Staff performance appraisals are terrible.

We can do better!

2019 NACM annual conference
Las Vegas, Nevada

Presented by
Norman H. Meyer, Jr.
Is the performance appraisal system used in your organization working well?

Or not?

How many of you have had an unsatisfactory evaluation experience as the person being rated?

How about as the person doing the rating?
You’re out here because you’re supposed to receive your performance review? I’m out here because I’m supposed to give one!
I believe the ultimate goal of performance management is to answer this question:

How can we help each person thrive and excel?

*The key is optimizing employee engagement.*
In this session we will talk about:

➢ What is the conventional wisdom regarding performance management?

➢ Why doesn’t reality match theory?

➢ What we can do about it (how we can do better).
The conventional wisdom of performance management

The Workforce Management Curriculum of the NACM Core:

• Performance Management (section 3)
  • The driving component:
    “Performance management involves establishing and communicating specific performance expectations and goals for each employee and periodically meeting with and providing feedback to the employee about his or her performance as it relates to the expectations and goals laid out.”
  • Reasons for performance management
  • Common types of performance management systems
  • Elements of performance management systems
  • Performance review process
  • Performance criteria
  • Common problems/pitfalls with performance management
  • Common rating errors

• Employee Relations (section 8)
  • “The most important part of any organization is its people.”
  • Subsections on motivating staff, creating a positive court culture, employee satisfaction, and employee conduct.

Note: curriculum is under revision
What do you think are the primary functions of performance appraisals?
The Functions of Appraisal

- Improvement
- Coaching and Guidance
- Feedback and Communication
- Compensation
- Discipline and Legal Documentation
- Staffing Decisions and Professional Development

Abolishing Performance Appraisals, Coen & Jenkins, p. 17
Sounds good!

But, something is not right... over 2/3 of people surveyed worldwide HATE performance appraisals!

Why are performance appraisals terrible?
First, the underlying conventional assumptions are *faulty*!

*For example:*

One appraisal system can effectively serve several functions at the same time.

An evaluation system can objectively and reliably assess individual performance.

Rating and ranking are effective motivational and coaching tools.
Next, performance management systems, even carefully crafted, have very poor execution.

For example…
Common Rater Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATER ERROR</th>
<th>PRACTICAL IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varying Standards</td>
<td>Similar performances are rated differently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recency and Primacy Effects</td>
<td>Timing of information affects rating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Tendency, Leniency, and Strictness Errors</td>
<td>Everyone is rated the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater Bias</td>
<td>Rater values or prejudices affect ratings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halo and Horns Effects</td>
<td>Generalization is made from only one trait.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast Error</td>
<td>Comparison is made to other people, not to performance standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar-to-Me/Different-from-Me Errors</td>
<td>Rater compares employees to self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling Error</td>
<td>Available information is insufficient or inaccurate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Also, annual interviews are often done very poorly
“But the biggest limitation of annual reviews…the main reason more and more companies are dropping them…is this:

With their heavy emphasis on financial rewards and punishments and their end-of-year structure, they hold people accountable for past behavior at the expense of improving current performance and grooming talent for the future, both of which are critical for organizations’ long-term survival. In contrast, regular conversations about performance and development change the focus to building the workforce your organization needs to be competitive both today and years from now.”


The Performance Management Revolution
(the focus is shifting from accountability to learning),
So, why do we continue to implement the conventional wisdom?

- The purposes are worthy
- Inertia  [230 A.D., Wei Dynasty in China rates government officials]
- HR likes (requires!) it
- Ignorance of alternatives

"This really is an innovative approach, but I'm afraid we can't consider it. It's never been done before."
We can do better! Think about:

- What are we really trying to accomplish, and how do we get there?
- How can we help each person thrive and excel?
- Goal is to fuel performance, not impede it.
Unconventional wisdom!
The key elements of an effective performance appraisal environment start with:

✓ Designing a system to primarily fulfill the three functions of
  ✓ Improvement
  ✓ Coaching and guidance
  ✓ Feedback and communication

✓ Ensuring a psychologically safe environment and process

_Understand the inherently emotional component and ensure that one’s performance management system takes this into account_

✓ Committing to processes and actions that result in actual and perceived fairness
It is **CRITICAL** to…

Focus efforts on individual employees

https://courtleader.net/2018/03/14/one-leadership-style-does-not-fit-all/
What specific actions should you take?

*Continuous communication and feedback* (reduce formality)

➢ MBWA -- Everyone keeps temporary performance notes ("me files")

➢ Regular “check-ins” -- No surprises!

➢ Feedback is specific, and actionable
  • Actively listen with an open mind
  • Body language is important

➢ Be transparent, honest, and ethical
Routinely include statements like these in discussions:

“What can I do to assist you in achieving our goals?”

“How can I be a better supervisor and team member?”

“What hinders and helps you to do a good job?”
Focus on…

✓ Intrinsic motivators
  
  Public Service orientation
  
  Rule of Law (a mission that “makes a difference”)

✓ Strengths, not weaknesses

✓ Outcomes, not process

✓ The future (e.g., training and development needs and plan, career goals and how to achieve them);

  *Spend less time on the past*
✓ Set *SMART* goals:
  • specific
  • measurable
  • achievable
  • relevant
  • time-bound

✓ Work to avoid the common rater errors and bias

✓ Be sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of staff in carrying out all of these practices
YOUR COMPENSATION WILL BE BASED ON ACHIEVING THESE GOALS.

AWESOME. IT'S LIKE WRITTEN PERMISSION TO IGNORE EVERYTHING ELSE YOU ASK ME TO DO.

IT'S NOT LIKE THAT AT ALL.

GET BACK TO ME WHEN YOU FINISH DEBATING YOURSELF.
Use good metrics -- what you count, counts!

The 6 C’s of good metrics are:

1) Connected to important goals  
   (define success, and measure it)

2) Consistent  
   (go up when performance improves, and vice versa)

3) Calibrated to the work

4) Complete  
   (covers all important work areas)

5) Communicated  
   (what, why, how…) to everyone who can affect the outcomes

6) Current  
   (keep them updated to changed circumstances)
➢ Simplify/reduce/get rid of rating scales and rankings that compare employees to each other and mislead with pseudo-objectivity

➢ Focus on examining how the employee is performing over time (longitudinally, compared to self)

➢ Understand that most people rate themselves too highly (85% say they are better than the median)

➢ Avoid forced distribution, behavioral, and similar systems/techniques
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>QUALITY</strong></td>
<td>Errors are very rare</td>
<td>Errors are rare</td>
<td>Seldom makes errors</td>
<td>Often has errors</td>
<td>Frequent errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QUALITY-2</strong></td>
<td>Leaps tall buildings with a single bound</td>
<td>Must take running start to leap over</td>
<td>Can only leap over short buildings</td>
<td>Crashes into buildings</td>
<td>Cannot recognize buildings; can’t jump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TIMELINESS</strong></td>
<td>Faster than a speeding bullet</td>
<td>As fast as a speeding bullet</td>
<td>Not quite as fast as a speeding bullet</td>
<td>Would you believe a slow bullet?</td>
<td>Wounds self with guns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADAPTABILITY</strong></td>
<td>Walks on water consistently</td>
<td>Walks on water in emergencies</td>
<td>Washes with water</td>
<td>Drinks water</td>
<td>Passes water in emergencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
<td>Talks with God</td>
<td>Talks with angels</td>
<td>Talks with herself</td>
<td>Argues with himself</td>
<td>Loses these arguments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I CAN’T GIVE YOU A RAISE BECAUSE YOUR PERFORMANCE WAS ONLY AVERAGE.

HOW CAN YOU CALCULATE AN AVERAGE FOR MY PERFORMANCE?

NO ONE HAS EVER BEEN IN MY EXACT SITUATION.

I COMPARED YOU TO OTHER EMPLOYEES.

YOU COMPARED ME TO STRANGERS DOING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT THINGS?

NO, I COMPARED YOU TO IMAGINARY PEOPLE DOING YOUR EXACT JOB.

IT’S CALLED MANAGING, AND I’M VERY GOOD AT IT.

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU’RE GOOD AT IT?

BECAUSE IMAGINARY PEOPLE DO THIS JOB WORSE THAN I DO.
CHECK SUB-ITEMS

CHECK APPROPRIATE CATEGORY EVALUATION

FACTOR
(RATE EACH APPLICABLE FACTOR)

A. QUALITY OF WORK
- EXCELLENT
- GOOD
- FAIR

B. QUANTITY OF WORK
- AMOUNT OF WORK PERFORMED
- WORK COMPLETED ON SCHEDULE

C. WORK SKILLS
- JOB KNOWLEDGE
- DECISION-MAKING/JUDGMENT
- ORAL COMMUNICATIONS
- WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

D. WORK HABITS
- COMPLIANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS/RULES
- ATTENDANCE
- ABILITY TO WORK WITHOUT IMMEDIATE SUPERVISION
- INITIATIVE

E. PERSONAL RELATIONS
- RELATIONS WITH SUPERIORS
- RELATIONS WITH CO-WORKERS
- DEALING WITH PUBLIC

F. OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)

G. SUPERVISORY ABILITY (ONLY FOR SUPERVISORS)
- PLANNING AND ASSIGNMENTS
- COMPLIES WITH PERSONNEL RULES AND PROCEDURES
- ABILITY TO MOTIVATE STAFF
- EVALUATING WORK PERFORMANCE
- DELEGATION
- LEADERSHIP
- DECISION-MAKING
- TRAINING AND INSTRUCTING
- DISCIPLINARY CONTROL
- FAIRNESS AND IMPARTIALITY

IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR NAME/TITLE

EVALUATION PERIOD
FROM TO

REASON FOR EVALUATION
- PROBATIONARY
- ANNUAL
- OTHER

OVERALL EVALUATION:
THE OVERALL RATING MUST REFLECT AND BE CONSISTENT WITH RATING FACTORS A THROUGH G.
EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR INADEQUATE
OVERALL EVALUATION OF "OUTSTANDING" OR "UNSATISFACTORY" MUST BE SUBSTANTIATED IN WRITING. WRITTEN COMMENTS RECOMMENDED FOR ALL RATINGS.

IF NECESSARY—CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET

SUPERVISOR’S SIGNATURE (DATE)

EMPLOYEE’S SIGNATURE (DATE)

My signature indicates that this evaluation has been reviewed and discussed with my supervisor. My signature does not necessarily indicate agreement.

SALARY RECOMMENDATION

TARGET GRADE

LAST EQUIVALENT INCREASE

- EMPLOYEE IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR WITHIN GRADE SALARY INCREASE DUE TO BEING IN A MULTIYEAR WAITING PERIOD, AT MAXIMUM SALARY RATE, OR HAS NOT COMPLETED A YEAR IN THE PRESENT STEP.
- EMPLOYEE IS ELIGIBLE AND IS BEING RECOMMENDED FOR PROMOTION.
- EMPLOYEE IS ELIGIBLE AND IS BEING RECOMMENDED FOR A WITHIN GRADE INCREASE.
<table>
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<th>CHECK APPROPRIATE CATEGORY EVALUATION</th>
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OVERALL EVALUATION OF "OUTSTANDING" OR "UNSATISFACTORY" MUST BE SUBSTANTIATED IN WRITING. WRITTEN COMMENTS RECOMMENDED FOR ALL RATINGS.
Abolishing Performance Appraisals

Why They Backfire and What to Do Instead

Tom Coens and Mary Jenkins

Foreword by Peter Block
Performance Evaluation (Full Performance)

Name:
Job Title: 
Dept.: 
Current CPS or JSP grade/level: 
Current Salary: 
Evaluation Period from to:
  - Annual review
  - Other (state reason)

Topics

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Check</th>
<th>When Complete</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1. Discuss employee's primary duties since last evaluation</td>
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  - review position description/job responsibilities and performance standards |
| 2. Discuss strengths and areas for growth |
  - review of last evaluation |
  - discuss employee's responses on the self-assessment form and suggestions for the supervisor |
  - discuss supervisor's assessment of the employee's performance |
  - reconcile, if needed, differences between employee and supervisor |
| 3. Discuss barriers to effective work performance and job satisfaction |
| 4. Discuss possible work process improvements |
| 5. Based on the outcome of discussion, |
  - review position description/job responsibilities and performance standards, as needed |
  - discuss how they relate to the court's mission, vision, and values |
| 6. Discuss Court Employee Competencies Framework, including employee's strengths and areas for growth |
| 7. Discuss employee's development and training: |
  - over the past year (attach training report) |
  - work-related goals for the next performance period and plan to achieve |
  - personal/professional development goals and plan to achieve |
| 8. Discuss other matters as desired |

Supervisor Comment:

Employee Comment:

Performance level is:
- [ ] AL = acceptable level
- [ ] UL = unacceptable level (performance enhancement plan attached)

New CL grade/step (if applicable): New Salary:

Effective date (if applicable): Next evaluation due:

Supervisor Signature: 
Reviewer Signature: 
Employee signature: 

My signature indicates that this evaluation has been reviewed and discussed with my supervisor, and does not necessarily indicate agreement with its contents. By this notice I have been informed of my rights to appeal this evaluation by filing a grievance and to provide pertinent written comments to the evaluation for inclusion in my personnel file.
1. Discuss employee’s primary duties since last evaluation
   ➢ review position description/job responsibilities and performance standards

2. Discuss strengths and areas for growth
   ➢ review of last evaluation
   ➢ discuss employee’s responses on the self-assessment form and suggestions for the supervisor
   ➢ discuss supervisor’s assessment of the employee’s performance
   ➢ reconcile, if needed, differences between employee and supervisor

3. Discuss barriers to effective work performance and job satisfaction

4. Discuss possible work process improvements

5. Based on the outcome of discussion,
   ➢ revise position description/job responsibilities and performance standards, as needed
   ➢ discuss how they relate to the court’s mission, vision, and values

6. Discuss Court Employee Competencies Framework, including employee's strengths and areas for growth

Performance level is:
- AL = acceptable level
- UL = unacceptable level *(performance enhancement plan attached)*
A couple of administrative details:

Document a formal review *after the discussion* (don’t fill out the form in advance!)

The performance review system, including any annual component, should be *simple* (reduce paperwork and red tape)
The essence of excellent performance management is Employee Engagement.

The Gallup organization has devised a validated survey to measure employee engagement around the world.
The survey asks workers to answer true or false to these statements:

- I know what is expected of me at work.
- I have the material and equipment I need to do my work right.
- At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
- In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
- My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
- There is someone at work who encourages my development.
➢ At work, my opinions seem to count.
➢ The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
➢ My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
➢ I have a best friend at work.
➢ In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
➢ This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

How do you and your organization measure up?
Let’s go back to the NACM Core definition:

“Performance management involves establishing and communicating specific performance expectations and goals for each employee and periodically meeting with and providing feedback to the employee about his or her performance as it relates to the expectations and goals laid out.”

Fine, but how you do this makes the difference between terrible and great!
Always keep in mind performance management is a team effort that results in the

✓ Development of the employee

✓ While achieving the court’s mission
Performance management is not easy!

➢ Doing it well requires continuous effort and dealing with often difficult issues.

➢ The results, however, are worthwhile.

➢ In the end, what is more important than making this investment in yourself and your staff?
Here's a list of the twelve elements of great managing.

If you do every—thing on that list, it will make me feel what experts call "engaged."

If you fail to do your job properly, I will feel all disengaged and do poor work.

This would be a convenient time to give me some praise and recognition.

You might also want to encourage my development and tell me my job is important.

Remember to care about me as a person and tell me my opinions count.

If you do all of that, plus seven more things on the list, you might get some productivity out of me.

Leave my office and drop dead. Will that help me learn and grow?
Key things to keep in mind as we finish:

✓ Conventional performance management can be improved

✓ Effective performance management focuses on
  • The primary three functions
  • The individual
  • Strengths and outcomes
  • Valid metrics
  • Intrinsic motivation
  • Honesty, transparency, and fairness
  • Employee engagement

Always focus on how can we help each person thrive and excel!
Questions?

Comments?
Thank you!

The Powerpoint presentation and an expanded written outline of the content are available on the NACM conference app!
I HATE MY JOB, BUT I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO MY AFTERLIFE.

ARE YOU HEARING GOOD THINGS ABOUT DECOMPOSING?

MY SOUL WILL LIVE FOREVER. GOOD LUCK. I LOST MINE AT MY FIRST PERFORMANCE REVIEW.