EFFECTIVE STAFF EVALUATIONS
It's About the *Conversation*

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HUMAN PARADOX

"Not everything that matters can be measured,
and not everything that is measured matters."

Elliott Eisner

The Arts and the Creation of the Mind

TRADITIONAL EMPLOYEE EVALUATION…WORTH THE EFFORT?

Answer: Seldom, and primarily for the purposes of finding exception…

So, why do we do it:

As evidence for an employment action; or to justify categorization, rating or rank ordering for an employment action or compensation consideration

REALITY
- We live in a world of measurement
- Evaluation is part of a cycle that begins with hiring
- Can be an effective tool for improving performance
- Should be strategic in nature
- Can help defend against litigation
- Support discharge decisions

Remember…performance evaluation is not an *event*…but an *ongoing feedback process…an extended conversation of sorts*

EVALUATIONS: (ALMOST) AS OLD AS CIVILIZATION

Third Century China– Job ratings

1800s – Scottish Cotton Mills – Color coded wooden blocks over employees' workstations to indicate merit

Mid-1900s – Cubicle "farms," numerical scales, rigid hierarchies

1990s – Move toward competency-based systems

2000s – More frequent, less structured, multi-sourced

Traditional performance management is largely based on 19th Century principles AND a pre-occupation with product quality

DEFINING COMPETENCE

- Competence is defined as knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that high performing employees regularly exhibit

- Can either be technical or behavioral

- You "know it when you see it" and especially when you don't

BASIC TALENT EQUATION

Talent = Competence x Commitment x Contribution

Question: *When is the best time to assess competence?*

BASIC TALENT EQUATION

Talent = Competence x Commitment x Contribution

Answer: *Competence should be assessed prior to hiring <u>and</u> affirmed/developed through the evaluation process*

Commitment and contribution cannot be adequately assessed until after you've employed the individual

TYPES OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

- Traditional Formative (periodic checkpoints)

- Traditional Summative (typically an annual summation)

- Portfolio (evidence-based)

- 360-Degree Feedback Based (multiple perspectives)

- Team-Oriented (emphasizes team feedback)

- Combination 360-Degree and Traditional
  - *Provides confidential feedback on competence and behaviors for development purposes <u>and</u> makes traditional measurements of the employee's accomplishments or results which can be used for rewards or merit increases*

What type you use is not as important as making sure that the process is <u>truly intended</u> to develop the employee

ESSENCE OF EVALUATION

The conversation IS the (relationship) evaluation

Why?

- Because leadership is a human phenomenon

- It requires "trust"

- Trust is built on communication and social "cues"

- Face-to-face communication is the most reliable

- Hence, "Actions are louder than words"

- Humans look for congruency

FEEDBACK VS. MENTORING VS. COACHING

- **Feedback is informing/observing**
  - Provider describes workplace performance to help employee improve
  - Puts "giver" in role of responsibility for improving performance
  - Largely one-way communication

- **Mentoring is guiding/sharing**
  - Usually provided by veteran or senior staff
  - Provides guidance, perspective and knowledge
  - Typically does not oversee employee
  - Mentors CAN BE coaches, but coaches are not mentors
  - Largely one-way; but can be two-way communication

- **Coaching is relating/asking**
  - Goal is self-actualization
  - Provider asks "powerful" (Socratic) questions
  - Provider invites contribution from the employee
  - Empowers the employee to "fix" themselves
  - Two-way conversation

INSIGHTS FROM ATHLETICS

Question 1: Why do pro athletes accept the open discussions of their performance while it remains an intensely sensitive, and often debated subject in other sectors?

Question 2: Do employees differ in their desire to excel, in their need for feedback, or in their desire to be recognized and rewarded for their performance?

Question 3: So why, for many employees, is the open discussion of their performance so excruciating?

