

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**Implementing Performance Evaluations**

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**An Administrative Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
Leadership Command College**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The ultimate objective of a formal performance evaluation system is to improve performance. Unfortunately, many agencies employing such systems find more disappointment than satisfaction in the process. The research question examined was, "Can a formal performance evaluations system be an effective tool for positively influencing officer performance?" The methodology employed a review of books, professional journals, magazines, and Internet web sites as well as surveys of officers and supervisors from the Galveston Police Department and participants of the 59<sup>th</sup> Module II of Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute's Leadership Command College. The research identified two principle obstacles to effective evaluation systems: poorly developed performance standards and insufficient or ineffective rater training. Ambiguous, inaccurate and subjective standards lead to biased, inaccurate and unfair evaluations. Insufficient or ineffective rater training leads to rating errors, supervisor cynicism or indifference, and officer discontentment. Agencies recognizing the obstacles can develop valid and relevant standards and rater training that minimizes the likelihood of their infiltration. When properly developed, implemented and administered, a formal performance evaluation system can be an effective tool for positively influencing officer performance and should be considered by those agencies currently operating without one.

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## INTRODUCTION

People evaluate each other every time they meet. Opinions are formed based on appearance, demeanor, speech, and countless other factors. Everyone is judgmental to some degree. Law enforcement officers may be the most judgmental for it is an officer's ability to evaluate people that aid him or her in assessing threats, quelling disturbances, and solving problems. Likewise, officers constantly evaluate the performance of each other. Law enforcement supervisors constantly evaluate the performance of their subordinates. Law enforcement administrators constantly evaluate first-line and mid-level supervisors to assess the potential and development of their replacements. This ongoing evaluation process takes place both informally and formally.

Performance evaluations, both informal and formal, provide feedback to the employee where inferior performance may be discouraged and superior performance reinforced. Further, they may determine pay raises, assignments, promotions, discipline and training needs. However, the principle objective of performance evaluation systems is to improve officer performance.

Informal and formal evaluation systems should not be exclusive of one another. Rather, they should be complementary processes that support one another. Every law enforcement agency employs methods of informal evaluation. Formal performance evaluation systems are common, but not universal. More than 90% of corporate America utilizes formal performance evaluations (Goff, 1992) by contrast only 75% of municipalities use formal performance evaluations. (Glover, 1996).

Many law enforcement managers judge an officers' performance by the number of arrests affected, citations issued and reports written. Such activities are easily measured, but they represent a fraction of an officer's on-duty time and do not provide an accurate perspective of officer effectiveness. Furthermore, emphasis on such measures can promote abuse, as officers feel compelled to satisfy arbitrary quotas. (Trojanowicz, 1998). The role of today's law enforcement officer encompasses so much more than simply enforcing state laws and municipal ordinances. Increasingly, communities' expectations of an officer's role are dominated by public service and order maintenance. Hence, today's law enforcement manager is tasked with the responsibility of evaluating performance that cannot be measured by mere statistics.

The research question to be examined is, "Can a formal performance evaluation system be an effective tool for positively influencing officer performance?" This research is intended to assess the utility of formal performance evaluation systems and determine whether or not they should be implemented in those agencies currently operating without such a system. It is believed that the research will support the effectiveness of formal performance evaluation systems if the systems are effectively developed, implemented, and administered.

The research employed for this project will include multiple sources. A survey will be conducted of personnel from the Galveston Police Department, which does not utilize a formal performance evaluation system, to determine officer attitudes toward the prospective implementation of one. Further, a survey will be conducted of personnel from law enforcement agencies that do utilize formal performance evaluations to

determine officer attitudes towards these evaluations systems. The research will also include a review of books, professional journals, magazines, and Internet web sites.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

An unfortunate truism that is frequently spoken within many law enforcement agencies is that “You will never get fired for doing nothing.” Many officers are satisfied with merely “getting by.” Sure, they answer their radio, they make their calls, and they write their reports, but they do little else. They know what it takes to keep the sergeant content and they do just enough to stay under the radar of the sergeant’s ire. Lacking some formal evaluation system, the officer might easily get the assignment, promotion or pay raise that another officer deserves.

When considering performance evaluations, according to Van Meter (2001), “few employers like doing them, employees distrust them, they are too time consuming to administer, and courts review them with a heightened degree of scrutiny when issues of discrimination are raised” (p. 10). Despite their widespread use, performance evaluations are one of the most controversial management tools. Attitudes range from unquestioned support to outright revilement. Not surprisingly, employees receiving a good evaluation frequently view the process as beneficial while employees receiving a bad evaluation view the process as unfair. (Roberts, 1998).

A good performance evaluation system does not necessarily make a law enforcement agency good, but a bad system can contribute to employee dissatisfaction, low morale, high turnover and discrimination claims. (Candelaria, 1993). With so much on the negative side of the ledger one might ask, why bother? Despite the controversies, there is consensus among the literature reviewed that an effectively

designed, implemented and administered performance evaluation system can benefit the agency, the supervisor and the officer. (Goff, 1992).

