

Writing effective performance appraisals:
a practical seminar

by

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INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisals are a fact of life in the business and institutional world. Most large organizations use them. Once an organization grows beyond a couple dozen people, that is beyond the number of workers managers can easily keep track of in their heads, performance appraisals become necessary to serve as a "corporate memory."

Performance appraisals serve as a record of a worker's abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and potential. This record should clearly state all of the worker's present duties, the manner in which they were performed, especially noteworthy achievements, efforts at self-improvement, any areas that need to be worked on, and some sort of recommendation for future action to be taken with the worker.

Preferably, the appraisal should be written by the worker's immediate supervisor, but in any case, the writer should be someone who has a clear understanding of what the worker is supposed to be doing, and who has been able to observe the worker in actual working conditions on numerous occasions. In some organizations, workers write a self-evaluation which managers use to understand how workers feel about their own performance. The insight gained is useful in discovering both problem areas and examples of exceptional performance which the manager may not have known about.

Appraisals should be kept as part of a permanent file on the worker so decisions can be reached regarding future promotions, special assignments, or disciplinary actions long after the worker's present supervisor has moved on. Without this permanent file, an accurate assessment of the worker's past performance over any length of time would be sketchy at best.

If the organization has a policy allowing workers access to their appraisals, workers should be allowed to make a copy of their document for their own records and to show it to future prospective employers.

Ideally, performance appraisals should be written with an eye to improving the ratee. Most organizations have a lot of time and money invested in each worker's training. It seems self-evident that it would be in an organization's best interest to ensure that each worker has the opportunity to grow and become the best he or she can be. The appraisal, again, should be a record of that growth.

My Interest in Performance Appraisals

I became interested in teaching supervisors how to write more effective performance appraisals while I was an officer in the U.S. Air Force, in the administration career field. In several of my duty positions, I was responsible for the quality and timeliness of performance appraisals for my organization. I quickly discovered that many supervisors, some with years of experience, had little idea of how to write appraisals that were accurate reflections of the performances of their subordinates--whether those performances were good, bad, or average.

I also discovered that some organizations, both military and civilian, have manuals and seminars designed to teach supervisors how to produce performance appraisals using their system. However, what is often taught is merely how to fill in the blanks and what information goes where. Usually, manuals and seminars do not teach supervisors how to write so that both the subordinates and the people in charge of the organization get a clear, specific

picture of how ratees have performed. As a result, subordinates can become confused about how they stand within their organization--they think they are doing fine because their appraisals do not emphasize, or maybe even address, problem areas. And the managers in charge of promotions and awards may not recognize people who are doing an outstanding job because their appraisals portray them as average workers.

My goal with this thesis is not to come up with the perfect performance appraisal system, but to show how managers can work within an existing system to produce the most accurate appraisals they can. I think it is important for supervisors to be able to write performance appraisals that are honest without offending ratees or putting them on the defensive, yet are useful to management. Appraisals should be written so that important information can be quickly and easily assimilated, no matter what the form itself looks like.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how performance appraisals could be written so that the users (supervisors, other managers, and the ratees themselves) can have a more complete understanding of the ratee's performance during the past rating period. Users need to be able to see any changes in the quality of the ratee's performance and any areas that the ratee still needs to work on. To accomplish this purpose, I sent out a survey to businesses in the Des Moines and Ames areas which asked about current performance appraisal practices. Using the information from the survey and other research, I conducted a seminar on how to write more effective performance appraisals for one of the organizations that responded to the survey .

Performance Appraisals in Business Writing Courses

With all the importance attached to performance appraisals by businesses and institutions, it is surprising that so little time is spent in business and technical writing courses teaching the managers of tomorrow how to write them (Ewald and McCallum 46). A quick look through the tables of contents and indexes of most texts used in business and technical writing courses will show that most do not even mention performance appraisals, and those that do treat them very generally. They say that appraisals exist and that the reader may have to write one some day, but beyond suggesting a "bad news letter" approach for communicating unfavorable observations, appraisals are not significantly addressed.

In the business world after graduation, new supervisors will be called upon to occupy positions of authority and will be responsible for preparing performance appraisals that will have a direct effect on their subordinates' lives. Before having to write one, if they are lucky, these new supervisors may pick up some principles of writing effective appraisals when they have appraisals written on them, or their supervisors may be willing to share their expertise. More likely, these new people will have to write with very little idea of how to portray their subordinates as they deserve: as efficient workers with great potential; or as struggling incompetents, undeserving of promotion; or as something in between.

Variations in Appraisal Formats

Performance appraisal systems differ greatly. Variations range from forms with only numerical or adjective blocks to check, to a blank sheet of paper on

which observations are to be written. Depending on the philosophy of management, the ratee may be an active participant in making up criteria and deciding how he or she is rated, or, on the other end of the scale, may never see the appraisal instrument, even after it is completed.

Within these extremes lie a vast number of systems. Many systems use forms that have blocks to check and space to write comments in, with some sort of overall rating that can be seen at a glance. Many have the ratee read and sign understanding of the document's contents, while in some cases the ratee sees the rating only after it is a matter of record. Of course, informally, the supervisor may disregard a strictly controlled system and have the ratee directly involved in writing the appraisal, but new supervisors should not circumvent their system like that.

Another area where systems vary is in whether ratings are true reflections of performance, if the system has artificial controls placed on it, such as limiting the number of workers able to get the highest rating; or if the system is "inflated," that is, if the vast majority of ratees receive very high ratings. How a particular system works is a political question which new supervisors need to find out from older supervisors within the organization. Practices in this area vary widely and are generally not publicized outside the organization, so it would be impossible to deal with them in this document.

No matter how an organization's particular system works, as long as there is space for written comments, there are strategies writers can use to improve the quality and accuracy of the textual picture they produce. The purpose of this thesis is to discover some of those writing strategies and communicate them to supervisors in an actual business setting.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As mentioned in the introduction, not many articles exist that directly address writing more effective performance appraisals. Fortunately, many of the principles that apply to producing clear, concise business and technical documents also have direct application to performance appraisal writing. Further, because this thesis deals with the entire appraisal writing process, I was able to use a number of articles and other material from the business management community.

In this chapter I will examine some of the sources I used as background material for my thesis. The chapter has two sections, one dealing with material I used to help me create my survey, and the other material that was helpful for my seminar.

The Survey

The vast majority of survey questions originated as a result of my trying to figure out how I could discover what issues the organizations to which I was sending the survey were concerned about and how their appraisal systems operated. However, a few articles helped draw my interest along certain lines. One part of the survey in which articles helped guide me was the part that asked about how involved the ratee is in the appraisal process.

Ratee involvement questions

Dan Brown's article, "Development of Performance Standards: A Practical Guide," strongly advocates using the "management by objective" method for

rating subordinates. While the effectiveness of management by objective is being hotly debated, the article did serve to raise questions about current practices in employee involvement with setting goals, collecting data, and writing self-appraisals. The concept of subordinates being involved in preparing their own appraisals was foreign to me, so I was intrigued. The article helped me see the usefulness of rater and ratee cooperating on setting goals that both think reasonable, so I included a question to see how prevalent the practice is.

In contrast to Brown, Ed Yager comes out strongly against relying too heavily on management by objective methods, but still advocates close, even daily, communication between rater and ratee to ensure both know exactly where the other "is at" concerning goals, progress, and problems. Again, Yager piqued my interest about how widespread this close cooperation is.

"Inflation" questions

Inflation is the practice of giving a disproportionately large percentage of ratees very high ratings. Reasons for inflation range from not wanting to confront employees with less than outstanding performance, to actively trying to enhance employees' records to make oneself look better. Inflation is a problem that I am quite familiar with. The appraisal system I worked with in the Air Force was so inflated, that over ninety percent of officers received the highest rating (of six). With inflation like that, the written picture becomes extremely important to separate the truly outstanding from the average.

The Air Force briefly experimented with a "controlled" rating system from 1974 to 1978. It was controlled in that the top overall rating was limited to only twenty-two percent of the officer corps and the second highest rating was limited

to twenty-eight percent. The remaining fifty percent of officers had to fall in the lower three ratings. This system was applied on a local level to each unit within the Air Force. Each commander had to decide which of his or her people fell into each category, regardless of whether or not there actually was such a distribution of ability. The result was tremendous bitterness. In this "zero-sum game," anytime someone "won" and received a higher rating, someone had to "lose" and receive a lower rating. Among other negative effects, it stifled cooperation, which is essential in a military unit, caused resentment toward those who received the higher ratings, and created ill-feelings toward supervisors among those who received lower ratings. Overall, it provided a lesson as a system to avoid (McBriarty 425-432).

While I was familiar with the controlled system and had actually discussed it with older officers, I was not aware of the seriously detrimental effects it had on morale and everyday effectiveness. Consequently, if the organization I would give my seminar for had a controlled or inflated appraisal system, I wanted to know about it because it would radically affect the way performance appraisals are written within that organization.

The Seminar

I consulted a number of sources at every step while I was putting together my seminar. To order my discussion of sources, I will follow the same organization I used in the seminar.

Steps in the Writing Process

The most useful article in this section, as far as organization goes, was Shelley Krantz's "Five Steps to Making Performance Appraisal Writing Easier." The five steps are: allow plenty of time to write the appraisal, record examples of behavior as they happen, organize notes before starting to write, write out a quick first draft, and edit the final draft to fit the organization's form (8-10).

I used the same ideas, but shuffled the second step into first position. It fits there chronologically because managers need to take notes long before even thinking about starting to write. Otherwise, Krantz's ideas are sound and very helpful. Along with organizational material, she gives a few suggestions about writing on a more specific level, while it was helpful, that information is covered in more detail in other articles.

Three sources, Michael Smith's "Putting Their Performance in Writing" and two videotapes, Documenting Discipline and the Legal Side of Evaluating Performance, both produced by American Media, proved very useful in presenting reasons for keeping careful records of employee performance, particularly when that performance is unsatisfactory. They all gave good outlines of what should be included in an incident file, and how and why they should be used. In particular, their advice concerning how information recorded should be as specific as possible and be strictly job-related was quite interesting and worthwhile. All three sources made it clear that if one ever has to defend one's personnel actions (like in court), a detailed incident file can make all the difference.

Clear writing

I got the overwhelming majority of my information on clear, specific writing from three books, Joseph Williams' Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace, Martha Kolln's Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effect, and William Vande Kopple's Clear and Coherent Prose. All three were valuable in one or more of the areas in which I make suggestions for clarity. Williams was particularly good because he touched on all the problems I addressed and gave good guidelines to follow. Vande Kopple was most helpful in conciseness, while Kolln helped with end focus and action verbs.