INSIGHTS FROM ATHLETICS

Winning is more often a team accomplishment

- Pro teams have 15 to 18 coaches
- Coaches provide ongoing feedback
- Use data to inform coaching strategies
- Team mates "cheer" each other to higher performance

- Biggest hurdle is the half century of ineffective performance management practices
- We are conditioned by our experience in narrowly defined jobs with little challenge and by close supervision (Industrial Model)
- We tend to "parent" rather than "coach" employees
- In the public sector, it is much more difficult to determine an organizational "win"

BRAIN'S RESPONSE TO CRITICAL, UNCONSTRUCTIVE EVALUATION

DURING THE EVALUATION, THE EMPLOYEE:

- Employee disengages from the process
- Employee feels disregarded and undermined
- Employee ignores feedback
- Employee rejects advice

AFTER THE EVALUATION, THE EMPLOYEE:

- Employee becomes conservative – no risk taking
- Sets lower goals
- Avoids candid conversations
- Engages in emotionally charged conversations with manager/team
- Develops an unmotivated mindset

Remember….

- Brain categorizes inputs into two categories: threat or reward
- That's why "evaluation" has become such a fear-based experience

THE S.C.A.R.F MODEL

- Status

- Certainty

- Autonomy

- Relatedness

- Fairness

- The SCARF Model is a brain-based framework designed to enhance self and social awareness and improve the quality of daily interactions

- Effective tool for brain-based coaching

NeuroLeadership
INSTITUTE

ACCURATE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The following tendencies can reduce the effectiveness of evaluations:

- **The Halo Effect:**

  The tendency of an evaluator to rate a person good or bad on all characteristics based on an experience or knowledge involving only one dimension.

- **Leniency Tendency:**

  A tendency towards evaluating all persons as outstanding and to give inflated ratings rather that true assessments of performance.

- **Strictness Tendency:**

  The opposite of the leniency tendency; that is, a bias towards rating all persons at the low end of the scale and a tendency to be overly demanding or critical.

- **Average Tendency:**

  A tendency to evaluate every person as average regardless of major differences in performance.

SETTING PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

❖ Effective objectives are:
- Observable and measurable
- Specific
- Constructive
- Relevant to the job requirements
- Within the employee's sphere of control
- Achievable (given time and resources)
- Limited in number

❖ When writing specific objectives, always include (ARC):
- A specific action
- A measurable result
- A time frame for completion

❖ Performance improvement plan should also include:
- Need for training or special direction
- Necessity for interim performance evaluation
- Identification of an Employee Assistance Program (if applicable)
- Personal improvement suggestions by employee

CONDUCTING THE (MORE FORMAL) APPRAISAL

- Provide informal feedback regularly

- Create a positive, communicative atmosphere

- Begin by affirming the employee's abilities

- Be sensitive to employee feelings

- Make the appraisal a two-way affair

- Arrive at a mutual agreement

- Focus on the employee

- Should allow an appropriate amount of time for discussion (typically, at least an hour)

Remember….Feedback Isn't Fatal! (and it shouldn't feel that way)

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL FOLLOW-UP

Performance appraisal is an ongoing responsibility

- Set a timetable for reviewing progress – no surprises
- Helps keep employee action plans on track
- Provides feedback on what is happening
- Creates dialogue on performance
- Gives supervisor an opportunity to offer help and support
- The more status checkpoints, the better

Employees need reinforcement to achieve and maintain high levels of performance

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Industrial Influence on Evaluation has made it a Pass/Fail Model*

- *Evaluation is Largely a Benign Process/Tool if Not Focused on Development*

- *Consider Your Own Motivations and Evaluation Style*

- *Adopt a Coaching Approach*

- *Encourage Employees to Reflect and Take Responsibility for Their Growth*

- *Questions are More Powerful Than Answers*

RESOURCES

- [Michigan Chamber of Commerce Employment Law Handbook](#)

- [Neuroleadership Institute](#)

- [101 Sample Write-Ups for Documenting Employee Performance Problems – Paul Falcone](#)

- [2600 Phrases for Effective Performance Reviews: Ready-to-Use Words and Phrases That Really Get Results – Paul Falcone](#)

- [Effective Phrases for Performance Appraisals – James E. Neal, Jr.](#)

- [The Crowd-sourced Performance Review – Eric Mosley](#)

- [Reinventing Performance Management, Harvard Business Review](#)

- [Help Them Grow, or Watch Them Go – by Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni](#)