In the simplest of terms, a performance evaluation system seeks to measure on-the-job performance. However, in many law enforcement agencies, performance does not receive the weight it deserves in assignment, promotion, and compensation decisions. Instead, seniority has a tremendous influence in such decisions. Unfortunately, seniority alone is a poor predictor of future performance. It is generally understood the best predictor of future performance is past performance, hence, there is a need to develop a formal system that evaluates and records performance.

When integrated into an agency's daily operations, evaluations help validate compensation, assignment, promotion, discipline, and commendation decisions by creating a defensible and credible system where performance is measured against an objective standard. Evaluations are deemed extremely effective for influencing subordinate behavior, particularly when pay, promotions, or assignments are dependent upon good ratings. (Roberts, 1998). It helps communicate and reinforce an agency's culture, goals and values as well as identifies and tracks their accomplishment. (Kramer, 1998; Featherstone, n.d.). By constantly evaluating and improving individual performance, an agency can simultaneously evaluate and improve its own performance as it seeks to fulfill its commitment to the community. (Kramer, 1998).

Evaluations help supervisors distinguish between satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance. (Bennett & Hess, 2001). Evaluations provide supervisors a tool with which they are better able to identify and evaluate officers' performance. (Featherstone, n.d.). The supervisor is able to identify and articulate his subordinates' strengths and

weaknesses, thusly, allowing him to more effectively communicate with his subordinate as they collaboratively develop work-related goals and training objectives to maximize officer potential. Inconsistent supervisor decisions are minimized (Bennett et. al, 2001) as supervisors develop a clearer perspective of officer performance and the standards against which the performance is compared. (Featherstone, n.d.).

Evaluations benefit officers by letting them know precisely what they need to do to be successful, what level of performance constitutes success, what level of performance constitutes failure and what they can do to improve. (Bennett et. al, 2001; Jones, 1999). Officers' want to know that management notices them. They want to know where their performance stands within the objectives of the organization. Individual recognition is productive as long as individual performance is consistent with agency objectives. (Roberts, 1998). It facilitates the fulfillment of officers' need for feedback, direction, role clarity, and job involvement. (Goff, 1992). In many instances, evaluations promote healthy competition where individual accomplishments promote self-actualization. (Roberts, 1998).

Of course, performance evaluations are not without their pitfalls. Most criticism of performance evaluations focus on two principal areas: performance standards and rater training. An officer's performance should be compared to an established set of standards and evaluated based on some scale of measurement. The courts have consistently supported management's right to develop and enforce valid performance standards if they are job related and administered without discrimination or bias to all employees. (Van Meter, 2001; Jones, 1999). Agencies operating without standards can stifle the agency as its officers become shrouded in an atmosphere of inconsistency,



conflict and chaos. (Bennett et. al, 2001). Ambiguous and inaccurate standards are equally problematic as they render the evaluation process ineffective and unproductive. (Goff, 1992; Roberts, 1998; Jones, 1999). Standards that facilitate the subjective rating of attitude, reliability, loyalty, or demeanor are inconsistent and unsupportable. Such standards create a rating process that emphasizes personality over performance. (Jones, 1999). Such a system will be deemed biased, inaccurate, or unfair and lead to rejection of the process. (Van Meter, 2001).

Any performance evaluation system must fit the agency. (Candelaria, 1993). Implementing a “canned” system that is successful at one agency will not ensure success at another agency. Each agency is unique with its own needs and own expectations. Thusly, an agency should develop an individualized evaluation system that recognizes and satisfies its unique circumstances. (Kramer, 1998).

An agency must identify its intended use of the performance evaluation system. It must be determined before implementation whether or not the performance evaluations will influence pay, assignments, promotion, discipline, or training. An agency must reexamine organizational objectives and develop performance standards consistent with those objectives. (Roberts, 1998). Consideration must be given to what will be accomplished, the quantity and quality of tasks to be performed and the level of performance required. (Bennett et. al, 2001). All supervisory levels must develop a consensus view of performance and the standards by which it will be measured. (Hudson, 1994). The standards must be job related, well defined and well documented. (Kramer, 1998). The standards must be consistent with job descriptions. If job descriptions change, the standards must change to reflect the new description. If job

tasks change, the job description must change to reflect the new tasks. It is imperative that standards fit the job. The focus of the standards is on specific job task performance, not personality. Anti-discrimination laws enacted over the last forty years have focused on developing standards that are essential to the job being evaluated. (Van Meter, 2001). Examples of bad, average, and good performance should also be developed, documented, and communicated to both the officers and supervisors. Performance should then be measured against these performance examples for evaluation. (Bennett et. al, 2001). Developing valid job related standards will delineate the path between desirable and undesirable performance. (Jones, 1999).

