

**WHAT PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS
WILL BE USED FOR PEACE OFFICERS IN
MEDIUM SIZED AGENCIES IN THE YEAR 2005?**

**A Project presented to
California Commission on
Peace Officer Standards and Training**

By

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This Command College Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planer can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future, creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Police departments, like all agencies held accountable to the general public, have a long history of setting standards, modifying behavior, and documenting the performance of their officers through a formal performance appraisal process. The issue discussed in this project grew out of questions and conflicts arising from a number of observations relative to peace officer performance evaluations.

To name just a few: On January 1, 1999, the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) mandated that during field training, every peace officer trainee in the State of California must have their performance evaluated daily, in writing, on a POST approved form. Meanwhile, the Sacramento Police Department abandoned the practice altogether and no longer completes peace officer performance evaluations on tenured officers at all. Further, involvement with a committee at the El Segundo Police Department revealed that virtually all employees, supervisors and subordinates alike, while believing that evaluations were necessary, were dissatisfied with our current performance appraisal process. Finally, instruction received at the Command College in the area of a Post-Industrial Leadership Model, seemed to suggest the future might take employers away from the old style methods of commanding and controlling employees through devices such as written performance evaluations.

The above facts conflict with one another and raise questions about the importance or even the necessity of performance evaluations for peace officers. If peace officer trainees must be evaluated daily as POST mandates, why do officers off training

never need to be evaluated as with Sacramento P.D? If evaluations are important and necessary, why is virtually everyone at the El Segundo Police Department unhappy with them? If we are truly concerned with moving officers into community based policing styles through the 21st century or post industrial leadership model, why is it still necessary to control and evaluate their actions through a process as limited and confining as the performance evaluation?

A long time dissatisfaction with our agency's performance appraisal system, and a number of unanswered questions such as those above, brought about the belief that this issue would be an important one to study. Inadequate performance evaluations being mentioned as one of the possible causes leading to the LAPD Rampart Division scandal, cemented this feeling (Parks 2000). Studying medium sized agencies specifically, was chosen because of the belief that medium sized agencies are large enough that they probably require the written assessment of their employees. At the same time they are small enough that they can quickly affect change when they want to.

Historical Perspective

Performance appraisal has been called, "the observation and assessment of employee performance against predetermined job-related standards, for the purposes delineated by the organization" (Eichel and Blender 1984, 11). Though this definition and the process it refers to have sometimes been described as simple, it is commonly found that the intended results fall far short of expectations. Statements such as "Most organizations have failed to establish performance appraisal systems which conform to the definition" (Brown 1992, 1) and ". . . nearly everybody does (performance

evaluations), but almost nobody seems satisfied” (Derohan 1998, 2) are typical of those found in the research on peace officer performance evaluations. Bill Brown summarized the situation well in his thesis on peace officer performance appraisals when he wrote:

The general feeling is that their performance appraisals are not valid or reliable. More often than not, those feelings do represent the true state of affairs. Not because patrol officer performance cannot be assessed, but because little or no effort has been made to develop a performance evaluation instrument that is capable of measuring patrol officer performance with a substantial degree of validity (Brown, 1992)

The Los Angeles Police Department recently released its “Rampart Area Corruption Incident” report, which offers the following scathing assessment of its own agencies performance appraisals:

We must restore integrity to our performance evaluation system so that it can be relied upon as a true measure of performance. Whether that will require implementation of a new system, such as returning to outstanding, excellent or satisfactory categories and placing a numeric maximum on each category, or simply enforcing the existing rules is inconsequential. The fact is that our personnel evaluations have little or no credibility at any level in the organization and that must be corrected. (Parks, 2000)

Upon careful reflection, how many could truly say that the current state of performance appraisals in any organization differs significantly from that in the LAPD?

This condition begs the question, if both writers and recipients of performance evaluations are so unhappy with them, why do we do them at all? According to Brown, there are six primary reasons that performance appraisals are done:

1. To motivate employees to improve performance
2. To assist employees in setting goals for professional development
3. To communicate management’s goals and objectives
4. To allocate organizational rewards
5. To make retainment or discharge decisions

6. To protect against liability

The necessity for performance appraisal certainly seems to be the accepted norm. Virtually all public agencies evaluate the performance of their officers, a fact that would appear to indicate the necessity, if not the effectiveness of the process. The results of an internet word search served to exemplify this point. Over 28,000 matches were found on the internet by entering the words, performance evaluation. Scanning a random number of those sites revealed that they overwhelmingly dealt with the importance of, and necessity for, the completion of performance evaluations.

A U.S. Navy report stated that personnel evaluations are, “the single most important personnel management tool”. The University of Texas, Austin site stated, “Performance evaluation is an important part of a manager’s responsibility to direct, train, monitor and support employee’s work . . .” In fact, the search found only one agency which did not do performance evaluations of their employees, and that was the Seattle Police Department. Ironically, the two independent sources of the references to Seattle, the city’s Chief of Police, and a panel of Seattle citizens appointed by the Mayor, both recommended the return of performance evaluations to the Seattle Police Department.

The completion of employee performance evaluations is by no means unique to public agencies or police departments. It is pervasive in the private sector as well. The American Management Association conducted a poll in March of 1996 where ninety eight percent of the 754 firms responding indicated that they use an employee performance appraisal system. (Derohan, 1998, 4)

If performance evaluations are believed to be so necessary, and are so widely used, why is there seemingly such universal dissatisfaction with them? A closer examination of

performance appraisals reveals that there are several obstacles lying in the way of problem free evaluations. For this discussion they have been organized into three loosely organized categories; the complexities of a peace officer's job; common rating errors as identified by experts; and general lack of training for supervisors.

