

The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas

An Analysis of the Use of Employee Appraisals

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ABSTRACT

Law Enforcement agencies today are being shouldered with more and more responsibilities. With new laws, new technology, and growing mistrust from sections of the public, agencies must continually strive to recruit, develop, train and retain qualified officers. The area of development will be discussed in this research paper. The specific method for development is Employee Appraisals.

Employee Appraisals are currently conducted, either officially or unofficially, in every area of the work force. The difficulty with most employee appraisals are that they are used in a superficial manner, using forms that are non-specific and serve no function other than to highlight faults of the employee. Appraisals are usually conducted annually and anticipated by both appraiser and employee with dread.

This research paper will discuss and examine various methods of employee appraisal. This has been done through reviewing papers, articles and books published on the topics of appraisals and evaluations. Several companies specializing in appraisals and evaluations have been contacted. Furthermore, a survey has been conducted of selected law enforcement agencies concerning their methods and procedures of appraisal.

During this research, a form of appraisal known as 360 Feedback, or multi-source appraisal, that is currently being used by many businesses and local governments as a means of appraisal and development of employees was examined.

This research paper will discuss the benefits of the multi-source appraisal system, including its development, implementation, use and benefits in the appraisal process. The research results will suggest this system as the recommended system for law enforcement agencies to enable them to develop their employees in the desired organizational direction.

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Introduction

Each year supervisors and employees face the anxiety and stress of the Employee Appraisal. This may be from the fear of economics and/or job security. The employee may have several concerns: "Does my supervisor hold a personal grudge against me?" "Will I receive a promotion?" "Will I get a pay raise?" "Will the appraisal be used against me?" The supervisor may be just as concerned with different considerations, including conflicting interests of friendship and accurate appraisals, dread of negative emotional impact, and feelings of futility and frustration if the appraisal process leads nowhere.

Both employees and supervisors often view the Employee Appraisal as negative. There are different reasons for this view. The supervisors may have different standards for the performance factors, such as attitude, knowledge of work, quantity of work, and dependability. Therefore, two supervisors might rate the same employee differently. Some supervisors are not comfortable being placed in a position of judging subordinates. Another reason for the negative view is that employees dread being told that their work is unacceptable.

The Employee Appraisal should be viewed by all involved as a positive tool. In order to accomplish this, the appraisal system must be clear, concise and fair. The appraisal should provide positive direction or criticism as needed, allowing for feedback and used to develop productive employees. One definition of a successful appraisal system is one which "creates and/or reinforces focused, sustained behavior changes and/or skill development in a sufficient number of individuals so as to result in increased organizational effectiveness" (Bracken and Timmreck 1999). This study will attempt to determine a method of employee appraisal that will successfully meet these requirements.

This project will investigate several aspects of Employee Appraisals. The methods and theories available for appraisal, including the current method for the City of Snyder, will be

reviewed. This will be accomplished through the review of published materials and various established law enforcement agencies appraisal instruments.

A survey of a selection of law enforcement agencies will also be conducted concerning their methods of appraisal, their administration of appraisals, the preparation for the appraiser and employee, the designed use of the appraisal, as well as the desired outcome of the appraisal. These appraisal methods will be compared with the effects of Employee Appraisals on the employee and their productivity. Department surveys concerning the opinions of supervisors will be used to measure the effect of appraisals on productivity. The purpose of the appraisals will also be studied, as well as what goals are set by the appraisal.

The results of the project will be studied in order to suggest a comprehensive Employee Appraisal instrument, as well as the procedures to complete the appraisal. The appraisal will then be able to be administered in a positive manner that will provide a tool for the development of productive employees as well as a useful tool for the agency.

Review of Literature

The amount of research available on the topic of Employee Appraisals can be staggering. Appraisals have been used for many years and have been discussed and debated for just as long. Over the years, almost all aspects of appraisals have changed or evolved. The first and most obvious change has been in the names applied to appraisals. These have varied from appraisals, evaluations, performance reports, performance management, single-source appraisals, multi source appraisals, multi-rater assessment, feedback appraisal, Panoramic Feedback™ and 360° Feedback®. All of these titles can be divided into two areas consisting of single-source and multi-source appraisals. The multi-source appraisal is the newest of the appraisal instruments.

