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Pay for Performance

By
GIL CANDELARIA

One question heard frequently throughout the law enforcement community is, "Are performance appraisals really necessary?" For years, police departments struggled to perfect their own performance appraisal systems; however, it seemed that the harder many departments worked to make a system meet their needs, the more they found wrong with the system. Clearly, good performance appraisal systems do not make a good department, but a bad system can be crippling and result in inconsistent salary increases, employee dissatisfaction, low morale, high turnover, and possible discrimination charges.

This article suggests ways that law enforcement agencies can review their current performance appraisal systems. It also discusses the importance of employee training in the area of performance appraisals and provides an overview of the newly instituted pay for performance system of the Sunnyvale, California, Department of Public Safety.

Rating Performance Appraisal Systems

Departments often overlook several issues when they examine their current performance appraisal systems. These issues include the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system, whether employees know what management expects of them, and how well employees

perform throughout the year. In addition, departments often fail to consider whether their systems allow for correcting or improving performance and provide rewards for good performance. Taking these issues into account can reveal both strengths and weaknesses in a

department's performance appraisal system.

Gauging how fully a performance appraisal system meets the following requirements can also be a measure of a system's effectiveness. First, the system must fit the organization. Forms, procedures, and the



frequency of review must depend on the size of the organization and on the participants' training and sophistication. Second, all programs should clarify what management expects of employees and should measure employees' current performance. Programs should also instruct employees as to how they can improve their performance, if necessary. Finally, performance evaluations must be thorough and provide an unbiased evaluation of an individual's performance.

In order for a performance appraisal system to be effective, everyone involved must understand it. Prior to the performance evaluation, rating officials should explain all objectives and procedures to each employee. These procedures should also be in writing and readily available for reference. All participants must believe that the system is fair and worthwhile. If, for example, the participants view the performance appraisal system as a tool for con-

sideration during promotional or salary review, then it may be viewed as a high priority that accomplishes its intended objective.

Law enforcement departments can also ensure a system's effectiveness by requiring all rating officials and managers to have the necessary skills to develop standards of performance, conduct appraisal interviews, and help subordinates develop a performance improvement plan. Departments should also establish controls and guidelines. If managers have the skills, motivation, and understanding, they should perform as expected. However, well-defined controls must exist in case a manager fails to complete any assigned appraisals.¹

Employee Performance Appraisal Training

In addition to the responsibilities placed on managers during the performance appraisal process, departments should also thoroughly

train employees for their roles in the performance appraisal system. Managers may not have given much thought to this concept, but training employees in the performance appraisal process will help them to assume more control over and responsibility for their own performance.

Managers and supervisors well-accustomed to carrying out performance appraisals may find it difficult to accept the idea of training subordinates to participate actively in the performance appraisal process. However, training employees for their role in performance appraisal has two major benefits. First, it helps to manage performance, and second, it provides a legal safeguard against employees who might otherwise become disgruntled or seek a court battle.

If management involves employees in the appraisal system from the beginning and informs them of their progress or lack of it, then employees may analyze their own work more accurately and direct less anger or frustration toward their supervisors or the organization. Employees who receive training also make the appraisal process easier and more productive for their managers and the organization. They require far less supervision and tend to make greater contributions to the organization.²

There are many additional benefits of involving employees more actively in performance appraisals. These benefits include higher job satisfaction, lower turnover, and increased time for managers to pursue other responsibilities.



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”

Captain Candelaria is a member of the Sunnyvale, California, Department of Public Safety.

The Sunnyvale Performance Appraisal System

In the mid-1970s, Sunnyvale, California, made a concerted effort to develop a performance appraisal system that would encompass employees involved in every major city function. To this end, the city developed the "Planning and Management System," which demonstrates to citizens, the city council, and program managers how the Sunnyvale government operates. Sunnyvale designed the system to bring quality service to citizens and to keep the city focused on addressing long-term goals.

While California State law requires most cities to prepare a general plan outlining the direction for their community, few, if any, use the document as a foundation for all city planning and budgetary action.³ In Sunnyvale, however, the general plan lays the foundation for the planning and management system.

The general plan consists of seven elements, including transportation, community development, socio-economic concerns, planning, culture, management, and environmental/management public safety. All seven components focus on service to the community.

The Program Manager

In order to meet the general plan's requirements and provide the best service possible, the role of the program manager becomes essential. Ultimately, program managers bear the responsibility for meeting the service objectives assigned to their programs. Each service objective has one or more performance indicators or standards, which serve

to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the service being provided. Service objectives reflect the policy statements and goals of the city's general plan.

Daily, managers must make decisions as to the best methods for providing services to the community given the budget restrictions. In order to do this, program

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managers prepare annual management achievement plans. These plans outline their assignments for the upcoming year, according to legislative priorities set by the city council and service objectives as reflected in the budget. At the end of the fiscal year, the department audits these managers, based on the successful completion of their assignments.

Service objectives play a critical part in the audits. Each month, program managers examine reports that highlight the unit cost and proficiency of a particular service. This information helps the department to determine how well it met a service objective and allows for quantitative assessment of the city's overall level of providing quality service to its residents.

Management Achievement Plan Reports

Management achievement plan reports (MAPR) document the achievements set forth in the management achievement plan. At the end of each fiscal year (FY), the program managers prepare these reports, based on established budget objectives and other job responsibilities. These reports provide the basis for each department director's performance evaluation by the city manager and city council.

