

THE CONCEPT OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL: STANDARDS,
PROBLEMS, AND ATTEMPTS AT REFORM

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE BILL BLACKWOOD
LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

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LICENSE AND WEIGHT SERVICE
ABILENE, TEXAS
JANUARY, 1994



#168

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report will review the practices of performance appraisals in public agencies, in general, and law enforcement agencies, in particular. Problems of appraisals will be discussed and recommendations for reforming the evaluation system will be offered.

II. NATURE OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Performance appraisals can be as informal as telling someone, "You've done a nice job," or as formal as a full scale written report, complete with a detailed follow-up interview.¹ A formal system of performance appraisal (i.e., one or two planned meetings with the employee each year to discuss job performance) has always been preferred to the informal method. This is because some managers are convinced their employees know exactly where they stand when they communicate. Interviews with employees, however, reveal that communication with employers is one of the greatest disappointments in traditional bureaucracies.

In handling performance appraisals, too many executives approach their supervisory role with the motto, "If they don't hear anything, they know they're doing okay." Consequently, such managers too often avoid discussing workers' performance except in cases that require emergency action. The rationale for this is the false impression that executives are always in control and that workers resent being told they are wrong.

Twenty-four human resource executives from Fortune 100 companies met to discuss performance appraisals. The meetings began with the moderator asking how many executives were satisfied with their company's performance appraisal systems. There was nervous laughter and a hesitancy for anyone to indicate such satisfaction. Finally, one hand did go up. The individual was suddenly overwhelmed by questions about what his company did. He pointed out that the company had spent decades

conducting research to improve its system and, now it knew how to make the system operate effectively.²

At the time of this event, the system the executive referred to was under study. There was no question that this corporation was operating better than most other organizations. It still, however, fell short of being an ideal system. Indeed, some managers who were interviewed suggested that the company might benefit through abolishing the evaluation system altogether. Others simply argued that it is impossible to appraise performance effectively. However, most managers would agree that while it is difficult to conduct performance appraisals, such a practice can produce a positive effect (Lawler, Mohrman, and Resnick, 1984), as well as accomplish valuable feedback between the employee and employer.

Appraising performance is an on-going process. The abilities of each worker are constantly being evaluated by the individual, as well as those around him. Responsibility for designated tasks makes an individual's performance assessment both possible and necessary. It is possible because it identifies the results for which the person is responsible and necessary because complex, differentiated organizations need information on how well jobs are performed in order to operate effectively.

On the surface, performance appraisals seem deceptively simple. It appears to be one person observing another performing a task and reaching a judgment about how adequately that task has been performed. Although such a process occurs regularly throughout all human activities, the situation is substantially more complex in work organizations. It is one thing for sports fan to observe the performance of a player, it is quite another for a superior to judge the performance of a subordinate. The fan may provide vocal feedback but, unlike the superior, the fan has little reward power over the player.

Performance appraisal in a work organization is a process of measuring workers' competence and effectiveness. In addition, it is the process by which the agency can

discover discrepancies between the goals of organizations and those of workers. Performance appraisals can have important legal implications and can lead to the courtroom. At the individual level, performance evaluation represents an interaction between two human beings who are often nervous, tense, defensive, and are poorly prepared to talk. The interaction certainly reveals a wide range of misperceptions, biases, hopes, and values.

At this point, one might ask whether formal performance appraisals are truly worthwhile. Virtually all organizations surveyed responded to this question affirmatively. For example, one study of 557 firms found that 83 percent had formal appraisal systems used for determining merit pay increases (Peck, 1984). Overall, most companies indicated they have formal appraisal systems that evaluate employees' performance. That information is used for pay determinations, promotions, hiring, training, and terminations.

Having established the importance of performance appraisals, it is not difficult to understand why most organizations continue their use. However, simply conducting performance appraisals is not enough. They must be properly conducted if their benefits are to outweigh any negative consequences. Negative consequences of a poorly conducted appraisal are so great that it would be better not to do it at all.

Results of Performance Appraisal

What are the consequences of a performance appraisal? Experience has shown many positive results.