While the single-source appraisal relies on the judgement of one individual in the appraisal of employees, the multi-source appraisal utilizes groups in the appraisal process. The groups will normally consist of the supervisor, the individual being appraised, peers, subordinates and often other work associates.

"The multi-source appraisal was in use in the 1940s by the British military" (Edwards & Ewen p 29). Over the past sixty years the use of the multi-source appraisal has developed over several areas, including; assessment centers, leadership assessment, job evaluation, executive selection, project evaluation, talent assessment and finally developed for performance appraisal in the 1980s (Edwards & Ewen 1996).

The next most changed area of appraisals has been the method of rating. The rating scales have changed from numerical ratings to descriptive ratings. Under the numerical ratings, the employee is given a value for each objective being appraised. This rating may be anywhere from 0 to 10, however a 5 or 7 point scale has been a popular system. The values would then be totaled and applied to a scale, which would provide a rating or ranking for the employee. The fewer descriptions of anchor points, the greater the discretion for evaluators, resulting in higher probability for subjectivity and error. More scale points result in less subjectivity but increases the difficulty in describing the behavioral differences between them.

Under the descriptive rating, the employee is rated in each objective area by using varied levels of descriptors. These have also changed over the years. Examples of these include; below average - average - above average, unsatisfactory - satisfactory - outstanding, and poor - fair acceptable - good - excellent. All of these samples of ratings were acceptable, but only as long as each appraiser understood the different meanings.

Probably the least changed area of appraisals has been the area that should have been changed the most. This is the area of "what" is being appraised, or the objective areas. "For the most part, appraisals have been generic in nature, commonly rating areas such as; knowledge of work, quantity of work, quality of work, initiative, cooperation, and reliability. Most performance evaluations currently in use by police agencies do not reflect the work officers do" (Oettmeier & Wycoff p 57). "The criteria used to judge performance are frequently not closely related to the job, often focusing on personality traits instead of job behaviors and objectives" (Conner 1999). Appraisal instruments have failed to adapt to changing jobs or positions and to accurately list objective areas to enable the full appraisal of an employees job performance or whether the employee is working within organizational goals and guidelines. "The main criticism of such a system lies in the definitive and interpretive aspects of individually listed traits or "performance factors" (Yon Behren p 72). "Each employee, including supervisors, has a different perception of how these factors should actually be defined" (Yon Behren p 72).

The final area of change in appraisals has been the purpose of the appraisal. Appraisals have typically been used in the hiring process, promotions, pay raises, and merit increases. The multi-source appraisal has more recently been developed for use in the development of organizational goals, identifying training needs and program needs. One of the common uses of the single-source appraisal has been related to pay raises. Most of the reviewed sources relating to multi-source appraisals discuss the use of the appraisal for each of the above areas; however, most discourage the use of multi-source appraisals for the purpose of pay decisions. It is recommended to use the appraisal for developmental purposes. This is essential, because when people believe that feedback data will influence a person's pay, job or career, they find it hard to give objective responses (Coates 1996). Ann Ewen, president of Teams Inc, a consulting firm

that specializes in 360-Degree feedback programs disputes this however. Ewen stated in a May 5, 1997 article in the San Francisco Chronicle, "But we'd argue that, if this (360 degree feedback) is more accurate and motivational, why not use it for big decisions like promotion or pay?"

Methodology

Along with the research of printed material, surveys regarding appraisals have also been conducted. An initial survey was conducted of police departments and sheriff offices represented in the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) 41 st Module I class and the 40111 Module II class. Of the 35 surveys that were sent out, 27 responses were received. The survey consisted of the following questions; What is the size of your agency? Does your agency conduct employee appraisals? How often are appraisals conducted? What are the appraisals used for? Pay, Promotions, Merit, Disciplinary actions, Education needs, Training, Employee Development, Other. Do you conduct appraisals? How many employees do you appraise? Does your agency conduct single-source appraisals, (Supervisor evaluates subordinate) or multi-source appraisals (Feedback from several sources supervisor, peers, co-workers, subordinates). Does your agency provide training concerning the appraisal process? Are the objective areas specific to the positions being appraised? Do you believe that your appraisal achieves the desired results?