Complexities of the Job

Eichel and Blender's definition of performance appraisal as, "the observation and assessment of employee performance against predetermined job-related standards, for the purposes delineated by the organization" contains four primary components:

- Observation
- Assessment
- Predetermined standards
- Used for purposes delineated by the organization

Each of these components faces its own individual challenges due to the unique working environment of peace officers :

Observation: The mostly unsupervised nature of daily police work does not allow for much direct observation of officer performance by supervisors. Supervisors must therefore, based on infrequent observations of a small percentage of performance and second-hand accounts, make generalizations about conduct they do not observe.

Assessment: Assessment of peace officer performance, though not impossible, is certainly difficult, given the dynamic nature of police work and the fact that each every situation encountered is unlike any other, and typically involves one or more people, any of which may react in any one of an infinite number of unpredictable ways. How an

officer reacts to these and other situations may be assessed when they are directly observed however, it is more important, and much more difficult, to objectively assess the more important issue of how an officer may have affected the situation.

Predetermined standards: Police departments have not traditionally been successful in setting clear objective performance standards in areas of critical performance. Though order manuals abound with clear, concise rules and regulations regarding issues such as arriving at work on time, acceptable hair length, and allowable shoe color, areas of greater importance tend to be much more vague. This may partly be a result of the complexity, and unpredictability, of the tasks routinely performed by peace officers.

Used for purposes delineated by the organization: Twenty years of personal interaction with fellow police professionals has lead to the conclusion that it is a common complaint of peace officers that their performance appraisals aren't used for anything at all. This could lead one to conclude that some agencies may not have made the purposes for performance appraisal well known to its officers. Others may have stated reasons that the appraisals will be used, yet in practice, may not use the appraisals for those reasons at all.

Common Rating Errors

While the above may describe some possible reasons behind the concerns with the performance appraisal process itself, even if all of those issues were resolved, there would still be a long list of hurdles to be overcome. Primarily, these have to do with errors that are commonly committed by those completing the appraisal document. Experts believe problems with performance appraisals are often grounded in the fact that

the rater has fallen victim to one of the seven common pitfalls of performance appraisal
Brown's research discovered:

Halo/Horn Effect: This effect, first identified by Thorndike (1920) refers to the general impression that the supervisor has of a subordinate, be it good or bad, halo or horn, respectively, influencing the appraisal in a number of areas.

Leniency/Severity: Leniency, the tendency for ratings to be higher than deserved, whereas severity is the tendency for ratings to be undeservedly harsh. Kingsbury (1933).

Central Tendency: A general reluctance on the part of the rater to give higher or lower than average ratings. This is typically brought about by the requirement for increased levels of documentation by the rater who marks other than standard (Bernardin and Beatty 1984, 157-158).

Similarity Errors: The tendency on the part of the rater to award higher markings to those whom they believe to be similar to themselves (Bernardin and Beatty 1984, 162).

Contrast Errors: The tendency of raters to give lower ratings to those who they see as being different from, and less capable than, themselves. (Blum and Naylor 1968, 39)

Recency Errors: The supervisor relies too heavily upon recent experiences with the subordinate. (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1985)

Factor Clarity: This stems from an unclear understanding of the definitions of terms commonly used in the rating. For example, absent adequate explanation, what is excellent to one supervisor may be standard to another.

Lack of Training

It is significant to note here that of the above seven common rating errors, only the last is very likely to be significantly affected by the performance appraisal form itself. Another possible explanation for the widespread dissatisfaction with performance appraisals, unrelated to the rating form, may be the lack of training provided to the raters. For example, at the El Segundo Police Department the only training given to raters in how to complete performance appraisals is received at Supervisory Course. The Supervisory Course is a POST training course mandated within one year of promotion to supervisor, which is often before the individual has completed a performance appraisal. The training may be offered by any one of a variety of agencies and trainers, and is never repeated or updated. Though the course content is regularly updated by POST, some supervisors never receive updated training in this area for their entire careers.

It appears that lack of training could contribute significantly to any one of the first six rating errors above. Again, Brown may have put it best when he wrote, “Few organizations have given (performance appraisals) the attention (they) deserve. Performance appraisal can not be a simple one-hour-per-year undertaking”.

Looking at the issue of peace officer performance appraisals from an historical point of view is intended to give an overall perspective from which one can begin to move forward. The next chapter looks forward by examining existing conditions and making some predictions about future conditions by imagining how trends and events which may occur in the future could affect peace officer performance appraisal.

CHAPTER 2

Futures Study

A major portion of this project was the facilitation of a nominal group technique process (NGT). The purpose of the NGT is to gain the collective perspective of a diverse group of participants as to what performance appraisal process will be used for peace officers in the future. The ten participants in this process included representatives from private industry, human resources, a cross-section of all levels of sworn and non-sworn police department employees, and police association legal counsel. The panelists spent half a day together discussing the issue, identifying trends which they believed were occurring and impact the issue. They also envisioned events which, should they occur, may positively or negatively impact the issue. After the conclusion of the NGT, the information was organized, evaluated, charted, and utilized as a compass to provide direction for this project.

Trends

Trends are patterns of changing behavior occurring over time which have a past, present and future. Panelists began the NGT process by brainstorming a list of trends, which they believed were occurring and could have an impact on the issue. They initially created a list of thirty trends. After considerable discussion and a series of private, then group, voting processes, those thirty were reduced to the following list of the ten trends.

This list contains those ten trends which the group agreed were likely to have the greatest impact on peace officer performance evaluations.

1. Input from other sources
Departments' tendency to seek and accept input from non-traditional sources such as subordinates, peers, supervisors and public, by a variety of means, including the Internet, and include that input in officers performance evaluations.