In addition to those three books, I was able to consult several readability handouts that I had gotten in various classes. These were valuable when it came time for me to write a few examples of my own for my seminar handouts.

As mentioned earlier, while very little has been done specifically about writing for performance appraisals, almost all the advice directed towards readability and concision applied directly to it. Because raters are writing on a form which has a limited amount of space for comments, they need to be able to get as complete a picture of the ratee's performance as they can in just a very few sentences. That task is difficult to do without cutting out a lot of excess verbiage. Writers must come to the point quickly and leave the reader with strong impressions before either running out of space, or boring the reader and causing him or her to go on to the next promotion candidate in the stack.

Substance

Performance appraisals full of general statements like "Humphrey did a good job on the Ames case" are a curse to upper-level managers. What is a

“good job”? What exactly did Humphrey do? There is no way to tell just how good of a job it was from that statement. If Humphrey’s rater is to convince the readers that he did do a good job, the rater must write about the substance of Humphrey’s accomplishments. Three sources provided the substance of my research.

Michael Smith’s article on documenting behavior and the videotape, The Legal Side of Evaluating Performance, again, provided worthwhile advice. By getting the specifics of behavior down in one’s incident file as soon as possible after it happens, managers will be miles ahead when trying to reconstruct the event months later at evaluation time. Specifics can even be written in the incident file as if the file were an appraisal. Then words and sentences can be lifted right out of the file, whole, and put on the appraisal form.

Smith also emphasized that file entries, supervisors’ talk with employees about behavior, and the ratings on appraisal forms should all be “congruent,” that is, should all point toward the same level of performance. There should be no surprises at rating time because managers have documented occurrences of behavior, both good and bad, and have talked with employees about those incidents (10).

The Legal Side of Evaluating Performance mentions some rating traps that managers sometimes fall into which may distort a true picture of an employee’s performance. The “halo effect” comes into play when an employee is rated high in spite of poor performance because of being well liked or being physically attractive. “Central tendency” means a manager avoids criticizing employees by giving them all an average rating. The “recency error” happens when an employee is rated on his or her most recent behavior (whether that is good or

bad), rather than the trend of performance over the whole rating period. Finally, the "similar to me" error occurs when a manager gives an employee a high rating because he or she acts like, or shares interests with, the manager. All these traps reduce the effectiveness of performance appraisals because they do not base ratings on the text image of the ratee on actual quality of performance.

Ewald and McCallum's article, "The Performance Appraisal: A Crucial Business Process and Product," approaches specificity by reminding readers that appraisals are a "rhetorical situation" that involve the entire process of communication (40). As such, the more detailed and complete an appraisal is, the more effective the communication, not only between rater and ratee, but among rater and everyone who reads the document. Stating what was done, why, and what effect it had are key to an effective appraisal (42-43).

Goals

The quality of work expected has the potential to be a major point of misunderstanding between worker and supervisor, so this issue warrants special consideration when standards are being worked out. Ideally, management would like to have all work done perfectly all the time, but they should realize that sometimes mistakes are made. In some areas, mistakes can be made which will have little effect on the overall outcome of the item produced, and thus can be tolerated. In other areas, a small mistake could have great health, financial, or legal consequences. In any case, it is best to have tolerances spelled out ahead of time to avoid problems of interpretation when it is time to write the worker's appraisal.

The strongest and most complete advocate of using management by objective methods was Dan Brown. His article, "Development of Performance Standards: A Practical Guide," gave step-by-step instructions on how to write and use management goals. Brown suggests that the statement of goals should be realistic, specific, measurable, consistent with organizational goals, challenging, dynamic (i.e. able to be changed), and understandable (94).

In the rest of his article, Brown lays out steps for creating a management by objective document. He suggests writing out all tasks a worker is to perform and breaking them as far down into their component parts as possible. Next, one prioritizes each part of each task with a I, II, or III indicating realistically which are essentials and which are incidentals. Then, managers and workers cooperate to set out quantified performance standards for each part of each task. Finally, one should list those skills and areas of job knowledge are needed for each task. He also emphasizes that, as any aspect of the job changes, the document needs to change as well.

Ewald and McCallum's article also stressed how to write goals so that they are specific and understandable. At the word-level, they suggest phrasing goals as specifically as possible. For example, just saying a project must be "complete" is not specific enough to avoid misunderstandings. However, saying the project must be "finish[ed] . . . by X date with a set minimum number of errors" is much more specific (42).

The overall concern with writing goals is to eliminate misunderstanding. If employees say, "I thought you meant . . . ," communication is not happening. Ultimately, performance appraisals can become meaningless as tools if managers rate on one thing and employees think they are being rated on something else.

Criticism

Since, as mentioned earlier, performance appraisals are supposed to be aimed at improving workers, how can a supervisor include performance that was less than satisfactory without putting them on the defensive, making rateses sound incompetent and ruining their futures with the organization?

Ewald and McCallum suggest using the "bad news" approach suggested in some business writing texts and "sandwiching" the information. What that means is, start out with something positive about the failure to meet standards, state the failure in a few words, and end with another positive statement such as how the problem was corrected or is being worked on (42, 44).

Another approach is suggested by Hagge and Kostelnick in their article, "Linguistic Politeness in Professional Prose." Although their article is not specifically addressed to performance evaluations, some of the strategies can be applied. Throughout their article, they suggest minimizing impact by using passives; "hedging words" such as "possible," "seems," and "at times;" modals like "may," "could," and "would;" and weaker verbs as "suggest" and "be" verbs. They call these "face saving" strategies because they make it seem like whatever occurred may not have been completely that person's fault or may not be indicative of usual behavior (330).

METHODOLOGY

From my prior experience, I assumed that performance appraisals in business settings would operate under much different “rules” than did US military and government civilian appraisals. The Air Force and civilian appraisals that I worked with in the past allowed quite blunt language if a supervisor thought a ratee was not performing up to standards. Because military members cannot quit their jobs or bring a legal suit against the company or boss if they don’t like the way they are portrayed in their appraisal, military supervisors are more or less free to “tell it like it is.” Common sense and the pragmatics of depending on one’s subordinates to accomplish a mission would dictate that supervisors should not arbitrarily destroy careers without good cause. Different recourses are available to military and civilian workers who do not receive glowing performance reports.

Because I was not familiar with performance appraisal practices in the business world, I looked for information by investigating recent scholarly articles on the subject and by creating and sending out a survey to some local businesses asking them about their particular performance appraisal systems.

Survey of Local Businesses

The survey I created (Figure 1) was designed to serve two purposes. Those organizations that returned the survey would provide information about their performance appraisal system, especially about how the document is filled out and how appraisals are used after they become a matter of record. My overall intent was to determine how important the “word picture” that is created

becomes in the future when higher managers make decisions on the rates. The second purpose my survey fulfilled was to find an organization willing to let me present a performance appraisal writing seminar for them. If the organization took the time to answer the survey and were willing to let me contact them with questions, they might be willing to let me talk to managers about the writing process.

I sent out twenty-two surveys to companies in the Des Moines and Ames areas. The companies I selected needed to be large enough that they would use performance appraisals (although I was wrong in one case) and I selected a mixture of sizes so that I had some very large companies, some small, and some in between. I wanted companies with a high percentage of "white collar" employees because their appraisal forms tend to be geared more towards written comments, versus just checking blocks. Finally, I looked for companies that were either headquartered or had a main office in the area. Minor branch branches of companies tend to take their directions from higher headquarters somewhere else and thus would probably not have the authority to make any changes in appraisal practices or be willing to listen to outside, unsanctioned, advice about how to write them.

Of the twenty-two surveys I sent out, I received ten replies. Nine of the companies provided good, detailed responses to my questions (the tenth was the company alluded to above that did not have an appraisal system). They each included appraisal forms and one company even sent material from their own appraisal writing seminar. Eight gave me a person I could contact with further questions and showed interest in seeing the results of my research (see Appendix A for surveys that were returned).

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?
 No Yes If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?

2. How often are performance appraisals usually written?
 One per six months One per year Other _____

3. Who writes a rater's performance appraisal? (circle all that apply)
 Immediate supervisor Peers Self Other _____

4. If rating criteria are not specified on the form (eg. with "management by objective" forms), to what extent is the rater involved in determining those rating criteria?
 not at all some closely totally involved

5. To what extent is the rater involved in collecting data for the appraisal?
 not at all some closely totally involved

6. To what extent is the rater involved in writing the text of the appraisal?
 not at all some closely totally involved

7. To what extent is the rater involved in the overall appraisal process?
 not at all some closely totally involved

8. Are raters permitted to review their performance appraisal document?
 No Yes, before it becomes a matter of record
 Yes, after it becomes a matter of record

9. If raters may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?
 No Yes

10. Approximately what percentages of those rated receive the highest rating?
 ----- %

11. Is there a limit on the percentage who can receive the highest rating?
 No Yes If yes, what percentage is the limit? _____ %
 Is the limit official, or informal policy?

12. Who, primarily, uses the information in the performance appraisal?
 Immediate supervisor
 Personnel Director
 Other supervisors (please explain)

13. How much importance do appraisals carry when considerations for promotion, salary increase, and/or retention of employees are being made?
 not important some much great importance

14. When managers make personnel decisions based on reviewing past performance appraisals, and when the ratings are the same among those considered, what factors differentiate the better employees? (please be as specific as you can)

15. Are supervisors expected to use full sentences and proper English grammar when writing appraisals?
 Yes No Not in some places (please explain)

16. Is there an established office or person raters can come to for help in writing appraisals?
 No Yes If yes, what or who (by title) is it?

17. What, in your opinion, is the greatest difficulty in the process of completing performance appraisals?

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?
 No Yes If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?

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 No Yes, before it becomes a matter of record
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9. If raters may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?
 No Yes

10. Approximately what percentages of those rated receive the highest rating?
 ----- %

Figure 1. Survey sent to twenty-two local companies.

The survey document

The survey I sent out had eighteen questions that were designed to elicit responses about how the appraisal document is filled out, the uses it is put to after it goes in the ratee's file, and whether the organization would be interested in learning more about writing appraisals.