- The person whose performance is appraised may develop an increased motivation to perform effectively.
- The self-esteem of the person being appraised may increase.
- The person conducting the appraisal may gain new insight into the person being appraised, and vice versa.
- The job of the worker being appraised may be clarified and better defined.

- Valuable communication may take place among the individuals taking part.
- Participants to the appraisal may develop a better understanding of themselves and of the kind of activities that are of value to the agency.
- Organizational goals may be made clearer, and therefore more readily accepted.
- Valuable appraisal information may allow the organization to be more efficient.
- The negative consequences of performance appraisals include the following:
- Individuals may quit as a result of the way they are evaluated.
- False and misleading data may be created.
- The self-esteem of the person being appraised and the person doing the appraisal may be damaged.
- Large amounts of time may be wasted.
- The relationship among the individuals involved may be permanently worsened.
- Performance motivation may be lowered, including the feeling that poor performance measurement means no rewards.
- Money may be wasted on forms and training.
- Lawsuits may be filed by individuals who feel they are unfairly evaluated.

All too often, negative results occur when organizations institute formal performance appraisals systems. The high hopes associated with a workable performance appraisal system end up being destroyed by a system that produces more conflicts, problems, and resistance than it does positive results. In some organizations, performance appraisal systems become inoperative simply because of the problems and resistance they produce.

The challenge is to produce a performance appraisal system that eliminates negative consequences and produces positive ones. Unfortunately, this is not an easy task. A brief review of some conflicts inherent in a performance appraisal will highlight why effective appraisal is often difficult.

Performance Appraisal Goals

Organizations and individuals alike have goals that they wish to achieve as a result of performance appraisal. In some cases, these objectives turn out to be compatible; in others, they are in conflict. These goals will be discussed in the following segment.

The Organization's Goals. Performance appraisal is an important element of control in complex organizations. A control system needs to gather data on what is occurring, and a mechanism for correcting or adjusting performance when change is needed (Lawler and Rhode, 1976). Performance appraisal is designed to provide the individual and the organization with data about what is going on, as well as a medium through which the organization tries to influence the behavior of individuals.

To make intelligent developmental decisions, organizations need to identify who needs development and what kind of development is necessary. This type of information is often not readily available. Performance appraisal data can help pinpoint who might be good candidates for development and what kinds of development experiences might be best for them. Thus, one reason why organizations need a system of appraisal performance is their need for the information it can yield. Based on such information, they can plan, coordinate, and administer training and development programs.

The ability to motivate workers is basic to the effective functioning of any organization. Performance appraisal serves that function. At the heart of motivation theory is the view that motivation is a function to which valued rewards are perceived to depend on performance (Lawler, 1981).

Appraisal for motivation must obviously be based on the objective appraisal of performance. To a substantial degree, appraisal for motivation is also based on past performance and what the person has accomplished. Appraisal for development should focus on both strengths and weaknesses from the standpoint of improving one's overall performance.

The Individual's Goals. Social psychological theories contend that individuals want and seek feedback on their work performance since it helps them learn more about themselves. Performance appraisal can provide such feedback. If their performance compares favorably with that of others, they will tend to feel satisfied in their competence and psychological success; if it does not, they may tend to experience failure, and constructive criticism may often be difficult to accept.

Each individual possesses a sense of self that includes beliefs about competence and capabilities. These beliefs are usually strongly held and well-developed. As a result, people often strive to avoid receiving a negative evaluation, and when they do receive one, it is rejected. Rejection can take many forms, including discrediting the source and distorting the information to make it more compatible with existing beliefs.

When performance appraisal is crucial to workers receiving rewards that led them to join their organization in the first place, they often present themselves and their performance in the best possible light during performance appraisal. They tend to deny any problems with their work and emphasize the most favorable aspects of their performance. On the one hand, they want to look as good as possible to maximize extrinsic rewards; on the other hand, they want accurate and helpful feedback about their performance (Meyer, Kay, and French, 1965)

Case Study. One study of performance appraisal was conducted at the General Electric Company in the early 1960s by Herbert Meyer and his associates. They found that formal appraisals by managers are often ineffective in improving the performance of subordinates. Individuals who were formally criticized about their job performance tended to decline in performance. Meyer and his colleagues suggested that the goal of appraisals should be to improve the future performance of subordinates. This goal, however, may be difficult to achieve for those managers who act as judge. Instead, Meyer and his colleagues argue that managers and subordinates should set performance goals together and then appraise progress toward those goals. Participatory appraisal,

they found, leads to both greater satisfaction and higher performance on the job. Meyer and his co-workers also suggested that the appraisal process should be continuous, that is, it should become part of the day-to-day interaction between managers and subordinates rather than an assessment imposed once or twice a year.

