Performance Appraisal: Psychology Professor Evaluation

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Performance management is the process by which an organization manages its resources to operate efficiently. A key component in performance management is the use of performance appraisals to guide and evaluate the performance of current employees and team members. There are a number of different errors that may occur when evaluating personnel, and these errors may occur consciously or subconsciously. These rating errors often lead to biases that distort the assessment of one's performance. Organizations should be aware of this issue and the types of errors that may occur so that they can take the proper action to avoid them to the best of their ability.

Some examples of these errors include serial position errors, contrast errors, halo and horn errors, leniency errors, and central-tendency errors. Serial position error occurs when a rater displays a better recollection for information about the ratee that was presented during a particular sequence. Raters are typically better at remembering and evaluating the information that was presented at the beginning of a given time sequence (known as the primacy effect) or at the end (known as the recency effect). As a result, information received in the middle is most poorly recalled. Related to the serial position error concept is the notion that raters also remember first impressions as well as information from the most recent events better than they remember events and information in between. This may mean that when evaluating personnel, the ratee's behaviors at the beginning of a time frame and end of a time frame may be more highly considered.

Another type of error is the contrast error. This occurs when an evaluator compares personnel with one another. The problem with this is that a rater may assess the ratee as performing better than he or she actually performed because he or she was compared to another ratee who actually

performed very poorly. This could also be applied in the opposite direction when rating someone as very poorly because a previous ratee performed extremely well.

Halo and horn effects also may influence whether a ratee receives an excellent evaluation or not. Halo effects occur when the rater has an overall favorable opinion about the ratee. As a result, the rater then rates the ratee as performing well on all dimensions of the evaluation, even if they do not have evidence or information pertaining to a dimension. On the contrary, raters may also evaluate someone unfavorably based on one aspect of their performance, causing them to have an overall poor evaluation. This is known as the horn effect.

Lastly, leniency errors and central-tendency errors produce disproportionate ratings in performance scores. Leniency errors occur when evaluators assess an overwhelming amount of ratees as performing exceptionally well or exceptionally poorly compared to the ratees' true levels of performance. When more people are rated favorably, this is known as positive leniency; however, when more people are rated unfavorably, this is known as negative leniency. Contrary to positively or negatively skewed ratings is the issue of central-tendency errors. These occur when evaluators rate a disproportionate amount of people as performing in the center of a performance rating distribution curve. In other words, raters might give average rating scores for the vast majority of people compared to their actual levels of performance.

Clearly, all of these errors can be problematic for both the rater and the ratee. However, with proper training procedures regarding the evaluation process as well as appropriate use of measurement tools, these errors can be significantly reduced. Ratings should be made from multiple, diverse, unbiased raters, perhaps in a 360 feedback system where the ratee is evaluated by at least one peer, one supervisor, one subordinate, and themselves. Raters should give

consistent documentation for decisions and provide examples of performance as they rate faculty.

Formal communication to employees should include access to results, an explanation of deficiencies, and recommendations for opportunities to improve performance. If faculty think an error has been made or wishes to appeal their results, they should have access to a formal appeal system. The department should have a system to regularly monitor for potential discrimination or abuses of the system.

The specific jobs related to our teaching evaluation will be assessed at the end of each semester. Also, raters should collect information formally throughout the appraisal period to prevent serial position bias. This will be regulated by having raters make a weekly record for each ratee that will ideally consist of at least one desirable behavior of notice, one detrimental behavior of notice, and any other information they find helpful in the end of the period. Teaching behaviors are most relevant for evaluation.

We will use the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS) because it is more comprehensive. In BARS, the scale identifies the important performance dimensions, displays behavioral examples at all levels of effectiveness, and translates incidents into dimensions and rates them on effectiveness. We will choose items with specific behavioral anchors to promote fair rating. With examples of the types of behavior they are looking for, raters will be able to give standardized results to faculty.

Raters should receive training and written instructions, and the process should be standardized for all faculty. Frame-of-reference training provides raters with common reference standards by which they may evaluate performance. This may help to standardize results and

improve accuracy. This should be combined with behavioral observation training to improve

behavior recall. Training should also include adjustments in rater motivation, which would

prevent raters from feeling compelled to rate positively. Training can reduce halo, leniency, and

central-tendency errors, raising accuracy and making faculty more likely to accept ratings. Raters

should also acknowledge their own proclivity towards biases (Ulhmann & Cohen, 2006). and

monitor their own evaluations to promote fair ratings. They can also utilize skills learned in

frame-of-reference training by comparing employee performance to standardized measures of

different levels of effectiveness. All raters will be familiarized with the evaluation form and how

to fill it out. During training, raters will also be highly encouraged to produce quality weekly

notes throughout the period and reminded of the behaviors that are most relevant to the

evaluations; approachability, enthusiasm about teaching, displaying knowledgeability about the

subject matter, promoting critical thinking, setting realistic expectations of students, creating fair

assessments, communicating and listening well, incorporating a variety of teaching methods into

the classroom to accommodate individual needs, promoting student development, and

sociocultural awareness

Listed below is the teaching evaluation form.