Filling out the appraisal form Questions one through nine, fifteen, and seventeen dealt with how the appraisal document is filled out. Question one asks if different forms are used within the organization and, more importantly, which types of positions are rated on the form that is being referred to while filling out the survey. The answer to the second part of the question was designed to give me some idea of the level of employee being rated, which may have a connection with how complex the form is to fill out. In some organizations, lower-level people are rated on a much simpler form than higher-level people. Also, higher-level appraisal forms sometimes place more emphasis on the written portion of the appraisal, versus the ratings blocks checked.

Question two merely told me how often performance appraisals are written in that organization. Raters who have to write appraisals more, often have better writing skills because of the extra practice.

Question three through seven got at the structure of how appraisals are written. Who writes them, who has input into the criteria on which the ratings will be made, and who actually does the writing are all important considerations when planning who needs to be trained on what aspects of appraisals writing.

Questions eight and nine asked if the ratee is able to confront the writer of the appraisal, and if they can influence changes, before it goes into their record. If

the ratee is allowed, that would have a large influence on what a rater is likely to say in an appraisal and how comments will be phrased. The answers to these two questions formed the basis of a major section in the seminar portion of my thesis.

Question fifteen asked if full English sentences are required in the text. This issue becomes important when considering readability and visual aspects.

Finally, question seventeen was a catch-all that let the person filling out the survey (hopefully someone directly involved with reviewing performance appraisals within the organization) bring out any areas they are particularly concerned with or that they consistently have problems getting raters to do correctly. The answers allowed me to focus on those areas in my research and provided me with a leverage point when asking if I could present my seminar to them ("I can provide help with this problem").

Uses for appraisals Questions ten through fourteen dealt with how performance appraisals are used within the organization, and thus focus on how important the written portion is.

Question thirteen asked for a general statement of the importance of performance appraisals within the organization. If the appraisal document is of little importance, there is not much point in spending a lot of time worrying about how well it is written. Conversely, if appraisals are of great importance, the better one is able to write, the more chance one's subordinates have of being promoted.

Question twelve asked who the primary user of performance appraisals is. Depending on who the document is being written for, different writing strategies could be employed. If the document stays within a department, more jargon can

be used because everyone understands the conventions. Outside managers reading an appraisal with lots of jargon may not be able to fully appreciate a worker's accomplishments if they do not understand everything.

Questions ten and eleven asked about the highest rating. Organizations that have caps on the number of people who can receive the highest rating have been found to have special problems (McBriarty) and require special writing techniques to accurately convey performance for those who are not fortunate enough to have received the best rating.

Question fourteen asked what differentiates ratees who have identical ratings. The purpose was to try to find areas within the appraisal document that are more important than others--areas that managers concentrate on at a glance to find who is really performing well and who is not.

Looking for interest in a seminar Questions sixteen and eighteen were specifically aimed at trying to find out which organizations might be interested in having me give a seminar for them. As I pointed out, question seventeen could be used incidentally for the same purpose.

The purpose of question seventeen was to find out if the person answering the survey was also the point of contact for performance appraisals within the organization. Also, if the organization does not have a person dedicated to performance appraisals, that would be a good indication that the organization may need help in teaching people to write them.

Question eighteen (which I put on a separate sheet of paper so I could remove it to ensure confidentiality) asked straight out if I can contact them and asks for a work address and phone number. Those organizations that did not want to be bothered could easily opt out.

The Seminar

The reason I wanted to conduct a seminar on performance appraisals instead of just writing about theories was the opportunity for immediate response--to see how supervisors in an actual business environment could use my ideas. If they had little use for my suggestions, I was sure they would let me know. We would be able to bring out experiences where ideas did or did not work and discuss how techniques could be improved.

The second organization I contacted (The Des Moines Register) agreed to let me present my seminar for them. I met with Martha Gelhaus, the Personnel Manager, to discuss what topics should be addressed in the seminar. Ms Gelhaus wanted me to present information on criticizing employees' substandard performance, writing more clearly, reporting substantive achievements rather than "fluff," writing about attitude problems, and writing so that the picture created by the words matches the rating blocks checked. In addition to these aspects, I decided that managers needed information on some other issues. In the sections following, I will address the substance of my seminar and bring out why I included each area.

Steps in the writing process

So that managers could appreciate the total appraisal writing process more fully, I decided to include some material on record keeping and pre-writing techniques and how they and writing fit into producing an effective appraisal (see Appendix B).

Producing an effective performance appraisal starts with keeping an “incident” file on each ratee in which the rater records incidents of work behavior. In addition, I touched on some of the legal problems of appraisals which an incident file can help avoid.

Next, I brought out the importance of getting an early start on writing appraisals and organizing materials in logical patterns so that information is handy when they write the different sections on the form.

Finally, I related the basic writing techniques of getting thoughts onto paper quickly without worrying about correctness, shaping it to fit the form, and then editing.

Clarity and specifics

To address the clear writing issue, I provided material on how to bring out specifics using action verbs, constructing sentences for emphasis by starting with the subject and ending with the thought to be emphasized, restructuring passive sentences into active voice, changing nominalizations into action verbs, omitting unnecessary words, shorting wordy passages, stating things positively, omitting reference to the writer, and how to make a page more visually organized.

Substance

To encourage raters to write more specifically about their ratees, I suggested that writers not make any generalizing statements about performance. Generalizations can bring up more questions than they answer. Empty, “flowery” sentences such as, “She is one of the best window washers I have ever

had the pleasure to work with," bring up many questions. In what way was she one of the best? How many does "one of" include? What about window washers who were good, but were not a pleasure to work with? Writers should cite specific examples of specific behavior. Raters can substantiate their specifics using numbers and citing trends in behavior that they have noted from their incident file.

Raters can make sure the word picture matches marked ratings by examining adjectives they use to describe the ratee's actions, and by the number and quality of the specific behavior examples they use. If one covers up the overall rating marked, could another reader be sure what that rating is?

Goals and objectives

The form that the Register uses has a page for management by objective-style goals, but when I talked to Ms Gelhaus, she said that page was very rarely used to actually measure performance. While I am not convinced that management by objective is the best way to measure performance, if used properly, it can be useful in writing appraisals. For that reason I decided to include a section on it in my seminar.

Besides measuring performance, goals can be used to help compose appraisals. If goals start out clearly and concisely written, with goals, criteria for measuring success, and firm dates, raters can usually transfer them whole onto their appraisal form. For example, if my job is to write a thesis (goal) complete and in proper form (criteria) by the end of the semester (date), and I accomplish that task, my hypothetical rater can write in my appraisal, "Dan completed his thesis and it was accepted by the thesis office the day before it was due." That

statement tells what I did (I completed my thesis), how well I did it (I met the criteria), and how timely my accomplishment was (I turned it in a day early). If I did an exceptional job, my rater could add another sentence that tells how wonderful my accomplishment was or the effect it will have on the discourse community.

Criticism

This section deals with how to express on an appraisal that a ratee's performance either has been less than satisfactory or could stand improvement in some area. First of all, I assumed that the ratee's superior(s) decided that the person is worth saving. If management's objective is to fire the person, it doesn't matter much if the ratee gets upset about how criticism is worded.

Attitude When I met with Ms Gelhaus, she wanted me to address how to write about a ratee's bad attitude so that it could be changed. The problem is that [performance appraisals should only deal with work-related aspects of behavior.] If the ratee's bad attitude is interfering with work performance, for example if the ratee is rude to customers or is interfering with the productivity of others, then it is a valid subject for the appraisal. But if one's attitude makes no [difference in quality or quantity of work produced, it should not be mentioned on an appraisal and should be dealt with one-on-one between supervisor and subordinate.] The [reason is that it could be construed as a personal bias against the ratee and may end up as a law suit.] If a ratee's attitude has no bearing on performance, it is better not committed to his or her permanent record.

Minimizing offense taken To change a ratee's less-than-desirable performance, supervisors first need to tell ratees that they need to improve. A

problem that immediately comes up is that the ratee may think s/he is doing fine and may take offense if told that her/his behavior is not as good as it could be. The opposite problem is that if criticism is written so subtly that the ratee doesn't "get the point," behavior will not change. Another concern is that if other managers, like those concerned with promotions and awards, notice that an appraisal contains a lot of blatant criticism, they may not be willing to promote or reward the ratee. I found two techniques to help minimize offending the ratee, yet still get the message across.

One way to minimize the impact of criticism is to use the "bad news letter" format. Start out and end with positive statements, and "sandwich" the criticism between them, with failures stated in positive terms (i.e. without using negations) if possible. This technique has the effect of taking the edge off criticism and making it seem incidental (Ewald and McCallum 42-43).

The other technique is to reverse the suggestions given in the Clarity section. Use passive constructions to avoid assigning blame directly to one person. Use hedging words like "perhaps" and "seems" to give the impression that the problem is not very obvious. Use "weak" verbs like "be" and "do" to minimize the impact that action verbs have (Hagge and Kostelnick 328-29).

Finally, writers should end criticism with a statement of the ratee's efforts at improvement. This could be the positive statement that makes the second half of the "bad news" "sandwich," but in any case, it should show that the ratee is aware of the problem and is actively trying to correct it. Showing progress toward improvement makes a favorable impression on the reader, whether the reader is the ratee or is the president of the company.

The practical exercise

I included an exercise both so that seminar participants could try their hands at applying the suggestions I gave them in a non-threatening environment where they do not have to get it right, and so I could see if my presentation was effective. The exercise was conducted by forming small two- and three-person groups and giving each group a real job description for a position that they are familiar with and, indeed, probably oversee; an incident file, the contents of which I made up; and a page of goals and criteria, also made up. From these materials, participants were to write an appraisal. Afterwards, the appraisals were critiqued by the reassembled seminar, based on the material I had presented.

Because I was totally unfamiliar with the two positions she suggested I use for the exercise, Ms Gelhaus' assistance was invaluable. She gave me the two job descriptions and a number of past performance evaluations (with all identifying information removed, of course) so I could come up with examples of behavior to use in my incidence files and goals pages.

As a final check on how I did with the seminar, I asked all participants to fill out a critique for that I made up (see Appendix D).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Like chapter three, this chapter will be divided into a section on the results of my survey and a section on the results of my seminar.

Survey Results

I sent out twenty-two surveys to companies in the Des Moines and Ames areas. The survey's functions were to gather information about current business practices in the performance appraisal arena and to help me find a company willing to let me present my seminar for them. As I explained in the Methods chapter, I based my selection of companies on three criteria. First, companies had to be large enough to use performance appraisals. I selected a mixture of different sized companies so that my results would not be skewed by the practices of only one size of company. Second, I chose companies that probably had a high percentage of white collar employees. In my experience, blue collar appraisal forms tend to emphasize checking blocks rather than writing text to describe behavior. Since the focus of the thesis is on writing, I thought it would be more useful to find appraisal documents with the most space for text. Third, I looked for companies that were either headquartered or had a main office in the area. Minor branch branches of companies tend to take their directions from higher headquarters somewhere else and thus would probably not have the authority to make any changes in appraisal practices or be willing to listen to outside, unsanctioned, advice about how to write them.