The panel believed the current trend is for more input to be sought and that this upward trend would continue.

2. Demand for documentation
Officers' demands that their supervisors document specific evidence of behavior supporting supervisor's ratings of them.

The panel agreed that they have seen an increase in demands for documentation and saw no reason to believe that this trend would subside.

3. Litigation/challenges
Officers willingness to challenge comments made about them in their performance evaluations through appeals, grievances, and litigation.

The panel had seen an increase in the tendency for officers to challenge comments made in their performance appraisals and felt this trend would continue.

4. Performance tied to pay/promotability
Public sector tying pay directly to performance, as documented by some sort of performance evaluation method, similar to what is sometimes done in the private sector.

The panel believed that the public sector might tend to follow the lead of the private sector in this area in the future.

5. One model
Performance standards become more and more defined and precise, until they are so specific that many officers are rejected from beginning or continuing employment due to failing to fit them exactly. Trend could be toward, or away from "one model".

The panel noted that as in many of areas of our society in this communication age, comparisons between agencies performance are much more easily made than before. They believed that these comparisons may lead to a homogenization of desirable peace officer standards of performance and lead to one model for

performance appraisal. It was pointed out that POST has already done this with regard to trainees.

6. Electronic “living” file

Creation of electronic files allowing supervisors to give, and receive, input about employees and be readily accessible for review when needed, such as when completing a rating.

The panel indicated that it seemed likely that there would be increased automation and sharing of records on peace officer performance, following the ready availability of new technology.

7. Accountability, emphasis on goals and objectives

Emphasis on development of goals and objectives and closer tracking of their progress. Closer alignment of individual and departmental goals and objectives.

The panel agreed that we are living in an ever increasingly service oriented society. They felt it was unlikely that law enforcement agencies would escape these demands.

8. Performance measures

Degree to which rating clarifies performance standards.

The panel believed that there will be increased efforts to more clearly identify and define performance objectives.

9. Supervisor training

Amount of training given to supervisors regarding standardizing methods of completing performance evaluations and specific definitions of performance criteria.

The panel believed the trend will be toward providing supervisors with more training in the completion of performance appraisals in the future.

10. Frequency of evaluations

How often departments require formal evaluations of the performance of its officers.

The panel saw no current trend here, but agreed there may be an increased frequency of performance appraisals in the future.

Trend Analysis

After collectively agreeing on the top ten trends, the members of the group voted independently on each trend’s direction, either upward or downward. Their opinions were

expressed numerically by comparing each trend to the number 100, a number arbitrarily assigned to each trend in order to numerically represent its level today. Panel members also indicated, on a scale of 1-10, how much impact the trend might have upon the issue. The following chart shows the median average of the collective results. Expressing the median average of the panelist’s results gives the reader a visual aid in order to assess the predicted impact of the selected trends upon the issue. Depicting and evaluating the results in this fashion is the process known as trend analysis.

TREND ANALYSIS – MEDIAN

	5 Years Ago	Today	5 Years From Now	10 Years From Now	Concern (1-10)
Trend 1	25	100	127.5	150	9
Trend 2	65	100	150	155	8
Trend 3	50	100	132.5	165	9
Trend 4	22.5	100	120	150	5
Trend 5	15	100	145	182.5	8
Trend 6	6.5	100	145	175	6
Trend 7	40	100	127.5	150	7
Trend 8	50	100	120	135	7.5
Trend 9	30	100	130	167.5	7.5
Trend 10	12.5	100	125	150	7

Examination of the chart shows that the group felt that all the trends were moving upward, as indicated by the numbers, which become increasingly greater over the passage of time. We can also see that the potential impacts of the input and litigation trends were felt to be the highest, with indicated concern levels of nine, while the impacts of accountability and frequency trends are lowest, with indicated concern levels of seven.

Events

Following the work on trends, the NGT participants brainstormed a list of events, which they believed could occur in the future and might have an impact on the issue.

Events describe a single occurrence which may have taken place, or may take place at some time in the future. Panelists were encouraged to be creative in the development of their initial list of potential events.

The initial list of thirty two events, after considerable discussion and a series of private, then group, voting processes, was reduced to the following list of ten possible future events most likely to impact performance evaluations.

1. Statewide mandated format
POST – or another authoritative body, mandates that a specific form of performance evaluation must be used by the agency.

With this having already occurred for trainees, the panel envisioned that some authority, most likely POST, may mandate the use of a specific type of performance appraisal tool.

2. Sales and marketing section, customer driven
The police department employs or creates a sales and marketing section which results in a new performance evaluation process focused exclusively on customer satisfaction.

One private sector member of the panel pointed out that there is virtually no private industry which succeeds without a marketing program. The panel agreed that the practice of marketing is rarely used in the public sector and that law enforcement agencies could benefit from making a concerted effort to more proactively publicize their efforts in a positive way.

3. Civilian review board gets involved in creating evaluations
The board actively participates in completing them on officers.

Panelists noted this has occurred in some jurisdictions already and that it could become a more widespread practice which could result in this event affecting any agency. This event would have a significant impact on performance appraisal.

4. 3% at 50

This retirement plan is adopted by the agency, which results in a mass retirement of senior rating personnel and a subsequent loss of knowledge and experience in that area.

After the conclusion of this NGT, but before completion of this project, this event has already occurred in many jurisdictions. The panel saw the strong possibility of this event occurring and believed that the impact on performance appraisals could be serious.

5. Peace Officer Development Program

The department implements recruit development programs at local schools and other locations throughout the community, which make potential officers aware of performance standards.