A second survey was conducted of the following police departments; Bismarck, ND, Auburn, ME, Golden CO, Greensboro, NC, Rocky Mount, NC, St Paul, MN, Anchorage, AI(and the sheriff offices of Henri co County, VA and San Bernardino County, CA. These agencies were selected due to information indicating that each of them uses the multi-source appraisal system. Of the 9 surveys sent out, 7 responses were received. The second survey consisted of

the following questions; What is the size of your department? What type Employee Appraisal does your agency use? Single-source or multi-source? Was the instrument developed within your agency or purchased from outside? If purchased, what is the name of the instrument? What was the initial cost of the instrument? What are the appraisals used for? Pay, Promotions, Merit, Disciplinary actions, Education needs, Employee Development, Other. How often are appraisals conducted? How many persons are used in each appraisal? What is the breakdown? Supervisor, Peer, Direct report, Outside, Other? Are the objective areas specific to the position being appraised? How many objective areas are used? Is olympic scoring used in the appraisal? Are written comments used? Does your agency provide training concerning the appraisal process? How long has your agency been using this appraisal system? Do you believe the appraisal achieves the desired results?

The responses on each of the surveys will be compared to determine what areas are being used with positive results and what areas need to be developed further or eliminated. The responses will be used to assist in the development of a positive appraisal instrument that can meet the needs of any agency.

Findings

From the printed material that was reviewed in this research process, it is determined that the common use of the single-source appraisal is filled with potential problems. The supervisor only performance assessment obviously relies on a single perspective: the supervisor's judgement. "These performance measures tend to provide flat, nonspecific information about an employee's performance, and they have other problems as well: They may reflect self-serving and other individual biases. Politics, favoritism, and friendship may enter into the assessment. The supervisor may have had an insufficient opportunity or motivation to observe employee

performance. The supervisor may be unwilling to confront poor performance. Different supervisors have degrees of rigor in making evaluation decisions" (Edwards & Ewen pp 6-7).

The Employee Appraisal can be a powerful tool for any agency in the development of employee strengths and the accomplishment of organizational goals. If the appraisal is not developed or used properly it can also build stress and resentment within the department. Most appraisals fail to meet the needs of the organization in at least one area. This may be in any of the following areas; the failure to train personnel in the administration and method of the appraisal, the failure to identify organizational goals, failure to provide appropriate objective areas for each position, failure to provide feedback, inappropriate use of the appraisal, or the impact of a single-source appraisal providing biased appraisals. "If employees do not believe the multi-source assessment process offers benefits to them such as fairness, accuracy and enhanced opportunities for career development, employees either will avoid responding or will respond in a manner that creates distortion" (Edwards & Ewen p 83).

The structure of law enforcement agencies is changing by flattening the structure (Stephens Feb 2000). As organizations flatten their structures by removing layers of management, the only practical option for performance feedback is from multiple-sources (Edwards & Ewen 1996).

The implementation of a proper multi-source appraisal instrument can develop a strong system for employee development and the obtaining of organizational goals. "Because MSA (multi-source assessment) feedback is based on multiple sources and has more face validity, it often has a greater effect on employees than supervisor-only appraisals" (Edwards & Ewen p 83).

Responses to the surveys were received from agencies that use single-source appraisals and multi-source appraisals. For the purpose of this paper, the two surveys were combined and then separated by those utilizing single-source appraisals and those utilizing the multi-source appraisal system. Three of the respondents indicated that their agencies do not conduct appraisals of any type.