The reports also provide program managers with the statistical data on their unit's production that allow them to conduct a comprehensive analysis of their program performance. For example, in FY 91, the Sunnyvale Public Safety Department's patrol units responded to 8,487 emergency calls, 47 more than FY 89-90, without a police vehicle-related accident. Eight thousand emergency calls had been projected. Additionally, the department still achieved a response time of 5.57 minutes per call (the plan projected a 6-minute response time), with staffing at minimum levels during the majority of the year.

Pay for Performance

However, the Sunnyvale program does not stop here. It goes on to offer bonuses and salary increases under its pay-for-performance program. Under this program, it is possible for managers to earn increases in pay if all objectives in their respective programs are exceeded. Exemplary performance could mean a significant increase in pay.

The pay-for-performance plan transcends traditional merit systems of "step" pay increases with a program that is tied directly to whether the policies of the city council are carried out. The basis for this program is that if managers' pay is tied

directly to the success of council-mandated policy, managers will be more likely to follow the course that the city council desires.⁴

Based on the MAPRs submitted by each manager and personal knowledge of the manager's per-

formance, department directors audit the managers they supervise. The city manager then audits department directors and approves or changes audits for managers throughout the city.

The auditor prepares a narrative discussing each manager's performance, also based on the MAPRs, and assigns a descriptive and numerical rating corresponding to each section of the management achievement plan. The auditor rates each section of the MAPR and then applies the weighing factors to each part of the management achievement plan to arrive at a total score. The composite scores, which determine the manager's compensation for the coming year, are designed as follows:

| | |
|------------------------|------------|
| Outstanding..... | 95-100 |
| Superior..... | 85-90 |
| Good..... | 75-80 |
| Marginal..... | 70-74 |
| Needs Improvement..... | 64-69 |
| Unsatisfactory..... | 63 or less |

The audit determination for each part of the rating criteria is weighed either at the high or low end of the scale. For example, outstanding is either 95 or 100; good is either 75 or 80. Once the city manager signs the MAPR, the audit and rating become final, and salary and any performance bonuses are set in accordance with the management compensation plan.⁵

Managers who receive ratings of 75 or more earn merit salary increases of 5 percent or advancement to their respective control point (CP), whichever is less. The control point is an employee's maximum

Suggestions for Employees During the Performance Appraisal Process:

- Anticipate and be prepared for your role in the appraisal interview
- Know what managers expect of you
- Document your personal strengths and weaknesses before the appraisal interview
- Recognize negative behaviors, such as not voicing disagreement, being prepared for the worst, never admitting mistakes, keeping a low profile, trying to "snow" the boss, etc.
- Be willing to accept help when it comes to behavior or performance changes
- Ask pertinent questions during the appraisal process
- Avoid overly defensive behavior during the appraisal interview.

(Source: Beverly Kaye and Shelley Krantz, "Preparing Employees: The Missing Link in Performance Appraisal Training," *Personnel*, May/June 1982, pp 23-29.

salary level. In addition, managers with ratings of 83 or higher receive a performance bonus. (See table 1.) A performance bonus results in advancement toward a control point in the salary range. Managers whose current salaries are at the control point receive the entire bonus in cash.

Managers with ratings of 70-74 do not receive a merit increase, a performance bonus, or a performance sanction. Salaries for these managers remain unchanged. Managers who receive ratings of 64-69 have their salaries reduced by 2.5 percent. For those managers with ratings of 63 or less, the department lowers their salaries by 5 percent.

Conclusion

The manner in which an organization conducts its performance appraisals reflects its management philosophy. In order for a department to obtain the best results from its performance appraisal system, supervisors must be fair, impartial, and possess a sincere desire to help employees grow and learn. As such, performance appraisals can either improve employee behavior or become a source of irritation.

Therefore, any organization that considers developing or implementing a pay-for-performance program must realize that it is not an easy, short-term process, but one that requires the cooperation of everyone involved. Additionally, any pay-for-performance appraisal system must also provide employees who perform below standards with an opportunity to improve their performance.

A periodic performance appraisal system should be construc-

tive, but candid. Ultimately, the system may become the best available method for improving not only the relationship between management and employees but also encouraging employees to fulfill their personal career goals. ♦

Endnotes

¹ Donald L. Kirkpatrick, "Two Ways to Evaluate Your Performance Appraisal System,"

Training and Development Journal, vol. 38, No. 8, August 1984, pp. 38-40.

² Beverly L. Kay and Shelley Krantz, "Preparing Employees: The Missing Link in Performance Appraisal Training," *Personnel*, May/June 1982, pp 23-29.

³ *West's Annotated California Codes*, Government Code Section 65300, copyright 1983, p. 251, vol. 363, 1991, Cumulative Pocket Part.

⁴ City of Sunnyvale, California, *Administrative Manual*, 1990, page XI.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Table 1

Performance Pay Plan*

| Rating | Salary Increase% | Bonus% |
|-----------------|------------------|--------|
| 100 points..... | +5.0%..... | +10.0% |
| 98-99..... | +5.0%..... | +9.0% |
| 96-97..... | +5.0%..... | +8.0% |
| 94-95..... | +5.0%..... | +7.0% |
| 92-93..... | +5.0%..... | +6.0% |
| 90-91..... | +5.0%..... | +5.0% |
| 88-89..... | +5.0%..... | +4.0% |
| 86-87..... | +5.0%..... | +3.0% |
| 83-85..... | +5.0%..... | +2.0% |
| 75-82..... | +5.0%..... | 0% |
| 70-74..... | 0%..... | 0% |

| Performance Sanction | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Rating | Salary Reduction% | Bonus% |
| 64-69..... | -2.5%..... | None |
| 63 or less..... | -5.0%..... | None |

(* Chart depicts the dependent relationship between an employee's performance rating and the increase or reduction of salary in one police department's typical performance pay plan.)