I received ten replies for a return rate of 45.45%. One response I threw out because that company does not use performance appraisals (see returned surveys

in Appendix A) leaving nine companies to base my results on. Those nine responses, fortunately, were very complete.

When appraisals are written

Eight of the nine responses indicated that appraisals were written annually. The one that didn't stated that appraisals were written on a "piece work" basis--that is, for every assignment that lasts longer than a certain amount of time (forty hours in this case), an appraisal is due. For that organization, which does a lot of outside consulting work, and that position, the arrangement probably works best. Each assignment is probably completely different, so the parameters of what is required and how it should be done could change with every assignment. In this situation, trying to evaluate over several cases would be comparing apples and oranges.

Who writes appraisals

Again, the company that differed above had different people writing the appraisal. Eight of the companies had either the immediate supervisor or the supervisor and a self-evaluation, but the other company had a self-evaluation and a peer evaluation. Perhaps on an outside consultation assignment, the ratee's peers see the ratee "in action," while the supervisor does not.

Ratee involvement

This section includes questions three through seven which ask about how closely the ratee is involved in the evaluation process. One of the respondents did not complete this section, so only eight surveys are considered.

Involvement in rating criteria Two companies responded by saying that employees are not involved at all in establishing rating criteria because the criteria are already established on the form. One other company said that employees have no say in rating criteria, but their form has almost no predetermined criteria. Since I didn't ask who does make it up, I don't know whether each supervisor makes up his or her own criteria, or if each position already has criteria established by the company, or what. The remaining five companies said that employees have at least some voice in establishing their criteria, including one company what said the employee was totally involved.

The response to this question led me to conclude that writing goals and criteria were an important aspect of evaluations and that I should investigate the area further. Since The Register is one of the companies that use management by objective criteria, I included the subject in my seminar.

Involvement in collecting data and writing Only one company reported that employees are not involved at all in collecting data and writing the appraisal. Three said they had "some" involvement, two "closely" involved, and two "totally" involved. There may have been some confusion on these questions because those companies that use a self-evaluation generally reported higher employee involvement with writing appraisals. Since they produce two different documents, I was looking for involvement in the final, supervisor-produced document. Also, since I didn't ask to what extent supervisors usually take into consideration the self-evaluation (a difficult question to answer), it is hard to separate the answers into who understood what I was after and who didn't. The only one that I can say for sure did answered question six with "no involvement" and added the comment that they write a separate self-evaluation.

Thus, I was not able to gain a lot of knowledge about the true extent of employee involvement in these stages of the appraisal process.

Overall involvement Seven of the eight companies rated overall employee involvement in their appraisal process either “closely” or “totally.” The one that didn’t rated theirs “not at all” to “some,” but had marked questions four through six “not at all.”

Since five companies’ responses did not “average” their high overall involvement response, I can only conclude that those companies would like to think that their employees are highly involved in the rating process, but that they may not actually be.

Employee review

Seven companies responded that employees review their appraisals before it goes in their file and have the possibility of changing remarks. Two companies responded that employees may see their appraisals only after the document becomes a part of their record. The implication for companies that hold reviews is that raters may need to be more careful about what they write about their rates. Since the employees may read and comment on their appraisals face-to-face with their rater, making a comment on paper has the same effect as making that comment in the ratee’s presence. Because The Register was one of the companies that use face-to-face reviews, I included a section on how to be critical of performance in my seminar.

"Inflation"

Response to the question, "approximately what percentage of those rated receive the highest rating," varied from "0.1%" to "25+%" (three said "10%"), and an "NA" response. The "NA" came from a company whose form only had three possible ratings: exceeds, meets, and does not meet, expectations.

The only company with an inflation problem was the one that reported twenty-four percent getting the highest rating although the company has an informal policy that only fifteen percent should receive the highest rating. My experience suggests that over twenty-five percent does not indicate a real problem with inflation (see the literature review, inflation section). Only one other company had a cap on high ratings, and that one adhered to its informal ten percent limit.

Who uses appraisals

Eight companies said that the immediate supervisor is the primary user of appraisals. Two of the eight added that the employee uses the document to improve performance. One other company said that the employee was the primary user. In addition, four companies indicated that appraisals are used to determine transfers and/or raises.

Because of the number of companies that wrote in that employees are major users of appraisals, I should have made that a possible response. I had taken for granted that all organizations would believe employee growth is a primary function of appraisals. If I had made employee use an option, I suspect that all companies would have used that response, but it would have been interesting to see if any did not mark it.

Importance for personnel decisions

All respondents agreed that appraisals are useful in making personnel decisions. Two said that appraisals held only “some” importance. The fact that those two companies are the smallest that responded may indicate that the higher-level managers may know almost everyone and do not need to rely on performance appraisals.

Responses to which factors of performance were most important varied considerably. Some of the more interesting responses included three companies mentioning that seniority could decide who would be promoted if all ratings were the same, three mentioning that evidence of high initiative would be important, and two that said the individuals’ potential would be considered.

Use of proper English

Four companies gave an unqualified “yes” response, indicating that appraisal writers must use full and grammatically correct English sentences. Five said “no,” but one qualified that sentences do not have to be complete (like bullet statements), but should be grammatical. Another one said proper English was desirable, “but it doesn’t always happen.”

In-house help for writing appraisals

Two companies said they had no specific office or person a rater could go to for help when writing an appraisal. One of those two said that their form was so simple, no one should need help. That form consists mostly of blocks to check, but there was only a small space for comments. However, they have a separate form for a self-evaluation, which is mostly space for text. Perhaps raters

would not need help, especially if the comments section is rarely used. Falling into the same type of category, two companies indicated that raters should consult with their supervisor or another senior manager.

Three companies would direct questions to someone in their personnel department, and one said someone in the training department would handle questions. One company answered the question "yes," but gave no source for information.

Difficulties

Responses to what is the greatest difficulty with appraisals varied. Two companies said that finding the time to do appraisals was most difficult. Three said that telling employees about less than satisfactory performance was hard. The Register mentioned supervisors keeping sufficient documentation to justify ratings was a problem, so I addressed that issue in the seminar. One company apparently has to create a bell curve of employees from best to worst, and that is hard, "especially in a smaller work group." Another company said that setting specific, measurable goals is difficult.

The remaining company gave a list of problems, starting with inflationary ratings (although they said only five-to-ten percent receive the highest rating), and including establishing goals at the beginning of the rating period, consistency of interpretation of ratings among managers, and having the textual picture match the rating checked. This question provided important material for the seminar.

Contact persons

As I mentioned before, eight of the nine useful respondents provided me with a person I could contact. Three of the contact people were personnel managers, one was a training manager, one was a "senior Manager," and for the remaining three I could not tell what position the person occupied.

Attached documents

All of the nine respondents attached at least one performance appraisal form. Some sent more than one form if they used more. One company sent a stack of sixteen sets of forms, most of which were seven pages long and included peer and self-evaluations. Finally, one company sent me their whole regulation for performance appraisals, including instructions and samples--and returned my unused self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Summary of the survey

The survey achieved its purpose of finding out more about current appraisal practices. Some of the most significant findings came from the questions involving who uses the information on appraisals, how appraisals are used, who is available to help appraisal writers, and difficulties involved in writing appraisals.

- Primary users of appraisals are the immediate supervisors and the individual being rated. This fact is significant because these two are also in the best position to change or encourage behavior. If people farther removed from the situation were the most important users,

they would not have as much knowledge of all the details of a situation and could react inappropriately to it.

- Appraisals are very important tools for making management decisions. in larger organizations. I found that, apparently, the smaller an organization is, the less they rely on appraisals for making decisions. In small organizations, upper-level managers have a better chance of knowing individuals; thus, appraisals could be unnecessary.
- Not all companies have someone in-house to help with appraisal writing. One of the four respondents that did not is a large company. This indicates that a need exists for appraisal training on a larger scale than I had supposed.
- With the wide variety of problem areas that organizations are experiencing, I see a need for continuing appraisal training. Even companies that have in-house appraisal contact persons still related a number of problem areas. The solution is not to rely on training supervisors once and then expecting them to produce perfect appraisal. Periodic refresher training would help to alleviate some recurring problems.

The survey also achieved its purpose of finding a company willing to hear my seminar. I had to contact only two companies before finding one. The first company was willing to have it, but wanted a major focus of the seminar to be on the appraisal interview between rater and ratee, which was outside my research area.

Seminar Results

I conducted a two-hour-long seminar for The Des Moines Register on Monday, 28 October 1991, from 1:30 to 3:30. The seminar took place in a conference room in the Register building and was attended by twenty-one managers, ranging from people who were going to be supervisors for the first time to two company vice-presidents. Participants came from the accounting and circulation departments. I had anticipated spending an hour presenting the class material, followed by a ten minute break, and then conducting the practical exercise, which could help me achieve my purpose by providing an immediate response to how actual business managers reacted to and were able to incorporate my theories.

Presenting the material

My presentation consisted of sections on steps in the process of writing appraisals, how to write with better clarity, how to write appraisals that contain substantive comments, how to write goals and the criteria for achieving them, and how to criticize performance without offending ratees or making them appear incompetent.

The presentation went smoothly. At the start, I offered participants the opportunity to stop me and ask questions, but the only time that occurred was when someone questioned the apparent conflict between my advice that examples of positive behavior should be written clearly, while examples of negative behavior should be written more vaguely. The purpose of the question was that the personnel manager had been having a problem with raters not documenting unsatisfactory behavior, and then when they wanted to fire the

person, there was no “paper trail” on which the action could be justified. Their position was that in order to either get poor performers to change their ways or to establish a pattern of unsatisfactory job performance raters must “point fingers” and place blame in no uncertain terms. With another participant supporting me, I explained that what I was getting at with my advice was not that unsatisfactory behavior should not be documented or should be hidden, but that the intent was to make the criticism easier for the ratee to accept without angering him or her, and to do an appropriate amount of “damage,” and no more, to the ratee’s image with the organization.

The only other comment on my material was that one participant wanted to clarify that when criticizing an employee that is not considered “salvageable,” that is, someone who is on the way to being fired, managers still need to be careful how appraisals are worded to avoid potential lawsuits.