While one respondent provided no comment as to why appraisals are not conducted, another related that the appraisals were discontinued due to them tending to be mostly positive and concerns that it could hinder terminating an employee if necessary. The third respondent indicated that appraisals were discontinued due to them having been conducted by a supervisor who rarely saw the person being appraised, and added that the agency did not provide training concerning the appraisal process and that the appraisal did not achieve the desired results.

Results of the two surveys have been totaled and the following information has been obtained;

		Single-source Appraisal	Multi-source Appraisal
Number of Agencies Responding		18	13
How often are appraisals conducted?	Yearly	84%	77%
	Semi-annual	16%	8%
	Quarterly	0%	15%
	Other	0%	00,/0
What are the appraisals used for?	Pay	47%	46%
	Promotions	37/010	46%
	Merit	58%	54%
	Discipline	21%	31%
	Education Needs	26%	31%
	Employee Development	68%	69%
	Other	0%	0%
Does your agency provide training concerning the appraisal process?	Yes	58%	85%
	No	42%	15%
Are the objective areas specific to the positions being appraised?	Yes	79%	85%
	No	21%	15%
Do you believe that your appraisal achieves the desired results?	Yes	47%	75%
	No	53%	25%

The chart indicates that the vast majority of the responding agencies conduct appraisals on an annual basis and that the appraisals are used for a variety of purposes.

While 85% of the agencies using the multi-source appraisals provide training for the appraisal, only 58% of those using the single-source appraisals provide training. The majority of both single-source and multi-source respondents indicated that their appraisals use objective areas specific to the positions being appraised.

The major area of concern is the response to the question of the appraisal achieving the desired results. Of the multi-source appraisal respondents, 75% replied that their appraisal did achieve the desired results, while only 47% of the single source appraisal respondents believed that their appraisal achieves the desired results.

The study of printed materials concerning the multi-source appraisal constantly promotes several areas. "The intent of 3600 feedback systems is to support people and encourage their continued improvement through the use of high quality information" (Edwards & Ewen p 20). "This process: Allows the process design to be created by those who use the system - employees and managers. Uses a valid process for developing employees' competencies for assessment. Uses a valid method for selecting evaluation teams. with a minimum of four respondents in addition to the supervisor and the person receiving feedback. Ensures absolute respondent anonymity and confidentiality for the feedback. Relies on a research-based protocol for collecting and scoring data and reporting information. Insures that all participants are trained to provide and receive feedback. Includes an understandable process and technology safeguards to ensure fairness that is communicated to all participants. Is assessed for effectiveness, fairness, accuracy. and validity by the users. Includes an appeals procedure" (Edwards & Ewenpp. 20 21).

Conclusion

The roles of law enforcement are constantly changing. This comes from economic changes, societal changes, technological advances, changes in laws and possibly changes in political leadership. As these changes continue and increase, law enforcement agencies are required to change and advance at the same pace. One method of insuring that employees are conducting these changes is through employee appraisals.

One of the newest appraisal instruments available is the multi-source appraisal. From the research conducted and the information that has been received, the multi-source appraisal is recommended. The multi-source appraisal can be developed for many uses, as well as being an effective employee development tool. While some experts approve its use for determining pay and promotion decisions, others discourage that use. According to Esther Kohn-Bentley, CEO of Panoramic Feedback™, the multi-source appraisal can be used in agencies with as few as ten employees.

The first step in development of an instrument is to decide on the purpose that the appraisal will be used for. The information can then be researched and an instrument developed, or an outside company can be contracted to develop the instrument. The issue of cost can be a major part of this decision. Various instruments may cost from \$99.00 to over \$50,000.00, depending on the use or the number of persons being appraised. There are many different employee appraisal instruments available on the market. Some of these appraisal instruments are Panoramic Feedback™, 20/20® Insight Gold, e-Listen, Insight Profiles®, Intelligent Consensus®, and CompStar Appraiser Plus 360™. Some of these instruments can be purchased and operated entirely by the agency. Others are purchased by the agency, but conducted and monitored by the company. At least one instrument, the Panoramic Feedback™, is purchased for

use by the agency, but is conducted entirely on the inter-net. This system, with a functional demo can be viewed at www.panoramicfeedback.com. Software is also available to assist in the development of a multi-source appraisal instrument. One such program is AllPoints Feedback™, which is available for evaluation and purchase at www.centerpointssystems.com. It is also recommend that several private companies be contacted before choosing a developed instrument, in order to determine the best instrument for the agency's specific needs.