1. Knowledge of subject matter
1.Poor_____ 2. Sufficient_____3. Outstanding_____

Teacher does not demonstrate minimal knowledge of content course. Gives invalid information and struggles to answer questions.	Teacher is capable of explaining content directly related to lectures and covered materials. Does not demonstrate mastery of content.	Teacher demonstrates exceptional knowledge about subject matter and course curriculum. Demonstrates mastery of content through elaborating in depth on topics and answers questions completely.

2.   Teaching effectiveness
1. Poor_____2. Sufficient_____3. Outstanding_____

Teacher presents material and does not facilitate further engagement with the material.	Teacher implements methods that require students to engage in the material beyond reading the text or studying lecture slides through traditional written assignments.	Teacher displays exceptional strategies for teaching that benefits different learning methods of students in the classroom. Uses applicable examples. Actively changes teaching methods when necessary to engage students with the material.

3.   Enthusiasm
1. Poor_____2. Sufficient_____3. Outstanding_____

Teacher is not motivated or enthusiastic about the class material and context	Teacher displays average levels of enthusiasm in subject concept.	Teacher demonstrates enthusiasm and passion in the subject matter he or she teaches. The teacher motivates the classroom to further their education.

4.   Ensures critical thinking
1.Poor_____2. Sufficient_____3. Outstanding_____

Teacher does not provide students with challenges that require them to creatively apply course knowledge.	Teacher provides students with challenges that require them to creatively apply course knowledge.	Teacher motivates and challenges students to creatively apply their knowledge to different scenarios.

5.   Comes to class prepared
1. Poor_____2. Sufficient_____3. Outstanding_____

Teacher struggles to come to class with necessary materials and plans.	Teacher comes to class with necessary materials and plans. Occasionally fails to prepare.	Teacher comes to class with necessary materials and plans. Fails to prepare rarely or never.

6.   Displays flexibility and openness
1. Poor_____2. Sufficient_____3. Outstanding_____

Teacher is not available outside of the classroom.	Teacher is available for the minimum number of office hours.	Teacher is available to assist students needs outside of the classroom frequently. Offers maximum amount of office hours.

7.   Makes effort to connect with students
1. Poor_____2. Sufficient_____3. Outstanding_____

Teacher does not make an effort to connect with students. Does not priority student growth and personal ambitions	Teacher makes effort to connect with students.	Teacher displays a strong interest in working with students and is extremely personable in the classroom. Has genuine interest in student growth and personal ambitions.

8.   Sets clear expectations for students
1. Poor_____2. Sufficient_____3. Outstanding_____

Teacher fails to explain expectations and goals for the course. Teacher's objectives of the curriculum conflict with students' views of the course.	Objectives of the course are set but not discussed.	Teacher demonstrates exceptionally clear expectations and goals for the students about class material. Objectives are discussed and students are notified of changes.

There are several content-related recommendations for effective performance appraisals to keep in mind when scales are being designed. Performance appraisals should be objective rather than subjective, so training for raters will incorporate the importance of this aspect. For example, raters will be taught the consequences of biased ratings and made aware of any biases they have. The scale itself is also objective in that there are pre-determined standards. In other words, the dimensions for poor, sufficient, and outstanding professors are already provided, so the rater simply must determine under which dimension the professor fulfills. The rater does not have to use their own subjective standard of what qualifies as poor, sufficient, or outstanding performance.

There are other content-related aspects that deal directly with the BARS performance rating scale to ensure an efficient appraisal. The scale assesses important KSAOs addressed in our job analysis that are necessary for a successful professor. For example, knowledge of subject matter and enthusiasm for teaching are both assessed. These dimensions should also be in control of the ratee. In other words, ratees should only be evaluated on their own behaviors that they can

regulate and not behaviors of others. A professor has control over how much knowledge they possess, but they cannot control what grades students receive in his or her class. Therefore, average grade from students in the class should not be measured because the professor cannot control other aspects that may affect grades, such as student motivation and number of hours the student spends studying.

Likewise in terms of what to rate, the scale should measure behaviors of the ratee rather than personal traits. Some professors may be naturally more approachable and friendly in their personality, but it is not fair to assess them on their personal characteristics. However, approachability can be assessed through behavioral measures instead, such as how many office hours they provide. Lastly, dimensions on the scale should relate to specific functions instead of global assessments. It is better to measure specific aspects and behaviors rather than assessing the big picture. A successful professor may be difficult to operationally define in one broad measure, so the scale incorporates smaller measures, such as preparedness and flexibility, to identify what constitutes as an efficient professor.

The type of performance appraisal we used is the 360 degree feedback, which is a process of evaluating employees from multiple rating sources, usually including supervisor, peer, subordinate, and self. The reason we chose to use this performance appraisal type is because it allows multiple raters with different perspectives to evaluate the employee's strengths and weaknesses. The 360 degree feedback enhances self awareness because of the discrepancies that may be found between how we see ourselves and how others see us. This performance appraisal also takes into account that self awareness is the key to maximizing one's full potential and performance in the workplace. This approach values the differences in rater perspectives as well because it provides an opportunity or professional development and learning too. Using this type

of performance appraisal discriminates between good and bad behavior efficiently because raters

are given examples of how performance should be performance compared to the performance

each individual is displaying. Good and bad behavior can also be evaluated since there are

multiple raters with different perspectives about appropriate behavior of the individuals as well.

References

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