In appraising employee performance, standards to be evaluated must be realistic. For example, if an employee's production record is low, his work would typically be classified as less than satisfactory. If the fault is his, the classification is justified. On the other hand, if an employee is expected to work on outdated equipment that is slow and subject to frequent breakdowns, poor production is beyond the employee's control. In such a case, evaluating performance against a standard that can be met only with modern equipment is unrealistic and unfair.

Needs of Performance Appraisals. The following is a list of the needs for an effective performance appraisal system:

1. Shifting standards. Some managers rate each subordinate by different standards and expectations. A low performing but motivated employee, for example, might be rated higher than a top performing but seemingly indifferent employee. The appraisal must be based on uniform, fair standards.
2. Rater bias. Some managers allow their personal biases to distort ratings. These biases may be prejudices against not only sex, color, race, or religion but also against personal characteristics, such as age, style of clothing, or political viewpoints. This problem can be alleviated by requiring written documentation for rating reports.
3. Different rater patterns. Managers, like teachers, differ in their rating styles. Because some managers rate more harshly than others, the lack of uniform rating standards is unfair to those employees who are confused about where they stand. It is also unfair to the organizations since it becomes difficult to determine which employees should be rewarded. Differences

in rating patterns can be reduced through precise definitions of each item on the rating form.

4. The halo effect. There is a common tendency, known as the halo effect, to rate subordinates high or low on all performance levels. For example, an employee who constantly works late might be rated high on productivity and quality of output as well as on motivation. Similarly, an attractive or popular employee may be given a high overall rating. By rating employees separately on a number of performance levels, the halo effect can be reduced.

Recommendations

Two decades after the study by Meyer and colleagues, a research team headed by Edward E. Lawler, Allan M. Mohrman, and Susan M. Resnick conducted a follow-up study at GE. Their study supported many of the original findings and led to the following recommendations:

1. Top management should take care to integrate performance appraisal into the overall organizational culture and human resource strategy.
2. The nature of an employee's job, the performance expectations, and the way in which performance is measured should be made clear at the outset of employment.
3. The bases for pay increases and the relationship between pay and performance should be a natural discussion of the appraisal process.
4. A manager should discuss an employee's career development opportunities and outline those needs.
5. The employee should be an equal and active partner with the manager throughout the appraisal process.³

According to the Lawler, et al. study, the most common cause for a negative evaluation stems from the occasional run-in between an employee and supervisor. If the

employee has done something to cause criticism of the supervisor, for example, this may influence the entire rating. Another error of low tolerance occurs when everyone in a department is rated lower in comparison to other departments. This generally happens when a supervisor is particularly demanding of his employees and when his standards are excessively high.

Another rating error is the high or lenient tendency. This results when the supervisor rates everyone high to avoid difficult decision making or to keep all of his employees happy. To avoid this error, the rater should make maximum use of production records, statistical information, and objective data which are not based on personal opinion.

III. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROBLEMS

Job performance appraisal systems are utilized by most law enforcement agencies. At best, these systems represent a "mixed blessing," since their deployment in an agency sometimes leads to managerial problems. Among the more general problems common in performance appraisals are the following:⁴

1. Lack of objectivity on the part of raters.
2. Rating errors of leniency, severity or the halo effect occur
3. Absence of clear-cut standards.
4. Misunderstanding, mistrust and lack of acceptance by rates.
5. Lack of training for the rater.
6. Absence of checks and balances in the system.
7. Legal and administrative complaints and labor contract grievances.
8. The absence of job performance standards and an effective rating instrument.
9. Law enforcement agencies expect performance appraisal systems to serve too many purposes simultaneously, with the end result being, none are served very well.