The panel discussed the possibility that agencies increased early recruitment efforts may have a side effect of sparking this side effect. They believed that if potential employees were familiar with the requirements and expectations of law enforcement agencies long in advance of their employment there, it may assist in both awareness of and compliance with those standards.

6. Major civil unrest

A significant negative civil unrest event takes place. Subsequent attention brought upon the department by that event drives the development of a new evaluation process.

The panel was very conscious of the effects of recent civil disturbances upon law enforcement agencies. They considered it likely that a future event of that nature could impact performance appraisals.

7. Implementation of pay for performance

Department implements a pay for performance plan where pay raises are awarded based upon certain, specific performance criteria, which are defined and tracked through the performance evaluation process.

The panel indicated that public agencies may choose to follow the lead of the private sector in the granting of rewards tied directly to the achievement of accomplishments measured through the performance appraisal tool.

8. Department lowers hiring standards

Due to lack of qualified personnel department lowers requirement for employees and finds those hired under the new standards no longer meet existing performance criteria. As a result, department is forced to create a new performance evaluation reflecting the new, lower standards.

The panel felt that if this desperate tactic was taken by an agency, it could be necessary to devise a new performance appraisal process with additional detail and control measures built in.

Event Analysis

After collectively agreeing on the above top-ten events, the members of the group voted privately on their opinion as to the likelihood that each event might occur, when it might occur, and what impact it might have, positive or negative, upon the issue if it should occur. The median of those results are depicted in the following chart.

EVENT ANALYSIS – MEDIAN

	Year >0	+5 Years	+10 Years	Impact (+ or -)	Impact (1-5)
Event 1	5	25	50	-	-0.5
Event 2	3.5	22.5	55	+	3
Event 3	5	15	27.5	-	-5
Event 4	1	77.5	100	-	-1.5
Event 5	3	35	60	+	3
Event 6	2.5	40	77.5	+	2
Event 7	5	25	75	+	3
Event 8	1	60	90	-	-5

In the event analysis chart, the first column, labeled Year >0 is the first year in which the NGT panelists believe that the event has any possibility at all of occurring, relative to this year. Therefore, if a column has the number five in it, the panelists believed that the first year the event could occur is five years from now. The next two

columns indicate the panelists' opinion of the possibility that each event will occur five years from now and ten years from now, respectively. The numbers in those two columns are percentages. The last two columns indicate whether the participants believed the event, should it occur, would have a positive or negative impact upon the issue and to what degree on a scale of one to five, one being the least impact.

For example, looking at event 4, 3% at 50 retirement, one can see that the panel felt that the event could occur within the first year, that the probability the event would occur within the first five years was 77.5% and that the event was 100% certain to occur within 10 years. Further, the group felt that the event would have a slightly (-1.5 out of a possible -5) negative impact upon the issue.

Cross Impact Analysis

After tabulation of the groups trend and event estimates, a cross impact analysis was done. A cross impact analysis is a small-group process where the members of the group examine each event and estimate the effect that the event, if it occurred, would have upon each trend, and to what degree. Some, but not all, NGT panelists were used for this process. The following table depicts the results of that analysis.

CROSS – IMPACT ANALYSIS

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10
E1	5	-3	5	-3	5	-2	0	0	3	0
E2	2	5	5	3	3	4	5	0	-5	4
E3	5	5	5	0	0	5	5	4	-5	3
E4	-3	-5	2	0	3	0	5	0	-4	3
E5	5	5	2	0	0	3	5	0	-5	2
E6	0	4	-5	0	0	0	5	2	-5	3

E7	5	5	-5	5	3	4	5	0	-5	4
E8	0	4	-5	0	0	0	5	0	-5	4

The cross-impact analysis chart depicts the group’s collective estimate of the possible degree of impact of each event, if it occurred, upon each trend and whether it is believed that impact will be positive or negative. Panelists used a numerical scale of zero to five to show this.

Reading from left to right across the first row, called E1, tells us that the estimated impact of event one upon trend one is the maximum positive effect, while the estimated impact of event one on trend two would have a negative effect at a level three out of five, and so on. For example, the group felt that event one, POST mandated standard ratings occurred then trend one, the tendency for departments to seek outside input, would be positively affected to the maximum degree.

The significance of this information is that it enables one to see the potential interaction between trends and events and their impact upon performance appraisal. From there, one could attempt to influence the desirable trends and events as well as minimize those which are less desirable. For example, a law enforcement executive, having reviewed the above may decide to encourage POST to mandate standardized performance appraisals of all peace officers in the state. The panel felt that if POST mandated a standardized format, it would have a strong impact on reducing litigation and challenges to the appraisal.

Another interesting note is the frequency with which zeros appear on this chart. For example, trend four, tying pay and promotions to performance appraisals, was thought to be completely unaffected by the possible occurrence of a civilian review

board, massive retirements, a police officer early recruitment program, or even an incident of major civil unrest. Similarly, trend eight, the trend toward increased clarity in performance standards, was not believed to be affected should POST mandate a standard format, a marketing division be created, mass retirements occur, implementation of pay for performance, an early development program is started, or even if the department lowers hiring standards. In both these cases it appears that the group felt the importance of the trend would cause it to continue uninterrupted by pressures exerted by these major events.

There were other cross impacts that the panel believed would have significant impact.

Scenarios

The development of trends and events and the cross impact analysis of the potential interaction between the two, formed the basis for the following scenarios. The scenarios depict three alternative futures. They are not predictions of the future; they are instead, three alternative looks at what the future may hold for the issue of performance appraisal. They are constructed so as to present an optimistic future, a pessimistic future, and a surprise free future.