The exercise

After the break, the seminar participants split themselves into small, three- or four-person groups to work on the practical exercise. Because of the differing nature of jobs within the two departments represented, members of the circulation department joined together to form two groups, and members of the accounting department got together in four groups. The purpose of the exercise was to see if participants were able to assimilate the material I presented and, more importantly, were willing to try using it in their appraisal writing. I presented each group with a copy of an actual job description from their department (a district sales manager and an accounting clerk), an “incident file” which I had made up, and a set of goals, also made up (see Appendix C). The task

was to write a performance appraisal based on the data given and on the suggestions for writing that I presented in the class.

Originally, I had allotted twenty minutes for the groups to compose their appraisals and the remaining half hour was for the seminar participants to discuss and critique their appraisals. Unfortunately, about ten minutes into the exercise, I realized that I had made it too detailed and complex. I eventually allowed thirty-five minutes and even at that, only a couple of the groups finished. We ended up running about ten minutes overtime and discussed only two of the groups' appraisals and those not very deeply.

In spite of time restraints, the groups worked diligently on their exercises, with discussions at times becoming heated. One thing the seminar critiques consistently showed was that participants liked doing the exercise, thought it was valuable, and wished we could have taken more time with it (see Appendix D).

The products of the practical exercise (see Appendix C) showed that the participants used my suggestions and produced appraisals that drew few criticisms from their colleagues. Writers used action verbs and started non-bulleted sentences with the subject. Examples included, "Ann exceeded daily sales goals . . ." and "He should improve the timeliness . . ." All groups used numbers, bullets, or space to indicate main points. No group used qualifiers in any sentence, even when reporting unsatisfactory behavior-- a result, perhaps, of the difference of opinion expressed during the presentation portion over the how unsatisfactory behavior should be reported.

Only one sentence was written as a passive, "David's value to the accounting office has been demonstrated this past year." Not only is the sentence

passive, it is also "fluff," adding nothing to the value of the appraisal. Also, every sentence was cast positively--there were no negatives in any appraisal.

On the goals page, participants wrote specific, positive, understandable goals such as, "Improve time management" and "Meet Sunday sales goal of 265 sales." Matching the goals were measurable, obtainable criteria and definite dates for achievement of the goals. The criterion for the time management goal was, "Attend at least one time management seminar" by "February 1, 1992." The Sunday sales criterion had five criteria, including, "Write 45 Sunday orders per month" and "Hold two cover[?] sales meetings each week--producing six sales per meeting." Both criteria were to be checked on April 1, 1992.

Participants' critique of the seminar

All but one of the participants filled out a critique of the seminar (see Appendix D). In general, I got good reviews. Areas that could be improved included spending more time on the exercise, giving more examples from actual appraisals, and being more familiar with the Register's particular appraisal system. Some people commented about the apparent contradiction between the suggestions I made for clear writing and for criticizing performance.

On the positive side, besides people liking the practical exercise; a number also found the clear writing section useful. Also, one person liked the goals part and one person liked my advice about incident files. A number also liked my use of handouts and the actual examples of Register appraisals that I used as overheads to point out good and bad examples of writing.

One problem I encountered with the examples was that some of them had been written by people in the seminar. When I showed examples of something

done wrong from them, I am sure the writers were not happy about that. However, I brought this to Ms Gelhaus' attention before the seminar started and she said a few words while she was introducing me to the effect that those bad examples were not being used to embarrass the writers, but as learning tools. I think that helped some, but people may still have been unhappy about it.

Summary of the Seminar

Overall, the seminar was successful. I achieved my purpose of gaining immediate feedback from participants through the practical exercise and the seminar critique. I found a number of things from my research that worked and some that had not worked as well as I expected.

- Based on the results of the exercise, I think participants realized some of the areas in which their writing may have been weak, such as making substantial, meaningful statements and using active verbs. Response to the section on clarity was positive.
- The goals section went over very well. Several people made good comments about it in their critiques and the exercise overheads showed that the groups understood the concepts I had presented.
- Participants also thought the idea of keeping an incident file was useful. A couple of the managers talked to me afterwards and said they were intrigued by the idea of making an incident file available to the individual.
- There was an undercurrent of hostility from those whose appraisals I had used as bad examples. One appraisal in particular was written so poorly, I used it several times to show what not to do, and the

writer was there. The solution is to either find examples that are several years old, or to work with the contact person to make up examples.

- The confusion over when (or whether) to use a tactful approach to reporting unsatisfactory performance caused some participants to question my expertise, which devalued the seminar for them. I had no idea that this was going to be such a divisive issue, yet it helped my research in that negative feedback is still valuable. One solution is to introduce the subject more carefully, using the angle that no one likes to be criticized, but that if properly approached, workers may be more receptive.

CONCLUSION

In my investigation into techniques of writing performance appraisals, I originally started out trying to confirm what I already “knew.” My experience in writing appraisals had led me to assume that certain practices were universal, such as inflation of ratings, that appraisals always play a large role in determining an employee’s future with an organization, and that writers are always required to use proper English. The three areas I mentioned represent expectations that were not confirmed by my survey.

Twenty-five percent of employees receiving the highest rating does not seem to me to represent a big problem with inflation. It may be high to others, but because my experience has been that a ninety percent rate of inflation is normal, twenty-five does not seem to be a problem.

I was also interested to find that appraisals are of lesser importance in some organizations. In a smaller organization, high-level managers would know a higher percentage of their subordinates and would not have to rely on written appraisals as much to make personnel decisions.

If appraisals are more important in larger organizations, I assumed that the larger an organization was, the more likely that it would be to have some central contact point available to help supervisors who have questions about how to write appraisals. While most of the larger respondents to my survey did have a contact point, some did not.

In the Air Force, appraisals that are turned in having grammar, spelling, or usage mistakes are not accepted by the records section until all mistakes are

corrected. I was surprised to find that companies would be willing to file an appraisal that is not easy to read and carefully written.

Survey responses that confirmed my assumptions were that appraisals are intended to help employees improve their performance; that the immediate supervisor is almost always the one who writes appraisals, but that ratees may have a direct influence on what is written; and that no matter how well trained supervisors are, they will still have problems writing appraisals.

Because I found that in many organizations employees are closely involved in writing their own goals, and the company I gave my seminar for was one of them, I included that area in my seminar. I found that writing clear goals is something managers are concerned about and are actively seeking to improve.

In the seminar, my biggest surprise was that some people confused stating a negative information tactfully with not stating it at all. I had difficulty convincing the participants that a tactfully-worded criticism would produce a better reaction from ratees and be less likely to permanently damage ratees' careers than a bald and accusatory statement of the failing. As a result, I think that the area of writing criticisms should be investigated further to see how personalized negative statements should best be written.

The seminar confirmed that supervisors appreciate suggestions for writing clear, fact-filled, direct statements of performance. They want to write the best and most honest appraisals that they can so that all involved--ratees, the organization, and themselves--will benefit.

Overall, what I learned from conducting my research is that the wide variety of performance appraisal systems used, in just as wide a variety of

settings and situations, produce so many variables that it is impossible to cover all contingencies within one thesis. My experience with performance appraisals in the Air Force was of limited use to prepare me for dealing with appraisals in the business world. The way that I learned to write appraisals in the Air Force is drastically different from the way appraisals are written at The Register.

Some aspects of performance appraisal writing remained the same, however. Two of the major purposes of writing appraisals are still to improve the ratee and to inform higher management about the capabilities of workers. These purposes are directly related and are often abused in practice by writing glowing reports for mediocre performance. Neither the ratee nor the organization gain anything from such an appraisal and both may even be hurt in the long run by the ratee being promoted into a job s/he is not ready to handle yet. But the problem continues because supervisors are unwilling to take the responsibility to let a worker know if a problem exists.

Once a rater decides that s/he will criticize a worker's performance, how to approach the criticism becomes an issue. As was brought out in the seminar, not everyone agrees on how to handle it. Should the rater give it to the worker straight, in uncompromising terms, or should s/he come at it indirectly? I thought I had the answer in telling raters to be tactful and considerate of ratees' feelings, but now I'm not so sure. I suggest that more research in the form of case studies should be done in this area to see what technique is in common use in business and if that is effective. I suspect that how criticism is received by workers is highly dependent on the individual and how s/he responds to perceived threats.

A suggestion to other researchers working with organizations to which they are outsiders is that they spend some time inside the organization. As I was preparing my practical exercise, I had to rely on the job descriptions and actual appraisals Ms Gelhaus had given me. I knew a little more than nothing about the two positions I was working with. As it turned out I made some good guesses and produced examples of behavior for my two cases that were acceptable and that the managers could work with, but I could just as easily have been wrong and produced confusing and contradictory examples.

My research was valuable because I found a clear need among both managers and the people who administer performance appraisal programs for appraisal writing training. Even the managers who had years of experience in writing appraisals found further training valuable and were glad they had attended the seminar. The fact that the survey got such a high return rate is also indicative of the importance organizations place on performance appraisals and the need for more in-depth study of the entire appraisal writing process.

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APPENDIX A

RETURNED SURVEYS

26 August 1991

Dear Personnel Director,

I am a graduate student working on a Masters Degree in English, specializing in Business and Technical Communication, at Iowa State University. For my thesis I am setting up a short seminar for a business setting on how to write more effective performance appraisals. As a part of my research I need to gather information about current performance appraisal practices in actual organizations. Could you please take a few minutes to help?

First, could you please complete the enclosed questionnaire on how your appraisal system works? It should only take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Then, please enclose a blank copy of the performance appraisal form you referred to when answering the questionnaire. Enclosing any other appraisal forms your organization uses would help my research as well. The forms and completed questionnaire can be returned in the envelope provided.

Please be assured that all answers will be confidential. If I should quote any responses, no organizational names, and certainly no personal names, will be connected to any information you provide.

If you could return the questionnaire and the forms within two weeks, I would appreciate it. In return for your cooperation in completing the questionnaire, if you wish, I will send your organization a copy of the seminar materials I develop. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Daniel C. Campbell

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?

No

Yes

If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?
Currently have "options" for forms to use. Different business units use different forms that have been developed specifically for their use.