Officers frequently dismiss performance evaluations systems as being subjective in nature. Developing objective standards is critical for a fair evaluation system. However, law enforcement is a complex job. Not all job tasks lend themselves to purely objective or quantitative measurement. Some essential job tasks will require the development of subjective standards. It is critical that these subjective standards be supported by performance examples to assist supervisors in recognizing and measuring performance relative to these examples, to communicate expectations to the officers, and to minimize the likelihood for rater bias. (Kramer, 1998). These standards will guide and control officer's performance and supervisor evaluation. (Van Meter, 2001).

The development of the valid performance standards is no guarantee that a performance evaluation system will be effective. The primary cause of evaluation ineffectiveness lies with the supervisor. (Goff, 1992). Supervisors who lack confidence in the evaluation system, fear conflict, or fear damaging supervisor-employee relationships can render the most carefully developed system ineffective. The

pervasive “good guy syndrome” that permeates the supervision ranks of some agencies fosters an agency culture where problems fester until they are out of control. Then the agency has little alternative but to impose disciplinary action, which is frequently difficult to defend on appeal because the employee’s evaluation history reflects only positive ratings. Roberts (1998) quotes one manager as saying,

“Department heads do not want to hurt bad employees, so they give satisfactory ratings. When the personnel board looks at good ratings and then sees that a supervisor wants to get rid of an employee, they vote in favor of the employee since nothing negative was documented. An employee can have a great performance appraisal, but it may conflict with the actual work performance. Many times we have to go to arbitration and we lose because there is a glowing performance appraisal and yet there is no documentation showing the bad work that the employee is doing.”

This unwillingness to confront even the most minor of undesirable behavior contributes to erosion in confidence of both the employee and supervisor. The officer begins to doubt management abilities while the supervisor becomes cynical and reluctant to put forth the appropriate level of effort for future performance deficiencies. (Roberts, 1998).

Rating errors also occur when: the evaluation is weighted by a single event or more recent behavior rather than a composite of the officer’s performance during the rating period; the supervisor is too lenient or too harsh; (Bennett et. al, 2001) the rater lacks knowledge of the officer’s actual performance; the rater is unskilled in conducting the appraisal; the rater is not forthright with the officer; the rater does not take the evaluation seriously; (Goff, 1992) the rater does not have the courage or training to conduct the evaluation accurately; the rater is prejudice due to differences in education,

race, sex or other factors; (Bennett et. al, 2001) or an ineffective management practice negatively impacts the evaluation. (Roberts, 1998).

The supervisor must possess the skills necessary to conduct an effective evaluation. Perhaps more importantly, the supervisor must possess the willingness to do so. Rater training is essential to developing the skills and commitment necessary to perform effective evaluations. Appropriate training contributes to satisfaction for both the supervisor and officer. Numerous studies have confirmed that rater training positively influences the evaluation accuracy. (Griffin, 1989). Unfortunately, rater training is emphasized when a new performance evaluation system is introduced, but rarely is it provided on a continuing basis. (Glover, 1996). Since several researchers have concluded that rater training effectiveness diminishes over time, (Griffin, 1989) refresher training scheduled at regular intervals contributes to continued rater effectiveness. (Goff, 1992).

Employee's effort and behavior is affected by his or her beliefs and expectancies. (Roberts, 1998). Supervisors' attitudes and expectations are integral to the successful application of any evaluation system. They must understand the system and its purpose. (Featherstone, n.d.). They must believe that the system effectively fulfills its purpose. (Goff, 1992). They must recognize their role. (Van Meter, 2001). Rater training must do more than teach a supervisor how to evaluate performance and how to complete the evaluation form. It must communicate the purpose and effectiveness of a well designed, implemented and administered performance evaluation system. Supervisors must understand what rating errors might occur, what might contribute to these errors, and how they can avoid them. In one study, it was learned that the

managers believed in the concept of performance evaluations, but were skeptical of the actual evaluation practices. In this study, the managers were more confident in the process if additional rater training were implemented and additional time allocated for the completion of evaluations. (Roberts, 1998). Supervisor acceptance and commitment is critical.

Once supervisors understand the intent and potential of a performance evaluation system, they must be taught effective methods of providing feedback in addition to the mechanics of the evaluation system itself. (Glover, 1996). The evaluation process should be an extension of on-going officer-supervisor communications. (Pennock, 1992). Supervisors must learn to communicate performance standards to their subordinates. They must learn to work with their subordinates to establish performance goals. They must learn to coach and provide positive feedback. The focus must be on helping officers improve their performance to achieve individual and organizational goals. (Featherstone, n.d.). Supervisors must be trained to elicit officer participation in the evaluation interview, thusly, giving them a sense of control over their work and a perception of fairness in the process. (Glover, 1996). Positive feedback and officer participation will facilitate officer-supervisor understanding and help the officer recognize the evaluation system as a developmental process rather than a judgmental process. (Featherstone, n.d.).