Scenario 1 An Optimistic Future

“Thank you, Lieutenant” she said as she drove off. Lieutenant Mendoza smiled and nodded kindly. Unknown to both them, all around the City there were others smiling too, not the least of which were the new police commissioner, Jack Wayt, and head of marketing, Kenny Hill. Why is everyone so happy? Because the ongoing evaluation

process (OEP) was finally up and working. Not in 2005 as hoped, in fact almost 10 years later due to Chuck, the constitution thumping labor attorney, and his myriad legal challenges, but never mind that, the good guys had prevailed. OEP was here and it was by any measure, a tremendous success.

What is really exciting is that though they were all pleased with the same system, they were all smiling for different reasons:

Lieutenant Mendoza knew when she flagged him down on his way to lunch, that the audio and video feed streaming into the OEP computer was allowing it to instantly evaluate and record his conduct. As OEP verified the accuracy of his directions, analyzed both his and her voice inflections, and validated cross-relativity between words and body language his performance evaluation was updated – along with his pay. His stock had just risen, quite literally, and he knew it. It felt good to help someone. It felt good to get immediate, accurate feedback in an evaluation. And it felt especially good to get paid for what you contributed rather than just for being there. He was glad that the days of union versus management were behind him and that every employee now came to work with the same goal in mind, to provide the absolute best public service possible – all the time.

Kenny was smiling too. It had taken a long time to convince the department that what they needed was a Sales and Marketing section. “We never had one before”, they said. “I don’t know how any business can run well without one,” he’d answer. And so it went for a long time. They finally began to see the benefits of what he was proposing, and who better to run it, they decided, than Kenny himself. What he put together for them had since grown into one of the largest, and definitely the most influential, divisions within the department. Every single moment of every officer’s day was now analyzed

more than a thousand different ways through the OEP system to evaluate their impact on community service. Nothing else mattered anymore. Period. And that seemed to be just fine with everyone involved. The public was getting unprecedented service – and was willing to pay dearly for it. Officers were pleased to be monetarily rewarded based directly on their personal efforts. Many of them earned salaries far higher than those working for agencies around them – agencies that still felt they knew better than the public what kind of service was needed – agencies who’s associations still fought with management over minor performance evaluation issues.

Commissioner Wayt was probably smiling the biggest of all though. For years he had fought for more frequent evaluations. Through his painstaking efforts, he had incrementally moved his department from annual evaluations to quarterlies, to monthlies, to weeklies. When they started dailies, he thought it just couldn’t get any better. But here he was, sitting back in his chair with his feet up, talking to his tennis partner on the speakerphone as he watched the OEP ratings stream across his computer screen like a stock ticker showing the activities, performance, relative value, and, of course, salaries of each of his officers.

And Chuck. Well, even Chuck was happy. Though he’d pretty much forgotten how to show it after a lifetime of complaining for a living. But as he sat sipping a cocktail on the deck of his Union-built home, looking out at the ocean and the sunset, he reflected on how he initially fought for the police association against the notion that performance evaluations – or mere performance for that matter – should have anything to do with pay. Ultimately he lost that one, but it all worked out for the best, both the association and management were pleased with OEP, and all hours spent fighting over it were billable.

Heck, they built this mansion. As the final rays of sun dipped into the ocean, he let himself dream briefly about what his life might have been like had he not lived it as a frustrated manager trapped in a labor-union attorney's body.

Scenario 2 A Pessimistic Future

He shouldered open the exit door on his way to his car, sending it smashing into the wall behind it and denting both the door handle and the wall in the process. Why wouldn't he? Nobody cared anyway, certainly not him anymore. He busted his tail every day for this place and no one ever said a word. Why should he care? Why should he take care of a stupid door, or anything else around here for that matter? He'd treat them just the way they treat him. Did they even know he made that arrest earlier? Did they even care? Yeah, they probably did, they were probably worried about the arrestee suing them, or that the new cop who had to clear Code-7 to back him might file a grievance. After all, he didn't get a call – it was his own observation that started it. “Why would you do that?” The new guy had asked him. He had given up on trying to answer those kinds of questions.

He got into his car and pointed it toward home. As he drove, his mind - weary from the 16-hour shift and unable to relax knowing he had to be back again in only 5 hours - drifted into a fog. He remembered a time when things were different.

When he first started with the department, things were promising: for him; for his career; and for his department. He had regular meetings with his supervisors, his mentors, and the Captains. Sometimes even with the Chief. Oh well, no matter, they've all long since gone. Right after that “3% at 50” thing passed, they all left. And they took a lot

with them too. Experience, knowledge, maturity, even some wisdom (though he'd have never admitted it then). Maybe worst of all, they even took "3% at 50" with them too. It was eliminated after it nearly bankrupted his department – along with a whole lot of others. Now he was stuck here.

But maybe the most important thing they took with them, he thought, was performance evaluations. Sure he hated them then, everyone did, but now it was different somehow. He missed them. Not the rating so much, but the feedback, the counseling, the setting of standards and goals, the mentoring. He plain old missed someone paying attention to what he was doing.

It wasn't that they were bad guys – his supervisors that is – they were doing the best they could. But as the job force shrunk, hiring standards were lowered, officers and their association continually grieved evaluations, experienced raters retired, and everyone was forced to work overtime just to field the minimum number of units – when they could even manage that – performance evaluations just kind of fell by the wayside.