2. How often are performance appraisals usually written?

One per six months

One per year

Other _____

3. Who writes a ratee's performance appraisal? (circle all that apply)

Immediate supervisor

Peers

Self

Other _____

4. If rating criteria are not specified on the form (eg. with "management by objective" forms), to what extent is the ratee involved in determining those rating criteria?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

5. To what extent is the ratee involved in collecting data for the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

6. To what extent is the ratee involved in writing the text of the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

7. To what extent is the ratee involved in the overall appraisal process?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

8. Are ratees permitted to review their performance appraisal document?

No

Yes, before it becomes a matter of record

Yes, after it becomes a matter of record

9. If ratees may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?

No

Yes

10. Approximately what percentage of those rated receive the highest rating?

5-10 %

11. Is there a limit on the percentage who can receive the highest rating?

No

Yes

If yes, what percentage is the limit? _____%

Is the limit official, or informal policy?

Except pay increases are driven by performance ratings and pay increases for business unit need to meet budgetary guidelines, overall.

12. Who, primarily, uses the information in the performance appraisal?

Immediate supervisor

Personnel Director

Other supervisors (please explain)

Employee - Performance appraisal identifies developmental needs/opportunities

13. How much importance do appraisals carry when considerations for promotion, salary increase, and/or retention of employees are being made?

not important

some

much

great importance

14. When managers make personnel decisions based on reviewing past performance appraisals, and when the ratings are the same among those considered, what factors differentiate the better employees? (please be as specific as you can)

Personnel decisions (e.g. reduction in force) based on:

- *Business decision/business need*
- *Skills/expertise analysis*
- *Performance analysis*
- *Seniority*

15. Are supervisors expected to use full sentences and proper English grammar when writing appraisals?

Yes

No

Not in some places (please explain)

Is there an established office or person raters can come to for help in writing appraisals?

No

Yes

If yes, what or who (by title) is it?

Human Resources Manager

17. What, in your opinion, is the greatest difficulty in the process of completing performance appraisals?

- *Tendency of managers to want to rate employees higher than warranted.*
- *Defining performance standards and expectations at beginning of performance cycle.*
- *Consistency in use/interpretation of ratings among different managers.*
- *Writing narrative performance documentation that conforms to overall performance rating.*

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?

No

Yes

If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?

2. How often are performance appraisals usually written?

One per six months

One per year

Other _____

3. Who writes a ratee's performance appraisal? (circle all that apply)

Immediate supervisor

Peers

Self

Other _____

4. If rating criteria are not specified on the form (eg. with "management by objective" forms), to what extent is the ratee involved in determining those rating criteria?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

*Information is gathered from peers, subordi
of self.*

5. To what extent is the ratee involved in collecting data for the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

6. To what extent is the ratee involved in writing the text of the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

7. To what extent is the ratee involved in the overall appraisal process?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

8. Are ratees permitted to review their performance appraisal document?

No

Yes, before it becomes a matter of record

Yes, after it becomes a matter of record

9. If ratees may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?

No

Yes

10. Approximately what percentage of those rated receive the highest rating?

10 %

11. Is there a limit on the percentage who can receive the highest rating?

No

Yes

If yes, what percentage is the limit? 10%
Is the limit official, or informal policy?

12. ~~Who, primarily~~ uses the information in the performance appraisal?

Immediate supervisor

Personnel Director

Other supervisors (please explain) - reviews files for inter departmental transfers.

13. How much importance do appraisals carry when considerations for promotion, salary increase, and/or retention of employees are being made?

not important

some

much

great importance

14. When managers make personnel decisions based on reviewing past performance appraisals, and when the ratings are the same among those considered, what factors differentiate the better employees? (please be as specific as you can)

If employees have received disciplinary action - ie written warnings or probation due to perf

The areas the employee excel in - Problem resolution, self initiative, motivation, interpersonal skills, accuracy, etc.

15. Are supervisors expected to use full sentences and proper English grammar when writing appraisals?

Yes

No

Not in some places (please explain)

16. Is there an established office or person raters can come to for help in writing appraisals?

No

Yes

If yes, what or who (by title) is it?

Compensation Component of Human Res.

17. What, in your opinion, is the greatest difficulty in the process of completing performance appraisals?

Telling employees the areas they need improve

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?

No

Yes

If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?

Hourly Forms

Exempted Forms

2. How often are performance appraisals usually written?

One per six months
Hourly

One per year
Exempted

Other _____

3. Who writes a ratee's performance appraisal? (circle all that apply)

Immediate supervisor

Peers

Self

Other _____

4. If rating criteria are not specified on the form (eg. with "management by objective" forms), to what extent is the ratee involved in determining those rating criteria?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

5. To what extent is the ratee involved in collecting data for the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

6. To what extent is the ratee involved in writing the text of the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

7. To what extent is the ratee involved in the overall appraisal process?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

8. Are ratees permitted to review their performance appraisal document?

No

Yes, before it becomes a matter of record

Yes, after it becomes a matter of record

9. If ratees may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?

No

Yes

10. Approximately what percentage of those rated receive the highest rating?

NA %

11. Is there a limit on the percentage who can receive the highest rating?

No

Yes

If yes, what percentage is the limit? _____%
Is the limit official, or informal policy?

12. Who, primarily, uses the information in the performance appraisal?

Immediate supervisor

Personnel Director

Other supervisors (please explain) *Future Job Bidding*

13. How much importance do appraisals carry when considerations for promotion, salary increase, and/or retention of employees are being made?

not important

some

much

great importance

Exempt

Howly

14. When managers make personnel decisions based on reviewing past performance appraisals, and when the ratings are the same among those considered, what factors differentiate the better employees? (please be as specific as you can)

Interview process

15. Are supervisors expected to use full sentences and proper English grammar when writing appraisals?

Yes

No

Not in some places (please explain)

16. Is there an established office or person raters can come to for help in writing appraisals?

No

Yes

If yes, what or who (by title) is it?

17. What, in your opinion, is the greatest difficulty in the process of completing performance appraisals?

Time

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?

No

Yes

If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?

None/emp

2. How often are performance appraisals usually written?

One per six months

One per year

Other _____

3. Who writes a ratee's performance appraisal? (circle all that apply)

Immediate supervisor

Peers

Self

Other _____

4. If rating criteria are not specified on the form (eg. with "management by objective" forms), to what extent is the ratee involved in determining those rating criteria?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

5. To what extent is the ratee involved in collecting data for the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

6. To what extent is the ratee involved in writing the text of the appraisal?

not at all

but does write a self-review
some

closely

totally involved

7. To what extent is the ratee involved in the overall appraisal process?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

8. Are ratees permitted to review their performance appraisal document?

No

Yes, before it becomes a matter of record

Yes, after it becomes a matter of record

9. If ratees may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?

No

Yes

10. Approximately what percentage of those rated receive the highest rating?

4 %

11. Is there a limit on the percentage who can receive the highest rating?
 No Yes If yes, what percentage is the limit? _____%
 Is the limit official, or informal policy?

12. Who, primarily, uses the information in the performance appraisal?

Immediate supervisor

Personnel Director

Other supervisors (please explain)

*original
copy goes to personnel file*

13. How much importance do appraisals carry when considerations for promotion, salary increase, and/or retention of employees are being made?

not important

some

much

great importance

14. When managers make personnel decisions based on reviewing past performance appraisals, and when the ratings are the same among those considered, what factors differentiate the better employees? (please be as specific as you can)

level of responsibility, length of service

15. Are supervisors expected to use full sentences and proper English grammar when writing appraisals?

Yes

No

Not in some places (please explain)

16. Is there an established office or person raters can come to for help in writing appraisals?

No

Yes

If yes, what or who (by title) is it?

Personnel Manager

17. What, in your opinion, is the greatest difficulty in the process of completing performance appraisals?

Supervisors not keeping enough documentation to justify review and rating

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?

No Yes If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?

2. How often are performance appraisals usually written?

One per six months One per year Other _____

3. Who writes a ratee's performance appraisal? (circle all that apply)

Immediate supervisor Peers Self Other _____

4. If rating criteria are not specified on the form (eg. with "management by objective" forms), to what extent is the ratee involved in determining those rating criteria?

not at all some closely totally involved

5. To what extent is the ratee involved in collecting data for the appraisal?

not at all some closely totally involved

6. To what extent is the ratee involved in writing the text of the appraisal?

not at all some closely totally involved

7. To what extent is the ratee involved in the overall appraisal process?

not at all some closely totally involved

8. Are ratees permitted to review their performance appraisal document?

No Yes, before it becomes a matter of record
 Yes, after it becomes a matter of record

9. If ratees may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?

No Yes

10. Approximately what percentage of those rated receive the highest rating?

---24---%

11. Is there a limit on the percentage who can receive the highest rating?
 No Yes If yes, what percentage is the limit? 15%
 Is the limit official, or informal policy?
12. Who, primarily, uses the information in the performance appraisal?
 Immediate supervisor
 Personnel Director
 Other supervisors (please explain)
13. How much importance do appraisals carry when considerations for promotion, salary increase, and/or retention of employees are being made?
not important some much great importance
14. When managers make personnel decisions based on reviewing past performance appraisals, and when the ratings are the same among those considered, what factors differentiate the better employees? (please be as specific as you can)
 • possible other career options for all candidates
 • person for whom this particular decision would be best developmental opportunity
15. Are supervisors expected to use full sentences and proper English grammar when writing appraisals?
 Yes No Not in some places (please explain)
16. Is there an established office or person raters can come to for help in writing appraisals?
 No Yes If yes, what or who (by title) is it?
 Staff Consultant, Training and Development
17. What, in your opinion, is the greatest difficulty in the process of completing performance appraisals?
 Establishing specific, measurable objectives on which to appraise performance

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?

No

 Yes

If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?

MANAGERIAL

2. How often are performance appraisals usually written?

One per six months

 One per year

Other _____

3. Who writes a ratee's performance appraisal? (circle all that apply)

 Immediate supervisor Peers Self

Other _____

4. If rating criteria are not specified on the form (eg. with "management by objective" forms), to what extent is the ratee involved in determining those rating criteria?

not at all

some

closely

 totally involved

5. To what extent is the ratee involved in collecting data for the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

 totally involved

6. To what extent is the ratee involved in writing the text of the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

 totally involved

7. To what extent is the ratee involved in the overall appraisal process?

not at all

some

closely

 totally involved

8. Are ratees permitted to review their performance appraisal document?

No

 Yes, before it becomes a matter of record Yes, after it becomes a matter of record

9. If ratees may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?

No

 Yes

10. Approximately what percentage of those rated receive the highest rating?

---10---%

11. Is there a limit on the percentage who can receive the highest rating?
 No Yes If yes, what percentage is the limit? _____%
 Is the limit official, or informal policy?
12. Who, primarily, uses the information in the performance appraisal?
 Immediate supervisor
 Personnel Director
 Other supervisors (please explain)
13. How much importance do appraisals carry when considerations for promotion, salary increase, and/or retention of employees are being made?
 not important some much great importance
14. When managers make personnel decisions based on reviewing past performance appraisals, and when the ratings are the same among those considered, what factors differentiate the better employees? (please be as specific as you can)
IF ALL RATINGS ARE EQUAL, THE ONLY VARIABLE WOULD SEEM TO BE LONGEVITY.
15. Are supervisors expected to use full sentences and proper English grammar when writing appraisals?
 Yes No Not in some places (please explain)
IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE, BUT IT DOESN'T ALWAYS HAPPEN.
16. Is there an established office or person raters can come to for help in writing appraisals?
 No Yes If yes, what or who (by title) is it?
17. What, in your opinion, is the greatest difficulty in the process of completing performance appraisals?
FINDING THE TIME TO DO THEM

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?