Once the system is developed and supervisors' trained, all other officers must be trained to understand the system. The evaluation process will have difficulty realizing its intended purpose if officers have unrealistic expectations, defensive attitudes, or fail to get involved. (Goff, 1992). They need to know how the system functions and how

they will be affected. (Van Meter, 2001). The training must include the dissemination of written objectives and procedures to act as a guide for future reference. (Candelaria, 1993). They need to recognize that the system is more than a command and control device. They need to know that a performance evaluation system is intended to improve job performance and, ultimately, job satisfaction. They need to know that their input is essential to the realization of individual and organizational goals. They need to know that they will have an opportunity to rebut any unfavorable evaluation and that there are appeal provisions for grievance and discipline issues should disagreement result. (Featherstone, n.d.). Officers must feel vested in the process and care about their evaluations. (Kramer, 1998).

Differentiation between levels of performance must influence consequences. Bad evaluations must have negative consequences (Bennett et. al, 2001) and good evaluations must have positive consequences. Differentiation between levels of performance must influence the attainment of incentives, such as assignment, promotion, or compensation as well as the dispensation of discipline. Failure to attach meaningful incentives to evaluations will lead to diminished officer motivation and a lack of trust in the system. (Goff, 1992; Kramer, 1998).

Commensurate with the formal evaluation process is the informal evaluation process. The former cannot be truly effective without the latter. The formal evaluation might take place annually or bi-annually, but the informal evaluation takes place daily. As a supervisor observes an officer in the field or reviews an officer's reports, an informal evaluation process takes place. The supervisor makes judgments about an

officer's performance as the behavior is observed. This informal evaluation process is a continuous activity. (Featherstone, n.d.).

Some view the informal evaluation process as more effective than the formal evaluation. Behaviors are evaluated as they occur, allowing for immediate reinforcement of desirable behavior and immediate correction of undesirable behavior. (Van Meter, 2001). This continuous feedback affords the supervisor an opportunity to monitor officer progress, provide feedback, and guide an officer towards improved performance. (Featherstone, n.d.). It also ensures that the officer is not hearing issues discussed during a formal evaluation interview for the first time. This gives the officer an idea of what to expect from their formal evaluation, thus, creating an atmosphere where they are more likely to participate and contribute towards a productive evaluation. (Pennock, 1992). Further, when notes of such behavior are made immediately and filed appropriately, they can be used to support the annual or bi-annual formal evaluation, thus reducing the likelihood of rater errors. (Bennett et. al, 2001). Informal and formal evaluation processes not only compliment one another, the integration of the two is necessary for an effective performance evaluation system. (Bennett et. al, 2001).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Corporate America and law enforcement, alike, develop and implement formal performance evaluations systems with the intent and hope that they positively influence employee performance. The intent of this research is to determine if such systems satisfy this objective. Can a formal performance evaluation system be an effective tool for positively influencing officer behavior?

A survey was constructed and distributed to the participants of the 59<sup>th</sup> Module II of the Leadership Command College (LCC) conducted at the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute. (See Appendix 1) The survey was intended to determine the pervasiveness of formal performance evaluation systems and assess the opinion of supervisors from agencies that employ them. Of the twenty surveys distributed, fifteen were returned representing a response rate of 75%. The respondents were all supervisors representing fifteen law enforcement agencies throughout Texas. The size of the agencies ranged from a low of 11 to a high of 1300 sworn personnel.

A second survey was constructed and distributed to patrol officers and patrol supervisors of the Galveston Police Department. (See Appendix 2) The survey was intended to assess the opinion of patrol officers and supervisors concerning the performance evaluations. The Galveston Police Department has an authorized strength of 170 sworn personnel, but employs no formal performance evaluation system. The survey was distributed to all three patrol shifts, which have a combined authorized strength of ninety-eight patrol officers and nineteen supervisors. Surveys were only distributed to forty-seven patrol officers and twelve supervisors working on October 10, 2005. Surveys were returned by all working personnel, representing a response rate of 100%.

Both surveys included several questions intended to develop some background on the respondent and their respective agencies. The surveys also included statements that the respondents were asked to review and then indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale.