It was sort of an evolutionary process really. First, they stopped talking so much, he and his supervisors. They just handed him his evaluation and started working on other things while he read it. When he asked questions, the way they answered told him they were preoccupied with other things. Next, they cut down the amount of information in the ratings themselves, every one he got looked just like the one before it – just shorter. And there was less talk – a lot less talk – until finally there was none at all. Not long after that, sometimes he didn't get evaluations at all. "Forgot", they said. Sure, once in a while Bob over in H.R. would catch it; he was pretty sharp, but usually not. Finally, the department decided the evaluations weren't important anymore and changed the rules so that they

were no longer required to be done. Funny thing is, he liked that rule at the time. No evaluation seemed better than a meaningless one, but now he could see the error of their ways. But it seemed like he was the only one who could.

No surprise really, he was the last cop still working who had ever been under the old system. He had tried to explain what they were like to the new guys, but they didn't get it. Goals? Objectives? Feedback? Who needs it? They were all raised under the new system where lawsuits and the media dictated their actions. Police chiefs made no decisions anymore, delegating all their power to city attorneys, and officers did as they pleased until the city got sued and told them not to anymore. But what did they care? There were not enough cops to go around anyway. As long as you stayed off dope and out of jail, your job was there for you.

As he pulled into his driveway at the end of his 2-hour commute, he had his last thought – promotion. What ever happened to his chances for promotion anyway? He was once on the fast track, mentored by the best and knocking down goals and objectives like crazy – a real company guy – motivated and enthusiastic. Now, he was just a malcontent, stuck on talking about how things used to be – at least that's what his supervisors said about him. And no matter how hard he tried, he didn't seem to be able to get these guys to see that he was not talking about how the past used to be, he was talking about what the future could be. They just weren't hearing him.

Scenario 3 A Surprise Free Future

She sat down with the 'Sarge, more than just a little nervous, and not quite sure why. After all, they had hammered out her goals and objectives together, had regular

meetings about her performance, and generally kept each other informed about mutual goings-on, expectations and occurrences. But still, it made her nervous somehow. It was rating time and she always got this way. Maybe it was because it just mattered so much. Special assignments, promotions, pay bonuses – they were all tied to her evaluation. She knew she was doing fine, but it was just too important not to take seriously.

They covered all the categories together: Achievement of goals and objectives, meeting of clearly defined, set standards, peer review, public input (gathered from the Internet, Interactive Cable T.V, and myriad other sources). There were no surprises really. Thanks to the regular performance and expectation meetings they had, there hardly ever were. The new rating process was a snap. She knew exactly what was expected, whether or not she was achieving expectations, and how well she stacked up against others.

This time there was a little surprise too. Her promotability rating was the highest ever. It should have come as no great surprise really. After all, she had listed promotion as one of her goals over two years ago. She would have probably seen it coming if she hadn't been so humble and self-critical. Once the department declared it a shared goal, partially through the rating process she, her sergeant, her assigned mentor, and a host of others slowly helped her navigate the career path toward achieving it.

She wasn't there yet, and even under the new system there was no guarantee for promotion built in here. But it sure was a far cry from the old way.

There were really no surprises on the sergeant's side of the table either. As one of the first "products" of the new peace officer development program, he had expected that she'd do well. Heck, it was almost impossible for officers to fail anymore. What with the

constant feedback from public, peers, supervisors, virtually anyone with an interest, success was almost automatic.

Sometimes there were criticisms and areas where improvements could be made. But with the constant feedback loop created by the ongoing evaluation system, it was much more positive than it used to be. It seemed that the focus was on the positive aspects of performance and matching employees to the right tasks rather than the old way of highlighting negatives and trying to fit “square pegs into round holes”.

All in all it was still an imperfect system, but a better one – a good one. The constant communication and training kept on making it better and better though. This was truly a better place to work than it was five years ago. And the revised performance evaluation system had an awful lot to do with that.

These scenarios conclude the futures study portion of the project. The intention is that having looked backward, through the historical perspective of performance appraisal, and looking forward, through a futures study, there is a solid base of knowledge upon which to base future decisions. Once the leader has envisioned the desired future, it is time to begin making the change. The following chapter, strategic planning and transition management, is intended to be a roadmap designed to assist the leader in determining the future of the performance appraisal system.

CHAPTER 3

Strategic Plan and Transition Management

Strategic Plan

The strategic planning process is the phase where the agency defines its future. The degree to which the future performance appraisal system of an individual agency reflects the more positive points found within the future scenarios may be largely influenced at this point. Giving consideration to future scenarios such as those depicted here can assist the individual in planning an agency's future.

This section is derived largely from a presentation made by Tom Estensen of Organizational Effectiveness Consulting. Estensen recommends that before beginning the strategic planning process, planners should consider the following questions:

1. Why are we doing this?
2. What is our expected outcome?
3. What is our planning horizon?
4. How long should the process take?
5. Who should be involved?
6. What resources are available?
7. What should our process look like?

It is this plan which suggests that agencies form a volunteer committee of interested, and affected individuals representing a cross-section of all divisions, ranks, and points of view, to work together on the strategic planning process. The idea is to get a lot of

“fingerprints on the finished product”, a metaphor of Estensen’s that is intended to emphasize the importance of involving employees in the development process. This is intended to both develop a better product as well as facilitate its implementation once completed.

In order to design an effective performance evaluation tool, agencies would be well advised to follow a strategic planning process such as the one outlined by Estensen. He defined a strategic plan as, “A structured approach, sometimes rational and other times not, of bringing anticipations of the future to bear on today’s decision”. Estensen also provided a model for the development of a strategic plan, which follows.

Define the future is the first step. This means the decision maker, having seen a need for a change in how performance evaluations are done, develops a focused vision of what needs to be accomplished and shares it with others. The more clearly this vision is communicated, the more likely the finished product is to be on target.

Assessment is next. The current state of the performance evaluations must be assessed from a variety of points of view.