10. Lack of training for supervisors.
11. Preference of having a poor rating system rather than none at all.

Although a flawless appraisal system is non-existent, some errors can be avoided by designing a proper instrument while others may be lessened through training. Agencies with a genuine desire to make the system work will inform raters of the obstacles to effective appraisals.⁵ Evaluators who identify standards and draft appraisal instruments would benefit by familiarizing themselves with the following appraisal rating errors and obstacles:

1. Halo effect or the tendency to evaluate an employee on the basis of one factor deemed important by the rater.
2. Constant error or subjectivity of rating. When appraisals are compared, one group may appear outstanding and the other only average, even though both groups are of the same quality. The differences are due to a divergence in supervisory input and not to subordinate output.
3. Recency occurs when too much weight is placed on an employee's performance immediately prior to a rating deadline. Most appraisals are intended to cover a six month or yearly time frame. However, if a supervisor fails to keep accurate records, there may be an inclination to overemphasize the most recent performance. If recent performance is not indicative of the entire period, the appraisal process is subverted. Recency error may result in higher personnel appraisals than deserved.
4. Central tendency results when a supervisor refuses to use extreme rating scales and clusters all his subordinates at or near the middle range. Central tendency also occurs when raters appraise new subordinates about whom they know very little.
5. Bias is very common.

6. Faulty assumptions occur when a structurally sound system is designed and installed by experts. There is usually an implicit belief that the instrument appears technically foolproof. Many managers further believe that once the system is installed, it will continue to operate as its designers intended. The result is an over-reliance on a device that eventually becomes faulty because it has not kept pace with the changing demands of the administrative environment. Another faulty assumption is that line officers consistently need to know where they stand. In truth, personnel appraisals may increase anxieties by pointing out the relationship between labor and management.
7. Psychological blocks play an important role in the success or failure of personnel evaluations. Social science research points more toward inhibitions regarding the use of appraisals than enthusiasm. Consequently, many supervisors develop psychological blocks. A common block is the idea of "playing God" to subordinates. Other psychological blocks include skepticisms of its value, a resentment of increased paperwork, and unwillingness to take corrective action against a close-knit group of subordinates.
8. Factor clarity occurs when two or more supervisors use different standards in defining "outstanding," "good," and "fair." Unless a precise definition of factors can be agreed upon, comparisons cannot legitimately be made and the process becomes defective. The superior should ensure that consistency of definition is the rule.
9. Leniency occurs when supervisors are overly lenient with poor or marginal employees, especially when evaluation scores determine pay raises. Leniency at the lower end of the grading scale has a snowballing effect. For instance, if an evaluator grades an inefficient employee to a "fair" or "satisfactory" rating,

he often tends to compensate by giving everyone else a boost up the gradation ladder whether they deserve it or not.

10. **Related quality errors** occur when the rater assumes that a subordinate who exhibits one strength automatically possesses others. To avoid related quality errors, each factor should be treated as an individual trait.
11. **Expended effort.** Some employees operate at peak efficiency throughout their careers. Yet, there are others who do not possess the needed qualifications even though they expend a great deal of energy to achieve that end. Supervisors who evaluate employees who are not particularly competent, but who try hard, are often tempted to give them a higher-than-deserved appraisal.

Personnel administrators are aware that appraisal programs are sometimes met by resistance from the managers who administer them. Even those managers who realize the necessity of evaluations frequently delay the process, especially the oral interview. As a result, the general conviction that subordinates have a right to know their superior's opinion is often not communicated.⁶

- The boss's resistance is usually attributed to the following causes:
 - A normal dislike of criticizing a subordinate
 - Lack of skill needed to handle the interviews
 - Dislike of a new procedure, with its accompanying changes in ways of operating
 - Mistrust of the validity of the appraisal instrument

In one company with a well-planned and carefully administered appraisal program, an opinion poll was conducted. More than 90% of the respondents approved of their system of evaluation. They wanted to know their strengths and weaknesses. Some

40% never even realized they had been evaluated, yet files showed that over four-fifths had signed a statement verifying that they had been through an appraisal interview.

Training programs designed to teach interviewing skills are also beneficial, but they will seldom eliminate managerial resistance entirely. "Negative appraisals" remain a source of genuine concern. There usually exists some discomfort in informing a subordinate that his or her work is not up to standard.