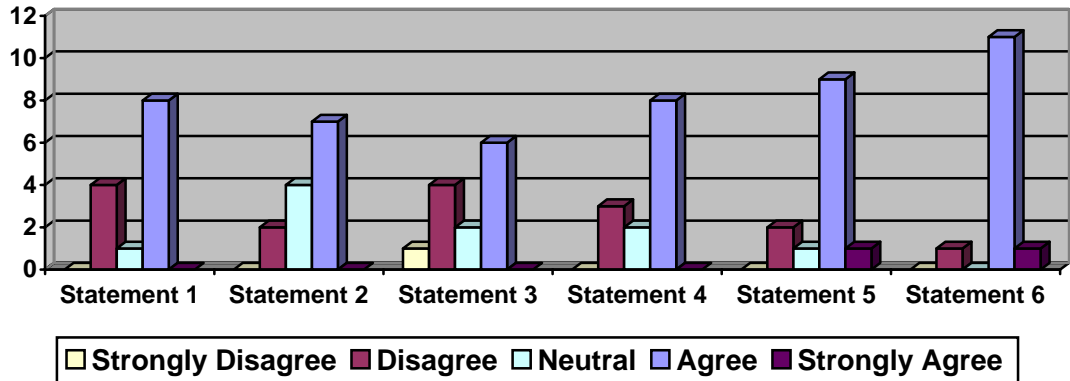


## **FINDINGS**

The survey respondents of the 59<sup>th</sup> Module of LCC confirmed the pervasiveness of formal performance evaluation systems. Thirteen of the fifteen respondents indicated that their agencies currently employ a formal evaluation system. One agency was in the process of developing and implementing one while only one agency employed no such system. Of the thirteen agencies that employ some form of formal performance evaluations system, twelve utilize supervisor review. Of those twelve, two agencies also use self-evaluation, one also uses subordinate evaluation, and one uses self-evaluation, subordinate evaluation, and peer evaluation. One agency uses subordinate evaluation alone. Respondents indicated that seven of those agencies involved its officers in the development of the performance standards, five did not, and one didn't know. Eleven agencies use annual evaluations while two use bi-annual evaluations. Seven agencies use evaluations in promotional decisions while six do not. Four agencies use evaluations in pay decisions while nine do not.

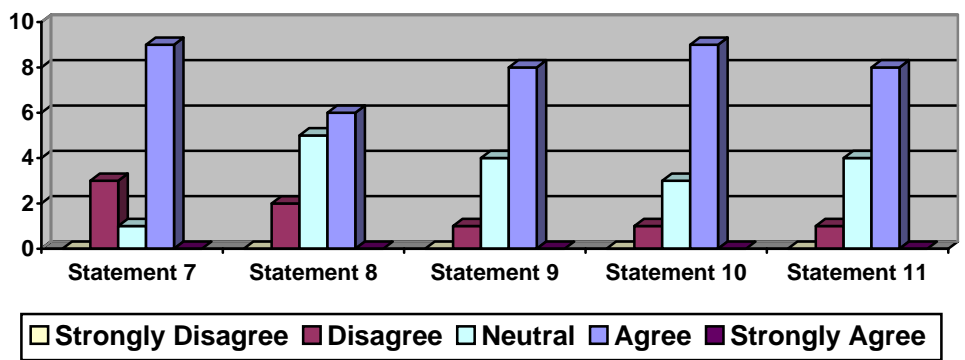
Respondents were then presented with a series of questions and asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with the statement on a five-point scale. The responses are illustrated by bar graphs in figures 1 and 2; with the respective statements following the graphs.

**Figure 1.** Survey of the 59th LCC Module II of LEMIT



- 1) Your agency's performance evaluation is an effective tool for identifying officers' deficiencies and strengths.
- 2) Your agency's utilization of performance evaluations is an effective tool for improving officer performance.
- 3) Those tasked with conducting performance evaluations were provided adequate training to observe, document, evaluate and discuss those behaviors with the respective officers.
- 4) Supervisors utilize the evaluations to discuss an officer's strengths and weaknesses and to develop a plan to improve performance.
- 5) The raters have sufficient time to complete the performance evaluations and discuss the results with the respective officers.
- 6) The raters have adequate contact with officers to accurately evaluate their performance.

**Figure 2.** Survey of the 59<sup>th</sup> LCC Module II of LEMIT



- 7) The performance criteria that is evaluated is relevant to job tasks.
- 8) Performance evaluations are fairly administered with minimal bias by the rater.
- 9) Officers generally support the performance evaluation system.
- 10) Supervisors generally support the performance evaluation system.
- 11) The administration provides adequate support for the performance evaluation system.