Current business definition is the basic self-assessment - how are we doing?

Internal assessment, the agency queries its own members in order to learn as much as possible about the current state of performance evaluations. How does the agency currently view its own process?

External assessment the agency seeks an external assessment from sources outside of its own ranks – its customers. How do those outside the agency view its current process?

Stakeholder assessment, the agency identifies all sources, which are either affected

by, or can potentially affect, the performance evaluation process. They need not be familiar with, or interested in, the process in order to be stakeholders. Many of those will not be members of the agency itself, but some will.

Mission, Vision and Value Statements should be developed, in a narrow context specifically tailored to define the desired outcome of the committee's efforts. Agency missions and vision statements should be taken into account, so they are not strayed from, but the mission, vision and value statements designed at this stage are for the purpose of keeping the committee's efforts focused and on track. The mission statement defines the work of the committee. The vision statement gives a snapshot of what they want to become. The value statement describes principles that guide attitudes, decisions and actions. The prominent posting of these defining statements may assist the committee in staying on course throughout its project.

Develop Key Strategies. The committee defines a number of specific steps that it will follow in order to accomplish its goal. This may be a point for the committee to subdivide into smaller groups and work individually on these strategies, reporting on progress to the larger group at regular meetings.

An organization may be able to better prepare itself for the future by refining the existing performance appraisal process or creating a new one, following the steps outlined above. To summarize the process, once an agency determines there is a need to improve the performance appraisal process, the organizational leader should meet with key decision makers and clearly describe the motivation for the change and the intended results. Those decision makers should then begin the assessment process from both internal and external views to clearly define the current situation. All stakeholders are

then identified in order to insure that their views have not been overlooked and finally, a mission, vision and value statements should be created. These will provide the impetus for key strategies to be followed by the work groups who will orchestrate the changes, ideally following a transition management model such as the one below.

Transition Management

If the above strategic plan is well executed, the transition management plan should go smoothly, if it is even necessary at all. Experience tells us otherwise. This is largely what Professor Cary Simon of the Naval Postgraduate School said when he wrote:

- Reasonable People do not do Reasonable Things;
- Strategy Implementation does not automatically follow Strategy Formulation;
- Treatment of planning and Implementation as two Sequential/Independent Processes is Artificial;
- Resistance to Change is not Confined to Introduction of Strategic Planning

Professor Simon, during his presentation on transition management to the Command College, stated that resistance to change is imbedded deeply in the very makeup of people's beings. It is basic survival instinct for us to resist change.

Transition management is essentially change management, or managing the effects and impacts of change in the workplace. Since the workplace is really nothing more than a collection of people who will naturally resist change, change must be managed. The possibility of change brings about uncertainty, anticipation of uncertainty creates

concerns about risk, which can bring about fear. Fear is closely connected to feelings of being in danger, and danger, by its very nature is something to be avoided in order to survive.

Typically, people are resistant to change to their circumstances at work, even when they are not content with those circumstances to begin with, because they fear that the change may place them in danger. Therefore, Simon recommends a highly integrated approach to transition management, one where the stakeholders' views are solicited and carefully considered.

With his "Organizational Systems Framework" model, Simon provides us with a context within which to minimize resistance to change. The framework is essentially a constant feedback loop which is made up of inputs, throughputs, and results. This framework is broadly applicable to any number of situations, including the issue at hand, and the reader should have no difficulty inserting the details of a performance appraisal revision process into this framework. The steps are described in more detail below:

Inputs: Inputs have been divided into three smaller sub-sets, Environmental/Context, and System Direction. The input stage of the framework primarily has to do with understanding what is causing the change to be made. It is important to take time to understand the factors at work in this phase and to share them with employees, as this is the first step toward gaining acceptance of change.

Environmental/Context: These are the inputs that are external to the system and put the reason for the change into context. Is the change motivated by Politics? Economics? Social or Technological reasons?

System Direction: Is the change brought about by Mandate? Values? Mission?
Strategic Issues? Vision? Goals? Strategies?

Design Factors: This is the throughput stage, the stage where the actual implementation of the change is planned step by step. The design factors can be analyzed within five sub-categories, Tasks/Jobs, Technology, Structure, People, and Process/Subsystems. These are discussed below:

Tasks/Jobs: What are the basic tasks and how are they accomplished?

Technology: What is the condition of the physical facilities and equipment, what changes will need to be made?

Structure: What are the basic groupings of activities and people?

People: Who are the people? What are their motives, expectations, and mindsets?
What are their knowledge, skills and abilities?

Process/Subsystems:

- Financial management, measurement and controls. How will people be held accountable?
- Human resource management. Do we have the people we need? How do we train the people to do what is needed? What will be formally rewarded and how?
- Communication planning and decision making. How will we communicate?
How do we plan? How do we make a decision?

Results are the final stage in the feedback loop. This is the stage where the group anticipates what the impact of their change is likely to be upon the organization. This is done by asking the following questions:

Culture: What are the prevalent norms and values in the existing system? How is conflict managed? What are the informal patterns of interaction? Are there subcultures? Does the culture work for or against the change? Does the culture fit the larger environment?

Outputs: What does the system offer in terms of goods/services? How will performance (of project) be measured?

The consideration and constant feedback through the input–throughput–results loop of the above categories can be useful to the group in planning its project in order to minimize the negative impacts of change.

One may note there are obvious similarities between the transition management strategy and the strategic planning process. This exemplifies Simon’s statement that they cannot be treated separately. Groups assigned to develop performance evaluations for their agencies would be wise to take both models into account when embarking on their project.

