Donald T. Shanahan, Patrol Administration Management by Objectives (Boston: Holbrook Press, 1975), 223.

28. Whisenand and Rush, 198.

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