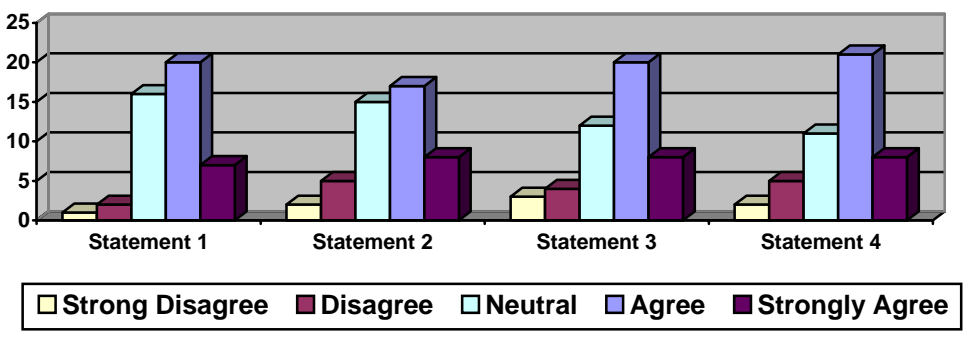
The respondents indicated general support of the evaluation systems employed by their respective agencies. Only statements 3 and 8 garnered less than 50% agreement. Statement 3 relates to rater training while statement 8 relates to rater bias. This is of significant concern since rater training and rater bias have been identified as causes of rating errors and evaluation ineffectiveness.

Surprisingly, three of the five respondents who deemed their rater training as less than adequate deemed other aspects of their evaluation process as effective. Although the statement concerning rater bias garnered less than 50% agreement, only two respondents disagree while six respondents agreed with the statement. Five respondents were neutral in their opinion. Not surprisingly, those two respondents who didn't agree that raters were provided adequate training also didn't agree that evaluations were conducted with minimal rater bias, suggesting a possible correlation.

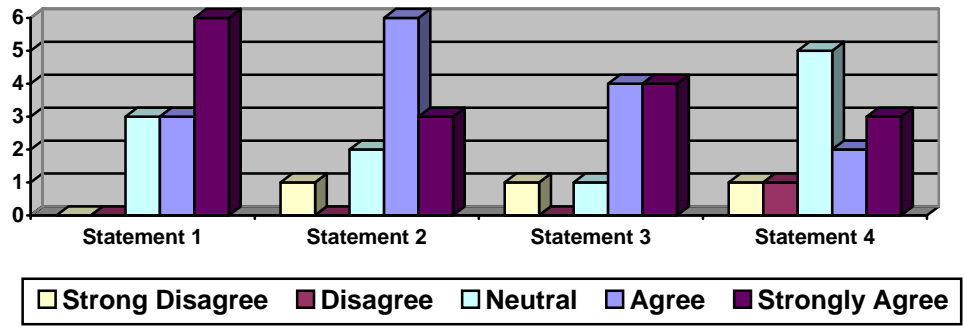
The survey respondents of the Galveston Police Department composed of forty-seven officers and twelve supervisors. Respondents were asked if the Galveston Police Department implemented a performance evaluation system, how frequently should they be conducted? Respondents were given a choice between annual or bi-annual. 57% of the officers and 58% of the supervisor prefer annual evaluations.

Officer and supervisor responses were segregated to determine if significant differences of opinion existed. Their responses are illustrated by the bar graphs in figures 3-6.

**Figure 3.** Survey of Patrol Officers of the Galveston Police Department

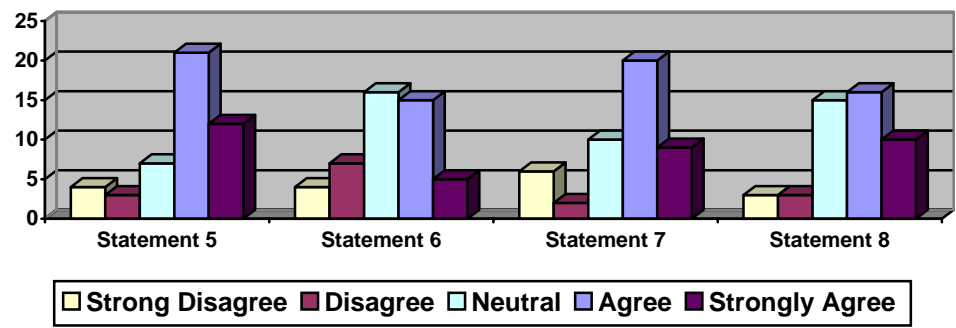


**Figure 4.** Survey of Patrol Supervisors of the Galveston Police Department

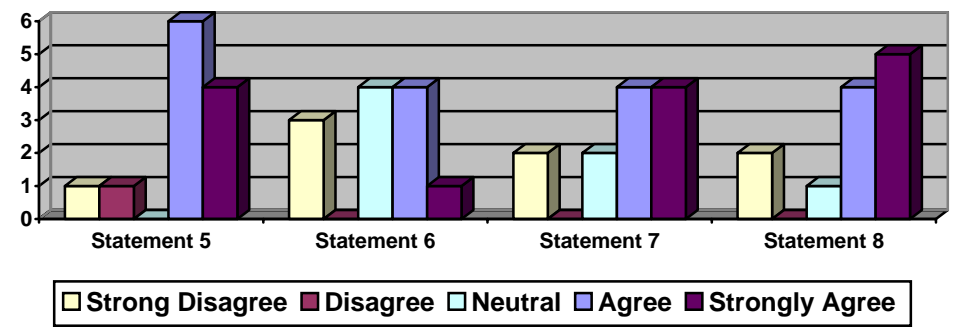


1. You would prefer more feedback from your supervisor on whether or not you are doing a good job.
2. Performance evaluations can increase communication and understanding between you and your supervisor.
3. A performance evaluating system can be an effective tool for identifying officer's strengths and weaknesses.
4. A performance evaluation system can be an effective tool for improving officer performance.