The basis behind the need for transition management is the fact that people will resist change, even when the change is intended to improve their conditions. This has direct application to the issue of performance appraisal in that though most are not satisfied with their current appraisals, they may not take willingly to a revised appraisal out of fear that it may be worse. The key to reducing this fear and increasing the chances that the new appraisal is both improved and widely accepted, is in following the transition management steps outlined above, primarily inputs, throughputs and results. Managers desiring to improve their performance appraisal systems need to look at them from those

points of view. Changing an organization, even in such a minor fashion as improving the performance appraisal system, has implications on leadership.

CHAPTER 4

Implications on Leadership

There are basically two important implications on leadership relative to performance appraisal. First, and probably most significant, is that the performance appraisal process within any given organization, is as important, or unimportant, as the leaders within that organization make it. Leaders may emphasize the importance of performance appraisal in a variety of ways. For example, by requiring that they be submitted at regular intervals, the most common interval encountered being annually. By creating an administrative tracking mechanism to alert superiors to forms which are overdue, or not submitted at all. By ensuring forms are carefully reviewed, both for content and accuracy. Or by making certain that appraisals serve some useful purpose, such as pay bonuses, preference for lateral reassignments and promotions, training, etc.

Next is the fact that the final written form that the appraisal takes is far less vital to an effective appraisal process than is the content of the appraisal itself and the method, by which the appraisal is administered. Leaders must stress the importance of accurate, complete performance appraisals, and take care to ensure that supervisors who complete them are adequately trained and supervised along the way. Supervisors must be trained in the common performance appraisal pitfalls in order to avoid them when appraising their personnel. In summary, leaders must refuse to accept performance appraisals that do not meet their standards. Another author put it best when he wrote, "Management cannot

tolerate unprofessional, “uninvolved” appraisals. Inadequate appraisals must be returned to the supervisor. Training should immediately be provided for the evaluator which should include instruction on proper format and content” (Templeton, 1995). This is the responsibility of, and the challenge for department leaders.

Budgetary Implications

The budgetary implications to implement the recommendations are negligible. The cost of conducting a series of meetings, workshops and training sessions, could likely be absorbed in any existing budget. Once agency leaders acknowledge the importance of the performance appraisal process, the budget issue should be seen as minor and easily resolved. If budget restrictions are a problem, agency heads should weigh the potential costs of an ineffective appraisal process; grievances, discipline, and general lack of direction, against the potential gains of a more effective one; improved supervisor/management congruence and greater achievement of department goals.

Recommendations

Though the rating form itself has been identified as possibly being one of the items least likely to affect the performance appraisal process, it is still recommended that leaders have their agencies go through a process of reviewing their current forms. Through this review process several objectives might be achieved. The mere fact that the review is called for, and is supported by, leadership demonstrates the importance of the appraisals and shows the top-down support necessary to accomplish virtually any important goal. The process of working through the review and possible revision of the

existing form may also have other positive spin-off results as well. Questions likely to arise from the review will most likely include; Why is it necessary to do these appraisals? How often should they be done? What are we trying to achieve? What is the job of a peace officer? How can we measure results? How will we assure accuracy and honesty in the appraisals? What will we do with the results?

The process of bringing together a cross section of the organization and having them sit down and work together on questions such as these may bring previously unknown differences out in the open and bring individuals of divergent ranks and assignments closer together on how one another view these issues. The group, though assigned to simply review a form, may well end up looking at the overall process, and suggesting thoughtful improvements to other areas of the process, such as regular supervisor-subordinate performance review meetings, and mandatory, recurring training for supervisors in how to complete performance appraisal forms.

Follow Up Activities

Though it would likely be excessively time-consuming and possibly even counter-productive to frequently revise the performance appraisal process, in order to realize the full potential of the benefits outlined above, it may still be desirable to revisit the process occasionally. Ideally, agencies would have a committee go through an abbreviated review process. This would serve to reinforce leadership commitment to the importance of the appraisal, bring attention to existing flaws, and flush out deviation from the intended process, early enough to avoid large scale problems.

Conclusion

This project identified three characteristics of peace officer performance appraisal. The first is that they are widely used, important, and therefore apparently essential to the function of a modern day law enforcement agency. Second is that most agencies are not satisfied with the performance appraisals that they generate and as a result they use the appraisals for very little, if any useful purposes. Third, is that peace officer performance appraisals are apparently here to stay. None of the facts, trends, or events, identified would hint at either the abolition of performance appraisals of peace officers altogether, or drastic modification of how they are done.

Based on these characteristics, it seems fair to say then that peace officer performance appraisals in medium sized agencies in the year 2005 will look very much, if not exactly, like they do today. There is no compelling reason or desire to change.

Nevertheless, it was suggested that future leaders of California law enforcement should place a new, higher emphasis on the importance of peace officer performance evaluations. Captain Ross Swope of the Metropolitan Police Department, Washington D.C. made the observation that “The major cause in the lack of integrity in American peace officers is mediocrity.” The Los Angeles Police Department wrote in its “Rampart Area Corruption Incident” report that it found “. . . Mediocrity was alive and well in Rampart . . .” and that they found, “mediocrity threatening to engulf many of our other workplace environments as well.”

Mediocrity might be a word that well describes the attitude with which many law enforcement agencies have approached their peace officer performance appraisals. It is time for leaders to move away from mediocrity in their organizations in general and,

specifically, one place to begin is in devoting sufficient resources toward developing and maintaining honest, accurate, useful, performance appraisals on their officers. The discussions concerning performance appraisals, their pitfalls, the likely trends and events which may affect them in the future, the scenarios, the strategic plan and the transition management; will serve to motivate leaders as well as provide a framework for creating an effective performance appraisal system in the future.

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