IV. EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

It is a complex task to specify what should constitute an effective appraisal system because complex issues rarely lend themselves to simple solutions. There are, however, some approaches whose effectiveness is supported by research and by the success of some organizations. An appraisal system consists of the following key issues:

1. Appraisal tools and methods
2. Degree of fit between other features of the organization and the appraisal system
3. System design
4. Introduction of the system and training of individuals

Tools and Methods

Forms used and methods followed are what many consider to be the major elements of an appraisal system. These elements certainly are important, but they should be considered only in terms of their context and the process of their use. The dynamics surrounding appraisal are so strong that they will dominate, regardless of forms and methods.

Besides methods and tools for appraisal, there are methods for using appraisal results in other organizational systems and decisions. A number of methods exist for

using performance measures to determine pay, promotion, and retention. Every effective appraisal system must use specific methods and tools that fit its purposes.

Fit

Performance appraisal takes place in organizations which are made up of many features and systems. Performance appraisal is also a part of an ongoing relationship between the individual and the organization. It is impossible to separate appraisal from the other things that happen to individuals or from the other features of the organization (Zammuto, London, and Rowland, 1982). This point is perhaps clearest with respect to the relationship between an individual and his or her supervisor. This relationship can have a large impact on appraisal. Similarly, the way jobs are structured can have a major impact on the choice of appraisal methods. There are also legal constraints that come into play in performance appraisal; organizations are not free to do whatever they want.

Finally, there is the whole process of appraisal. The process is crucial to the appraisal's effectiveness and must fit the organization's management style. For example, it is counterproductive to conduct top-down, supervisor-dominant appraisals in an organization that emphasizes employees' involvement and decision making. Conversely, it is very difficult to conduct participate appraisals in an organization managed in a top-down manner. Effective performance appraisal proceeds from a number of factors, including the process used to design the appraisal system, the fit between the appraisal system and the way work is designed and managed, the technical and legal correctness of the appraisal system, the process used in conducting appraisal, and the ways the system is introduced and people are trained to use it.

System Design

Effective appraisal begins with design. Key issues include which people are involved in the design, what type of activities they engage in, and how they operate as a design group. All too often, however, these issues do not receive enough attention, and it

is erroneously assumed that as long as the design process produces a good design, how the process is carried out is irrelevant.

There are three readily identifiable beliefs (Jantsch, 1975). The first is built on the careful specification of all the details of the system which, in turn, are based on the work of the best available experts. This approach leads to a concern with the specifics of measurement tools, with the procedures for appraisal, with the connections between appraisal and merit raises, and the like. With this notion of design, the task is to specify all the components and assemble them into a blueprint. This approach also leaves design to experts who are familiar with the research on how to conduct appraisal.

The second approach is determined by the degree to which the design has the backing of political process. An appraisal system may be designed or redesigned because new people assume top organizational positions and seek to propagate their own approach to management by infusing it into the appraisal.

The third approach argues that the best way to insure the acceptability of it and to let users participate in its creation. The participative approach assumes that the final participants will alter things to their own purposes anyway; therefore, why not involve them in the design process? Furthermore, it is believed, as long as the organization and its employees are represented in the design process, this approach can accomplish organizational purposes and values without sacrificing individual ones, and vice versa.

What we see as the most viable approach to design combines important aspects of all three of the foregoing approaches: the rational, the political, and the participative. Experts do have a great deal to contribute, since a large body of research exists on performance appraisal. The process also needs to incorporate the values and purposes of key political figures in the organization, as well as of the majority of its members. In an organization of any size, it is impossible for everyone to be involved in the design of the appraisal system, although it is quite conceivable for the small groups to design the system and for others to participate through questionnaires and other indirect means.

The design process must also be carefully articulated with the process used to introduce the appraisal system into the organization. In an important way, the design process is the beginning of that introduction. How the appraisal system is introduced can have an important impact on its effectiveness (Cocheu, 1986). Effective communication and training are needed if the design effort is to result in a successful system.

V. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL INSTRUMENT

A formal system is usually designed in order to consider as many elements of the job as possible. The manager should be forced to make some judgment about each element of performance. This means that the executive must be knowledgeable about the job and its performance. That's why the appraisal instrument should be done at the level closest to the job being reviewed. A manager three levels above the position in question cannot handle the judgments as well as the manager who is in daily contact with the employee. The instrument can be reviewed by higher-level management, but the appraisal will be more accurate when done by someone in daily contact with the job.⁷

A typical performance appraisal instrument usually addresses such areas of performance as well as the degree to which each performance is judged in each area. There may be anywhere from three to ten degrees of performance efficiency for each category, the extremes being "unsatisfactory" on one end and "outstanding" on the other.

Volume or production levels

Thoroughness

Accuracy

Initiative or attitude

Ability to learn

Cooperation

Attendance and punctuality

Furthermore, there are areas applying to ones own business that ought to be included. Some may use a numeric weighting for each of the factors. The entire form correctly becomes part of the employee's personnel file. The ranges can be narrower if your system is designed that way. There are many different types of appraisal forms.

VI. THE INTERVIEW

If new car prices once produced "sticker shock," a formal appraisal session sometimes produces "rating shock." If there has been adequate informal feedback over the previous twelve months, the employee should have some inkling of what is coming. Otherwise, you may find yourself dealing with a closed mind.⁸ You don't want that at all. You want the employee to be in a receptive frame of mind.

The key note for the interview is honesty. The rater must impartially control the presentation of good and bad information. The rater should maintain performance appraised to be at a satisfactory level, and work to improve performance appraised at an unsatisfactory level. Both goals--maintaining an employee's steady course and closing any performance gaps--require the same type of feedback session, with one major exception, to be noted later.

The formal appraisal feedback session is important to the employee, as well as the business unit. It should be conducted with a high degree of professionalism. The following are steps to remember for employee feedback:

1. Set the stage. The session should cause the employee to sit up and take notice. Use every possible means to make sure the employee will be primed to listen to what you have to say.
2. Give specific details. Just as the appraisal itself should avoid generalities, so should the feedback session.
3. Avoid making character judgments. Employees take appraisals personally. Remember that the employee is under pressure. Remarks that would normally

be overlooked can take on exaggerated importance in a formal feedback session. Discuss only performance--only outputs and behaviors. Do not comment on what you see as the employee's character--"arrogant," immature," moody." Even if you're right, you're wrong. It's essential to explain to the employee the performance data that led you to reach your conclusions. But keep the adjectival judgments to yourself.

4. Motivate the employee. No matter what a particular assessment may be, the tone of the session should be constructive. You must show each employee that there is a clear link between appraised performance and regards such as pay increases and promotions.

Formulate an action plan. The four previous rules apply to feedback reasons aimed at maintaining a steady course and at closing a performance gap. The fifth rule deals only with unmet performance requirements. When a performance requirement has not been met, first discuss with the employee the probable cause or causes of the problem. Some causes are obviously beyond the employee's control--a major illness, an office fire. But in the absence of such events, use your combined analysis of the problem as a basis for creating an action plan. Draw up a list of specific steps the employee can take to close the gap. Set up a timetable for each step, and specify when you will review the employee's progress. Both you and the employee must believe that this plan has a good chance of working. Don't try to impose a plan without the employee's uncoerced agreement. Otherwise, your efforts will be wasted, and the employee will feel demoralized. Your aim in devising an action plan is to encourage improved performance, but only the employee can implement it.

A formal feedback session requires homework, skill, and practice. You must be prepared. You have to know quite accurately what you intend to say and how you will say it. You may even want to go over it mentally, or with a friend, before the session. Even so, no matter how good your appraisal tools, no matter how fair and thoughtful your

appraisal, no matter how excellent your preparation for the feedback session, you may bomb. Things may not go the way you want them to. Human beings are unpredictable. You may get some startling reactions. You may fail dismally.

But as a smart manager, you won't let one or two failures stand in your way. You will keep on doing the job that needs to be done, and doing it to the best of your ability.

Ten points to remember

The following are ten points to remember about good performance appraisals.