**Figure 5.** Survey of Patrol Officers of the Galveston Police Department



**Figure 6.** Survey of Patrol Supervisors of the Galveston Police Department



- 5. If the Galveston Police Department were to implement a performance evaluation system, officers from all ranks should be selected to develop the performance criterion that is evaluated.
- 6. If the performance criteria is carefully selected to the job task related, evaluations can be fairly administered with minimal bias by the rater.
- 7. Performance evaluations should be included in promotional decisions.
- 8. Performance evaluations should be included in transfer/assignment decisions.

Galveston Police Department patrol officers who responded to the survey generally support the literature reviewed. Although many of the respondents had a “neutral” opinion to the statements presented, there were very few that indicated any degree of disagreement to the statements.

57% of the officers and 75% of the supervisors agree that they want more feedback from their supervisors while 6% of the officers and 0% of the supervisors disagree. 53% of officers and 75% of the supervisors agree that evaluations can increase communication and understanding between officers and their supervisors while 15% of the officers and 8% of the supervisors disagree. 60% of the officers and 67% of the supervisors agree that evaluations can be an effective tool for identifying officer's strengths and weaknesses while 15% of the officers and 8% of the supervisors disagree. 62% of officers and 42% of the supervisors agree that evaluations can be an effective tool for improving officer performance while 15% of the officers and 17% of the supervisors disagree. 70% of the officers and 83% of the supervisors agree that officers from all ranks should be selected to develop the performance criteria that will be evaluated while 15% of the officers and 17% of the supervisors disagree. 43% of the officers and 42% of the supervisors agree that evaluations can be fairly administered with minimal bias by the rater while 23% of the officers and 25% of the supervisors disagree. 62% of the officers and 67% of the supervisors agree that evaluations should be included in promotional decisions while 17% of the officers and 17% of the supervisors disagree. 55% of the officers and 75% of the supervisors agree that evaluations should be included in transfer/assignment decisions while 13% of the officers and 17% of the supervisors disagree.

The percentages of agreement relative to disagreement to the respective statements presented are significant among both the officers and supervisors. The officers and supervisors generally agree that a formal performance evaluation system does have its benefits and should have consequences by being involved in promotional

and assignment decisions. The supervisors indicated higher percentages and higher degrees of agreement with most of the statements. However, the officers and supervisors, alike, expressed agreement of less than 50% that evaluations can be fairly administered with minimal bias echoing the cynicism indicated by the respondents 59<sup>th</sup> Module II of LEMIT. It should be of particular notice that the majority of officers agree that evaluations can be an effective tool for improving officer performance, while less than half the supervisors agree. This is particularly disconcerting since improving officer performance is the primary objective and those who would be most responsible for the success or failure of the process have the least confidence in it.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Formal performance evaluation systems seek to measure on-the-job performance with the ultimate objective of positively influencing performance. The research sought to determine if a formal performance evaluation system could be an effective tool for fulfilling this objective. It was believed that the research would support the hypothesis that such systems could effectively improve performance *if* effectively developed, implemented, and administered. This is a big *if*.

The research generally supported the hypothesis but also identified numerous obstacles to effective evaluations. These obstacles must be recognized and acknowledged before any agency decides to implement a formal system. System development must then account for these obstacles and implement standards, training and monitoring processes to minimize the likelihood of their infiltration.

Although formal performance evaluation systems are intended to positively influence performance, they will have little positive effect if differentiation between levels of performance doesn't influence consequences. (Bennett et. al, 2001). Therefore, an agency considering the implementation of a formal performance evaluation system must first identify what its intended use will be, whether it will influence compensation, assignment, promotion, discipline and/or training decisions. (Roberts, 1998). The agency must then evaluate its own objectives, culture, policies, job descriptions and actual job tasks to: first, ensure that they are consistent with and complimentary of one another, and second, to develop job-related standards that are consistent and relevant. Once developed, these standards become the core of the formal evaluation system.

An agency must then evaluate its own informal evaluation system and ensure that it sufficiently facilitates on-going observation of officer performance and on-going communication between officer and supervisor. It must be integrated with the formal system. If appropriately integrated, these continuous informal evaluations will support and compliment the periodic formal evaluations.

