



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Avoiding Pitfalls

The performance review is a tool that helps development of the employee being rated. However, there could be some pitfalls like attitudinal problems. Criteria like: "Attitude," "Ability to Work Under Stressful Conditions," "Personal Characteristics," "Self-Confidence," "Discretion," "Maintains an Attitude of Optimism and Enthusiasm," and "Entrepreneurial Demeanor" appearing on appraisal forms are often a cause for concern.

Part of the problem with these "standards" is the definition. The psychological definition of 'Attitude' for instance, is: "An enduring, learned predisposition to behave consistently toward a given class of objects; a persistent mental state of readiness to react to certain objects, not as they are but as they are conceived to be."

However, lay-folk would consider attitude as a pattern of behavior, which reveals how an individual views a situation or another person. Interestingly, attitudes can change. Very few managers really rate anyone on "attitude" since the rating has to be based on numerous subjective personal criteria.

The primary purpose of a performance evaluation is to help in the development of the employee being rated. As we get away from objective factors in performance, the review system itself becomes even more personal and less quantitative. For a review to be meaningful to the employee and to meet the needs of both the employee and employer, it has to be measurable.

A successful performance appraisal addresses not only the past and the present but also the future issues. This three-pronged approach is referred to as RAP - Review the past, Analyze the present, Plan the future.

Review the past. Reviewing the past year should consume about 25% of the performance appraisal and is usually accomplished with the actual written review of the employee's performance and achievements during the past year.

Analyze the present. This entails a discussion on the department and the organization's status and the employee's role in both and should consume about 15% of the performance appraisal.

Plan the future. Planning for the future should comprise 60% of the performance appraisal. Employees should be made aware of where the department might be this time next year and in years to come and where each employee would fit in that scheme.