1. A good formal performance appraisal, one that is helpful both to employees and to management, provides specific, point-by-point assessment of assigned requirements.
2. Direct assessment involves numerical measures and is effective only if the numbers mesh with stated performance requirements.
3. Indirect assessment yields tangible results, though the measures on which it is based are less concrete than numbers.
4. Performance appraisal forms come in many varieties; the general types are (a) rankings, (b) checklists, and (c) scales.
5. Ranking systems-simple, paired-comparison, and forced distribution-provide workable ways to rate equal-level employees from best to worst.
6. Performance appraisals of managers are typically made once a year, but employees below the managerial level need to be rated more often.
7. In giving an employee feedback at a formal performance appraisal session, be honest--lay it on the line.
8. A feedback session should rivet the employee's attention, offer specific details, and stick strictly to performance.
9. The tone of feedback sessions should be constructive; you want to improve employee performance, not install guilt.

10. Devise an action plan to help an employee close the gap between performance requirements and actual performance.

VII. TRAINING OF RATERS

Training of raters is necessary for good performance. The reasons for that kind of training includes some of the following. Rating is not an easy task. To do it accurately requires the supervisor's best effort. Most companies recognize the importance of the rating program and train supervisors to rate accurately and fairly. The supervisor is told why the program is being used, its advantages and disadvantages, and what it can do for him, his department, and his people. The rating forms are thoroughly explained, and appraisal factors are defined. Common rating errors and ways to minimize them are discussed and analyzed. The technique of the interview is emphasized and perhaps demonstrated by having supervisors act out the roles of participants in an interview. The supervisor is encouraged to consult with his or her own supervisor or the person responsible for the rating program in order to check negative judgment and benefit by another's experience.⁹

During training the following guidelines should be emphasized:

- The rater must be familiar with the behavior and job performance of the employee.
- An adequate amount of time must be spent on the rating.
- The rater must be able to evaluate objectively and make use of factual information.
- The rater should be willing to seek and follow advice in connection with the rating.

As a result it is important that supervisors be trained in conducting performance appraisals. This training should include lessons on setting goals with employees and

making appraisals a constructive part of supervision. Proper performance appraisal is a skill that must be learned and practiced. It is not something that one automatically acquires upon being appointed to the position of supervisor. ¹⁰

VIII. JOB PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

A standard of performance is a measure against which each employee can be judged in order to determine their motivation.

1. It must be exceedable or employees cannot be separated into adequate, inadequate, and outstanding.
2. It must be high enough to meet management's needs.
3. It is not based solely upon "the average" since the average may be misleading.
4. It is not at the level attained by the present occupant. He may be more or less than adequate to management's needs.
5. It is not based upon "pace setter" results.
6. It must be complete in covering all normal tasks.
7. It must be written to provide a common understanding and base for review.
8. It must be developed with the help of employees if acceptability is to be assured.
9. It must be accepted by the supervisor of the employees concerned.
10. It must be reviewed and accepted by top command as equitable with standards used in other segments of department.
11. It must be kept up-to-date by periodic review.

Clearly defined standards of performance possessing these characteristics can be and have been established for every type or level of position. A misconception exists that standards must be based upon quantitative measures. Standards for tasks in which there is unmeasurable output can be defined by description, in clear and unequivocal language,

of the effects desired from the employee's performance on the job or by the setting of time limits within which action is to be completed or initiated.

The basic unit in the techniques for establishing standards is the task. When the entire content of the job is detailed as tasks performed, it is possible to be specific about the performance required. List the tasks that are performed in carrying out the functions and meeting the responsibilities of the position. Express them in action words that are not capable of multiple interpretation.

Characteristics of performance that are most useful when considering a standard of performance for any task are generally agreed upon. Not all are pertinent to every task. The degree of importance attached to a characteristic will vary from position to position even though the task appears to be the same.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

Performance appraisals are very important to any organization. A plan for the future may be laid out. Employees know what they contribute to the organization and become better employees. They have a say in the organization. They know what their job is, what is expected of them, and what the organization will do for them.

Performance appraisals are not easy to maintain. Organizations must continually look for ways and means to improve their system of appraisals. Almost every organization needs a different appraisal system and there are many differences even within the same organization. Raters must be trained and have an open and impartial mind. It is a very difficult job when it is done correctly but the benefits to the agency as well as to the worker are paramount.

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