There are several recommendations for the implementation of a multi-source appraisal instrument. First, the top management of the agency must support the process. This must be through the positive promotion of the instrument as well as through participation in the appraisal process. The process must insure anonymity and confidentiality. The respondents' identity must be protected to insure candid and useful feedback. The results should be kept confidential, made available only to the employee and supervisor. The appraisal instrument must be designed for ease of use. If too burdensome or time consuming, the process will not be successful. The objective areas must be job specific. All items should be worded in a positive manner and constructed to assess behaviors, not thoughts, feelings or opinions. Finally, the instrument must provide feedback to the employee with guidance for what to do with the data and how to maximize their effectiveness and increase their success within the agency (Jackson 1998).

If the decision is made to develop an instrument, the study of any material that can be found on the subject is recommended. The book recommended to read is 360 Degree Feedback: The Powerful New Model for Employee Assessment & Performance Improvement by Mark R. Edwards and Ann J. Ewen. This book provides step by step instructions for the development of an appraisal instrument, providing guidance on every aspect from initial decision, development, adaptation, implementation, training, record keeping, formats, objective areas, feedback and

guidance. After following the process outlined in the text, a productive, balanced appraisal instrument will be available for use in your agency. The instrument can be used for the development of employees and the obtaining of organizational goals. An instrument, using the process described in the 360 Degree Feedback system, has been developed. It could be used effectively in the Snyder Police Department and can be adapted for use in most agencies.

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APPENDICES

First Survey

NAME:(optional)

AGENCY:

TITLE/POSITION:

1. What is the size of your agency? Sworn Non-sworn
2. Does your agency conduct employee appraisals? Yes No
3. How often are appraisals conducted? Yearly - Semi-Annual- Quarterly_Other4. What are the appraisals used for? Pay- Promotions- Merit- Discipline actions
Education needs - Training- Employee Development- Other
5. Do you conduct appraisals? Yes- No
6. How many employees do you appraise?
7. Does your agency conduct: single-source appraisals- multi-source appraisals
8. Does your agency provide training concerning the appraisal process? Yes No
9. Are the objective areas specific to the positions being appraised? Yes No
10. Do you believe that your appraisal achieves the desired results? Yes No

Would a copy of your appraisal instrument be available for my review? If yes, please list the name, address and phone number of the person that I can contact for a copy.

If you have any comments or opinions about the topic of employee appraisals, please list them here.

Second Survey

NAME: (optional),
RANK/POSITION:
AGENCY:

1. What is the size of your department? Sworn Non-sworn.
2. Does your agency conduct: Single-source appraisals- Multi-source appraisals
3. Was the instrument developed within your agency or purchased
4. If purchased, what is the name of the instrument?
5. What was the initial cost of the instrument?
6. What are the appraisals used for? Pay Promotions Merit Disciplinary
 Actions- Education needs- Employee Development Other
7. How often are appraisals conducted? Yearly Semi-annual Quarterly_Other
8. How many persons are used in each appraisal?
9. What is the breakdown? Supervisor Peer Direct report Outside Other
10. Are the objective areas specific to the position being appraised? Yes No
11. How many objective areas are used?
12. Is olympic scoring used in the appraisal? Yes No
13. Are written comments used? Yes No
14. Does your agency provide training concerning the appraisal process? Yes No
15. How long has your agency been using this appraisal system?
16. Do you believe that your appraisal achieves the desired results? Yes No

Would a copy of your appraisal instrument be available for my review? If yes, please list the name, address and phone number of the person that I can contact for a copy.

Please attach any comments or opinions that you have on the topic of employee appraisals. Thank you for your assistance.