The supervisors conducting the evaluations are central to the success or failure of any performance evaluation system. If the supervisors lack confidence in the system, their efforts will reflect it and the system is destined to fail. Rater training is of paramount importance to garnering supervisor support and confidence. The training must take place prior to system implementation and at regular intervals thereafter. The supervisors need to know much more than the mechanics of the system. They need to understand the system and its purpose. (Featherstone, n.d.). They must recognize their role. (Van Meter, 2001). They must understand and believe that properly developed,



implemented, and administered formal performance evaluation system can fulfill its purpose of positively influencing behavior. (Goff, 1992). They must learn effective methods of providing feedback, establishing performance goals and eliciting officer participation. (Featherstone, n.d.; Glover, 1996).

Supervisor training is easily recognized as a critical element to the success or failure of a formal performance evaluation system. However, officer training cannot be ignored. Both the literature reviewed and surveys taken emphasize the enormous concerns that officers have concerning rater bias. Whether rater bias is a matter of perception or reality matters little. If the officers believe that ratings are biased, they will not have confidence in a system they believe unfairly evaluates their performance. If they lack confidence in the system, the system will do little to support improved performance. They must not only have confidence in the system, they must feel vested in the process and care about their evaluations. (Kramer, 1998). Therefore, they must understand its intended purpose, the standards by which they will be evaluated, the evaluation procedures, the appeal procedures, and most importantly, their role within the process.

Obviously, formal performance evaluations systems are not without their blemishes. However, an effective formal performance evaluation system doesn't happen by accident. It requires commitment and effort from the agency, the supervisors, and officers.

Those agencies operating with no formal system of performance evaluation would be well served to implement one. When the obstacles are recognized, the agency committed, the standards valid and relevant, the supervisors and officers well

trained and committed, and the informal evaluation system integrated, a formal performance evaluation system can be an effective tool for positively influencing performance.

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### Survey – 59<sup>th</sup> Module of LEMIT

1. What is your rank? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long have you been a supervisor? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many sworn officers does your agency employ? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does your agency utilize a formal performance evaluation system? \_\_\_\_\_
5. If yes, how long has your agency utilized a formal performance evaluation system? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which type of performance evaluation does your agency employ? Please check all that apply.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Review
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Subordinate Review
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor Review
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Self Evaluation
7. Are supervisors evaluated by their supervisors? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Prior to implementation, did the officers have an opportunity to provide input in the development of the performance criteria to be evaluated? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is the term of evaluation periods? (i.e. six months, yearly, etc...) \_\_\_\_\_
10. Are evaluation periods adhered to? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Does your agency perform periodic evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the performance evaluation system? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do performance evaluations affect promotional decisions?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, points are added to exam results. If so, what is the maximum number of points that may be added relative to exam points? \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, they are considered by the Chief or a review board, but without a point system.
13. Do the results of performance evaluations affect pay raises? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Does someone higher in command than the rater review the results of the performance evaluations?  
\_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate whether or not you agree with the following statements:

15. Your agency's performance evaluation is an effective tool for identifying officers' deficiencies and strengths.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
 Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Neutral                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

16. Your agency's utilization of performance evaluations is an effective tool for improving officer performance.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
 Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Neutral                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

17. Those tasked with conducting performance evaluations were provided adequate training to observe, document, evaluate and discuss those behaviors with the respective officers.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
 Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Neutral                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

18. Supervisors utilize the evaluations to discuss an officer's strengths and weaknesses and to develop a plan to improve performance.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
 Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Neutral                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

19. The raters have sufficient time to complete the performance evaluations and discuss the results with the respective officers.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
 Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Neutral                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

20. The raters have adequate contact with officers to accurately evaluate their performance.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
 Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Neutral                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

21. The performance criteria that is evaluated is relevant to job tasks.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
 Strongly Disagree                  Disagree                  Neutral                  Agree                  Strongly Agree

22. Performance evaluations are fairly administered with minimal bias by the rater.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

23. Officers generally support the performance evaluations system.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

24. Supervisors generally support the performance evaluation system.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

25. The administration provides adequate support for the performance evaluation system.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

**Survey – Galveston Police Department**

- 1. What is your rank? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. If the Galveston Police Department implemented performance evaluations, how frequently should they be conducted?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every 6 months                      \_\_\_\_\_ Once a year

On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate whether or not you agree with the following statements:

- 3. You would prefer more feedback from your supervisor on whether or not you are doing a good job.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

- 4. Performance evaluations can increase communication and understanding between you and your supervisor.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

- 5. A performance evaluation system can be effective tool for identifying officers’ strengths and weaknesses.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

- 6. A performance evaluation system can be an effective tool for improving officer performance.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

- 7. If the Galveston Police Department were to implement a performance evaluation system, officers from all ranks should be selected to develop the performance criteria that is evaluated.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

- 8. If the performance criteria is carefully selected to be job task related, evaluations can be fairly administered with minimal bias by the rater.

- 9. Performance evaluations should be included in promotional decisions.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree



10. Performance evaluations should be included in transfer/assignment decisions.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree