



To What Extent Are the Difficulties Around Appraising Job Performance Insurmountable?

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Abstracts: Nowadays, performance appraisal has been regarded as a critical method to evaluate employees. This article reviews the historical background of performance and the frontier theory results, and summarizes performance evaluation in research progress. The researchers present the definition of performance evaluation and analyze the advantages, disadvantages and key indicators of performance evaluation. Performance appraisal should be remained in companies' evaluating and reward system in spite of the insurmountable surrounding difficulties while the improvement of making the assessment more acceptable and reliable is indispensable simultaneously.

Keywords: performance appraisal, key indicator, insurmountability

1. Introduction

Nowadays, performance appraisal has been regarded as a critical method to evaluate employees. To define it, "Performance appraisal is the process of identifying, measuring and developing human performance in organization"^[4]. This approach is widely used in a company's rating system since it is a simple solution avoiding self-inflicted judgment^[2]. Although the advantages of using appraisal may be considerable, the demerits are still significant. Curtis, Harvey and Randem^[4] stated that political arena should be responsible for the rating distortions instead of unconscious errors. Meanwhile, limited objective outcomes due to the overdependence on supervisors' judgement probably destroy the rating system because the results got are parochial^[5]. In this case, some alternatives could be suggested to make the assessments more acceptable. However, it could be argued that whether other substitutions are effective or feasible. This essay will illustrate different problems in the appraisal and evaluate potential solutions. I will argue that alternative improvements could be adopted, however, the performance appraisal is still non-negligibly important and worth-keeping even though the difficulties may be insurmountable.

One significant error in individuals' evaluation is caused by what we called "political distortion" referred to as the rating error. Apart from accuracy, exercising discretion and ensuring effectiveness and survival are also goals what executives want to obtain^[4]. To increase subordinates loyalty, supervisors may increase performance ratings to restore employees' confidence^[4] and hesitate to give a negative feedback^[4]. It is reasonable for leniency to survive under such a situation. That is to say, political purpose results in deliberate distortions which may lead to further misunderstanding. To cope with these problems, rater accountability could be introduced to those who made conscious mistakes. Fundamentally, accountability can be classified into two distinct types: upward accountability and downward accountability^[4]. Downward accountability means give evaluations to the subordinates while upward accountability is mainly about that the evaluation raters made will be verified by supervisors^[4]. Based on the research from Mero and Motowidlo, upward accountability is more likely to be effective to reduce leniency. However, Curtis, Harvey and Randem^[4] argued that although some compelling evidence had proven the effectiveness of upward accountability, it is still vital to make extra experiments to ensure the effect will improve accuracy continuously when other variables are introduced.

2. The performance ratings studies the state of management

As all mentioned above, the performance ratings system seems to need to be abandoned completely and switch to other systems. However, this assumption did not occur due to the measurement challenges we faced when trying to forbid the appraisal. The most prominent reason for the survival of performance ratings results from the insufficient alternatives^[5]. Lack of substitutions does not allow raters to have other eligible choices when evaluating. In addition, it is infeasible to use objective measures in most settings^[5]. Landy and Farr^[5] stated that, surprisingly, objective measurements are likely to output unreliability and little consistency. Moreover, the availability and deficient criteria of objective measures could also be a limitation. For example, for those employees who do not have a fixed workday, it is unreasonable to collect

their absence or tardiness as a factor involved in their ratings ^[5]. Finally, performance management and reward system may be distorted when introducing objective measures leading to the appearance of contrary. For instance, performance management system mainly focus on countable aspects of people's behavior and possibly ignore other remaining features ^[5].

3. Strategy to improve the performance appraisal

Simultaneously, some improvement might be suggested when we judge the effectiveness of performance appraisal. From 1960s to 1970s, the variation in the theme of improving the quality of performance rating could be noticed obviously. Behavior anchoring, at a standardized scale, was widely used to identify the specific behaviors of ratees ^[5]. However, according to the review of Farr ^[5], reconstruction of rating scale formats had merely slight influences on both reliability and validity. Secondly, identifying and removing rating errors has been regarded as an effective method of progress ^[5]. Ironically, isolation and reduction seemed not to be successful because of the complexities to determine when and where the errors appear ^[5]. Thirdly, rater training is issued to eliminate original errors form initial performance ^[5]. Adversely, Murphy ^[5] argued that skepticism may be found when using this method to improve the system. In this case, a latest approach which called 360° evaluations could be available. The assessment of this method is from supervisors, subordinates, peers and clients ^[5]. In contrast, Brown, Inceoglu and Lin ^[3] have criticized it since they firmly believed that "both self-reported and other-reported questionnaires can be subject to response styles".

4. The merits of the performance appraisal

Nevertheless, despite blaming the drawbacks of performance appraisal, there are still several merits of using it. Firstly, the validity and reliability of performance ratings are supporting by evidence. It is probably to receive reliable assessment if evaluation can be pooled across many similarly situated raters ^[1]. Secondly, performance appraisal enable raters to obtain different information such as personal attitudes and beliefs from various perspectives ^[1]. Psychometric index is added to the performance management system which seems to be doubtful ^[1]. Thirdly, subjective response is feasible for attacking subject judgements ^[1]. Landy and Farr ^[1] believed that the objective measures are more deficient than subjective results. Moreover, there is a debate between formal and informal feedbacks. Sometimes, informal feedback may fail to validate in systematic or academic way ^[1]. Adler et al. ^[1] concluded that it is complicated to establish the relationship between job performance and informal feedback. Furthermore, the establishing of fairness and freedom from biases is could be referred as torture. Based on their belief, performance appraisal remain our bet for seeking for useful measures of individual evaluation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, although some of the disadvantages of using performance appraisal might be unavoidable, some improvement need to be introduced to make the whole system more acceptable and reliable rather than abandon the appraisal directly. This statement is due to the similar problems found in using the alternatives. It is meaningless for raters to improve other substitutions instead of the original one. Repetitive actions may be done during this process, which is really time-consuming. Therefore, performance appraisal should be remained in companies' evaluating and reward system in spite of the insurmountable surrounding difficulties while the improvement of making the assessment more acceptable and reliable is indispensable simultaneously.

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