No

Yes

If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?

Non-Exempt employees on form used to answer this questionnaire

2. How often are performance appraisals usually written?

One per six months

One per year

Other _____

3. Who writes a ratee's performance appraisal? (circle all that apply)

Immediate supervisor

Peers

Self

Other _____

4. If rating criteria are not specified on the form (eg. with "management by objective" forms), to what extent is the ratee involved in determining those rating criteria?

rating criteria are being specified on the form

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

5. To what extent is the ratee involved in collecting data for the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

6. To what extent is the ratee involved in writing the text of the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

7. To what extent is the ratee involved in the overall appraisal process?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

8. Are ratees permitted to review their performance appraisal document?

No

Yes

before it becomes a matter of record

Yes, after it becomes a matter of record

9. If ratees may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?

No

Yes

10. Approximately what percentage of those rated receive the highest rating?

0.1 %

11. Is there a limit on the percentage who can receive the highest rating?
 No Yes If yes, what percentage is the limit? _____%
 Is the limit official, or informal policy?

12. Who, primarily, uses the information in the performance appraisal?

Immediate supervisor

Personnel Director

Other supervisors (please explain) ← when employee posts for another position

13. How much importance do appraisals carry when considerations for promotion, salary increase, and/or retention of employees are being made?

not important some much great importance

14. When managers make personnel decisions based on reviewing past performance appraisals, and when the ratings are the same among those considered, what factors differentiate the better employees? (please be as specific as you can)

Additional factors section IV (on enclosed form)
 e.g. attendance, willingness to accept responsibility, etc.

15. Are supervisors expected to use full sentences and proper English grammar when writing appraisals?

Yes No Not in some places (please explain)

16. Is there an established office or person raters can come to for help in writing appraisals?

No Yes If yes, what or who (by title) is it?

consult with immediate supervisor (up the line).

17. What, in your opinion, is the greatest difficulty in the process of completing performance appraisals?

Section II comparative rating, arraying your employees from high to low, especially in a smaller work group.

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?

No

Yes

If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?

2. How often are performance appraisals usually written?

One per six months

One per year

Other _____

3. Who writes a ratee's performance appraisal? (circle all that apply)

Immediate supervisor

Peers

Self

Other _____

4. If rating criteria are not specified on the form (eg. with "management by objective" forms), to what extent is the ratee involved in determining those rating criteria?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

5. To what extent is the ratee involved in collecting data for the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

6. To what extent is the ratee involved in writing the text of the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

7. To what extent is the ratee involved in the overall appraisal process?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

8. Are ratees permitted to review their performance appraisal document?

No

Yes, before it becomes a matter of record

Yes, after it becomes a matter of record

9. If ratees may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?

No

Yes

10. Approximately what percentage of those rated receive the highest rating?

25⁺ %

11. Is there a limit on the percentage who can receive the highest rating?
 No Yes If yes, what percentage is the limit? _____%
 Is the limit official, or informal policy?

12. Who, primarily, uses the information in the performance appraisal?

Immediate supervisor

Personnel Director

Other supervisors (please explain)

+ Rates - to improve weak areas.

13. How much importance do appraisals carry when considerations for promotion, salary increase, and/or retention of employees are being made?

not important some much great importance

14. When managers make personnel decisions based on reviewing past performance appraisals, and when the ratings are the same among those considered, what factors differentiate the better employees? (please be as specific as you can)

haven't had this situation arise

15. Are supervisors expected to use full sentences and proper English grammar when writing appraisals?

Yes

No

Not in some places (please explain)

16. Is there an established office or person raters can come to for help in writing appraisals?

No

Yes

If yes, what or who (by title) is it?

N/A - form is very simple

17. What, in your opinion, is the greatest difficulty in the process of completing performance appraisals?

dealing face to face w/ low rated areas
 if rater doesn't see it that way.

Please feel free to provide additional explanations or mark references on your appraisal form. If you need more space, extra paper is attached.

1. Does your organization use more than one kind of performance appraisal form?

No

 Yes

If yes, what types of positions are rated on the form you will use to answer this questionnaire?

staff accountants

2. How often are performance appraisals usually written?

One per six months

One per year

Other for every engagement worked on that is ≥ 40 hrs.

3. Who writes a ratee's performance appraisal? (circle all that apply)

Immediate supervisor

 Peers Self

Other _____

4. If rating criteria are not specified on the form (eg. with "management by objective" forms), to what extent is the ratee involved in determining those rating criteria?

not at all

some

closely

totally involved

N/A -
rating criteria
is specific

5. To what extent is the ratee involved in collecting data for the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

 totally involved

6. To what extent is the ratee involved in writing the text of the appraisal?

not at all

some

closely

 totally involved

7. To what extent is the ratee involved in the overall appraisal process?

not at all

some

closely

 totally involved

8. Are ratees permitted to review their performance appraisal document?

No

 Yes before it becomes a matter of record

Yes, after it becomes a matter of record

9. If ratees may review their appraisal before it becomes official, are they allowed to suggest changes or make objections?

No

 Yes

10. Approximately what percentage of those rated receive the highest rating?

---15---%

11. Is there a limit on the percentage who can receive the highest rating?
 No Yes If yes, what percentage is the limit? _____%
 Is the limit official, or informal policy?

12. Who, primarily, uses the information in the performance appraisal?

Immediate supervisor

Personnel Director

Other supervisors (please explain)

The person who primarily uses the appraisal is the rater, who uses it for self improvement. However the

partners also use it to determine raises.

13. How much importance do appraisals carry when considerations for promotion, salary increase, and/or retention of employees are being made?

not important

some

much

great importance

14. When managers make personnel decisions based on reviewing past performance appraisals, and when the ratings are the same among those considered, what factors differentiate the better employees? (please be as specific as you can)

initiative + attitude

verbal + written explanations + input

15. Are supervisors expected to use full sentences and proper English grammar when writing appraisals?

Yes

No

Not in some places (please explain)

Not necessarily full sentences

but should be grammatically proper

16. Is there an established office or person raters can come to for help in writing appraisals?

No

Yes

If yes, what or who (by title) is it?

their supervisor - a manager or senior manager

17. What, in your opinion, is the greatest difficulty in the process of completing performance appraisals?

not being honest and not expecting enough

18. If I have any questions concerning your answers, may I contact you?
No Yes If yes, may I have your name, work address,
and telephone number?

APPENDIX B

SEMINAR HANDOUTS

Steps for Writing a Performance Appraisal

Keep an incident file

- Tell your people the file exists
- Let individuals see their file
- Record both good and bad incidents
- Record only facts of behavior—not opinions or hearsay
- Record incidents on paper—not on computer disks

Start writing early

- Find out when the performance appraisal is due
- Figure out how much time you will need to do a good job
- Don't start writing the day (or night) before the appraisal is due

Get organized

- Be familiar with company guidelines for performance appraisals
- Get together all incident file material and notes
- Lay out materials according to where you will need them on the form
- Use goals and objects section from the last appraisal
- Figure out a chronology of events so you can see trends

Start writing

- Dump thoughts onto paper based on sections of the form
 - Don't edit anything yet
- Be specific about performance
 - If you make a general statement, question meaning
 - Back up statements with numbers or statistics from your notes

Edit and finalize

- Let the appraisal sit for a day
- Cut unnecessary words (refer to Clear Writing handout)
- Make your draft fit the form
 - You don't have to fill all the space available
 - You can use a continuation sheet
- Type the appraisal in final form

Clear Writing

☐ Specifics

Write action verbs

- Replace “weak” verbs: be, am, is, are, was, were
make, makes, made
do, does, did
use, used

Start sentences with the subject

- Replace: It is . . .
There are . . .
What . . .

End sentences with the thing you want emphasized

Omit qualifiers and intensifiers

- Omit: very, perhaps, such, pretty, much, really, etc.

Use “active voice”

- make “was given by him” into “he gave”

☐ Readability

Change nominalizations to action verbs

- Many end in -ation
- Many follow “weak” verbs

Shorten wordy phrases

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| • Replace: | due to the fact that | with: because |
| | has the ability to | can |
| | despite the fact that | although |
| | subsequent to | after |
| | in the event that | if |
| | it is necessary that | must |

State things in positive terms

- Try not to use “not”

Omit unnecessary reference to the writer

- Omit: I think, I believe, To me, etc.

Visual aspects

- Use numbers or bullets, don't have solid blocks of typing
- Put space between paragraphs

Substance versus Fluff

Do not generalize about performance

Give specific examples of behavior

- Get specifics from your incident file

Use numbers or statistics to support statements

When writing about “bad” behavior, consider if it is typical of everyday performance

- If the behavior is a one-time occurrence, you may not want to mention it
- If the behavior is not typical, but is seriously disruptive, you should mention it (see Criticism handout)

Make sure the word picture matches ratings

Are the adjectives I used too strong or weak?

Are amounts and qualities of specific examples consistent with ratings?

Goals and Objectives

 Goals

Specific

Understandable

Obtainable

- Able to exceed goals
- Challenging

Consistent with goals of others in the same position

Consistent with company goals

 Objectives

Measurable

Realistic

 Date

Realistic

- not "immediately"

Specific

- not "ongoing"

 If the job environment changes

Rewrite this page

Consult with employee(s)

 Use this page when writing the next performance appraisal

Criticism

These suggestions assume you want to save the person

Bad attitudes

Does the bad attitude interfere with their work?

Does the bad attitude interfere with the work of others?

If the answer to both questions above is "no," you should not mention attitude on the appraisal form. Bad attitudes that do not affect performance should be worked out informally

How to avoid offending employees in writing

The "bad news" approach

- Start with something good
- "Sandwich" criticism
- End with something positive

Word-level techniques

- Use "hedging" words
- Use "weak" verbs
- Use passive construction
- Share blame if you can
- If the behavior is unusual, state that

Indicate efforts the person has made to improve

APPENDIX C

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

JOB# _____

Date: October, 4, 1989

EEO# _____

Job title: District Manager Dept: Metro Circulation

Main Function: Work with a carrier force in a designated area to meet goals for circulation, sales, service and collections.

Working Relationships:

Accountable and reports to (job title): Zone Manager

Positions that report to you (job titles):

Contracted carriers
(Employee carriers
in designated

areas)

RESPONSIBILITIES (in order of importance):

1. Increase circulation units and penetration in an assigned district. Meet sales goals.
2. Meet goals for service (complaints/1,000). Provide for a reliable distribution system in the district. Follow up quickly and effectively on service problems.
3. Meet goals for "clearing" (money management). Minimize revenue losses from unpaid carrier/customer accounts.
4. Properly recruit, lease (hire, for employee carriers), train and service the carrier force for the district. (For managers with employee carriers: monitor performance and conduct performance reviews).
5. Process reports and perform general operational duties effectively and on time.
6. Perform other job-related duties as assigned by the zone manager.

SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITIES (in order of importance):

1. Promote and maintain carrier safety standards.
2. Provide teamwork to assist in other districts when necessary.
3. Participate in department projects and activities.
4. (Adult Division; meet service goals for USA Today).

Working condition: Outside work in designated district; office work.

Equipment used to perform the job:

<u>Item</u>	<u>% working time used</u>
Motor vehicle	40%
2-way radio	15%
Misc: VDT, calculator, telephone	30%

List any skills and abilities required to perform this position:

- . Organization/time-management; good communication skills; math skills; sales; people/management skills; willing to handle "split shift" responsibilities.

Minimum education and experience needed to perform the job:

- . College degree or appropriate work experience; carrier experience helpful.

Certification or licensing required:

- . Valid Iowa driver's license.

Your signature indicates that you have reviewed this Job Description and agree with its contents. Please return a copy of this form to Employee Relations after it has been reviewed by the department manager.

signature of employee

date

signature of supervisor

date

signature of department manager

date

Circulation Department

Name: Ann Smith

Job title: District Manager, third year in that position

Items in incident file:

- Sales:** daily average of 221, Sunday average of 264
came up with creative new sales strategy
- Service:** reduced number of deliveries per carrier
complaints per 1000 .62 daily and .89 Sunday
follows up on complaints 100%
- Clearing:** 99% clearing
bad debt loss .14%
conducts random collection book audit at least every 10 days
- Carriers:** started carrier training program last month, too early for
results
well liked by most carriers
had to fire carrier after random collection book audit and
many customer complaints--most complaints in
service section above from him
heard rumors that Ann sexually harassed a male carrier--I
looked into it, but found no substantiation
- Reports:** all reports in on time during past year
- Other:** helped organize zone Halloween party
stress management not good

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Date</u>
Increase daily sales	increase to 200	30 Oct 91
Increase Sunday sales	increase to 265	30 Oct 91
Reduce daily complaints	reduce to .65	1 Jun 91
Reduce Sunday complaints	reduce to .75	1 Jun 91
Follow up on complaints	99% follow-up	1 Feb 91
Maintain clearing rate	99% clearing	30 Oct 91
Reduce bad debt loss	reduce to .20%	30 Oct 91
Implement carrier training	have program in place	30 Oct 91
Increase report timeliness	99% on time	1 Apr 91

Des Moines Register

Job # _____

EEO# _____

Job title: Accounting Clerk I Dept. Accounting

Main

Function: Process all payments received, balance and prepare a daily deposit, keep accurate record of payments by posting on a terminal and handle customer service related to cash processing.

Working Relationships:

Accountable and reports to (job title): Cash Services Supervisor

Positions that report to you (job title): None

RESPONSIBILITIES (in order of importance):

1. Exhibit a positive approach to customer service and help establish a professional company image.
2. Process advertising, PBM, carrier and miscellaneous cash payments. Process charge card payments.
3. Demonstrate ability to prepare the daily deposit and maintain balancing routines.
4. Relieving 1st floor cashier, including performing duties without supervision.
5. Process lockbox and clearing cash. This would include balancing, ordering reports and fixing errors.
6. Post cash payments to customer accounts, balancing and closing the batches.

SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITIES (in order of importance):

1. Filing cancelled checks.
2. Stuffing expense checks.
3. Any other duties assigned by supervisor.

Working conditions: Constant attention to detail, time and deadline pressures, enclosed space, lack of closure to tasks.

Equipment used to perform the job:

<u>Item</u>	<u>% of working time used</u>
1. CRT terminal	15%-25%
2. 10-day calculator	25%
3. Cash register	5%

List any skills and abilities required to perform this position: 10-day balancing skills, data entry ability, attention to detail, ability to work together as a team, customer service skills.

Minimum education and experience needed to perform the job: At least 1 year of college, 2 years experience handling cash and acquiring customer service skills.

Certification or licensing required:
None

IMPORTANT

Your signature indicates that you have reviewed this job description and agree with its contents. Please return a copy of this form to Employee Relations after it has been reviewed by the department manager.

(signature of employee)

(date)

(signature of supervisor)

(date)

(signature of department manager)

(date)

Accounting Department

Name: David Roberts

Job title: Accounting Clerk I, two years in that position

Items in incident file:

Customer service: generally pleasant, sharp dresser
received two customer complaints in past year,
Dave apologized to person both times
after I told him to
attended customer service training 15 May 91
after I told him to go

Processing payments: needs more time than most other clerks, was
late with pbm clearing 6 times
over 99% accurate throughout the year
prioritizes work well on his own and helps
other occasionally to prioritize theirs
very organized—almost obsessively so

Daily deposit & balance 100% over the year, but slow sometimes

Relieve cashier: no problems

Posting payments: again, nearly 100% accuracy, but works at about
80% the rate of others
came up with new method for verifying
accuracy of posted payments that is more
thorough—estimate \$1000 per year savings
in missed postings

Other: four co-workers individually complained that
Dave is hard to work with and interferes
with their ability to get their work done
on time
works well, but slow, on his own

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Date</u>
Improve customer service	one customer complaint per year	30 Oct 91
	attend customer service training	1 Jun 91
Maintain high processing standards	maintain at least 99% accuracy in all processing	30 Oct 91
Improve timeliness of processing	improve to 99% on-time rate	30 Oct 91

APPENDIX D

SEMINAR CRITIQUES

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

One to one bases according to job -

You were especially effective when you:

You could have been more effective if you had: *One Evaluation form used on job description*

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

The exercise but using Circulation and Accounts were so different because we don't all understand what was being explained

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

Your organization needs to flow a little more

You were especially effective when you:

You gave your examples

You could have been more effective if you had:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

Class exercise.

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

If they followed Company policy more closely.

You were especially effective when you:

You could have been more effective if you had:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

You were especially effective when you:

You could have been more effective if you had:

done more training in this field - view the Gannett training film and/or other companies training materials. - one

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: Overall
Not enough substance too much generalization for this experienced group.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: Handouts were good could not read the overheads - too far away - should have had paper copies to refer to.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: ok -

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

Class exercise could have been better if we all had access to each other's examples & we didn't know what they were talking about.

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were: *Writing exercise*

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful: *More discussion of writing exercises had time permitted*

You were especially effective when you: *You were analyzing good/Bad written performance appraisals using specific examples.*

You could have been more effective if you had: *Could eliminate some of the "ands" & connector words from verbal communication*

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

overheads and group interaction

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

You were especially effective when you:

You could have been more effective if you had:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

Goals

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

You were especially effective when you:

You could have been more effective if you had:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

ACTUAL WRITING & REVIEW

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

IF MORE TIME WAS AVAILABLE

You were especially effective when you:

HAD GROUP DISCUSSION & REVIEWS ON OVERHEADS

You could have been more effective if you had:

TRY TO RELAX MORE - GO IN CASE

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

INCIDENT FILE - SHARE WITH EMPLOYEE

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

MORE HELP WITH "BUZZ" WORDS - A MORE SPECIFIC LIST,

You were especially effective when you:

You could have been more effective if you had:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

Clear Writing and the practice session

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

You were especially effective when you:

Gave specific examples from our work.

You could have been more effective if you had:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: <i>We could have used more time.</i>				
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: <i>Clear, well organized</i>				
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: <i>Martha's early explanation that we were just looking at the written portion</i>				
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

Some parts of ~~part 1~~
All parts of part 2.

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

If more time devoted to hands on.
We had handouts, so could have taken less time.

You were especially effective when you:

Were very good at being 1 w/ audience,
eye contact, rapport.

You could have been more effective if you had:

gotten w/ personnel to see what you agreed on about reviews, emphasized this more.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> (+)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

Doing the class exercise.

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

Being more specific on job responsibilities

You were especially effective when you:

were talking from experience

You could have been more effective if you had:

been more knowledgeable of how our policies work and are enforced.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

Step by Step procedure up to time of actually doing the review.

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

Clear writing

You were especially effective when you:

You could have been more effective if you had:

I feel your part of the program deserved more time moved to fast.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

step by step parts for writing an appraisal

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

You were especially effective when you:

You could have been more effective if you had: *Been more prepared - Maybe gained a little insight on how business performance appraisals go.*

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

Clear writing section

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

Some of the comments on the criteria section were contradictory

You were especially effective when you:

The written handouts and use of overhead examples were most effective.

You could have been more effective if you had:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

You were especially effective when you: *used actual performance review written within the Register*

You could have been more effective if you had: *completed more research on performance review. ~~I felt that~~ I tended to disagree w/ a lot of what you said.*

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

the last hour writing a performance review

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

Criticism, Verbage

You were especially effective when you:

?

You could have been more effective if you had:

Given more feedback and scenarios.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

The performance review examples.

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

More examples of appropriate wording.

You were especially effective when you:

utilized newspaper as an example of good communication and organization - makes appraisal much more effective

You could have been more effective if you had:

spoken more of criticisms and the most effective method in dealing with the "bad" by having

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Critique

Thank you for attending this seminar on writing effective performance appraisals. I hope you gained something useful from it. If you could give me some feedback by critiquing my presentation, you would be of great assistance. Please be as specific as you can.

The parts of the seminar I found most valuable were:

*pointers on clear writing
group work*

These parts of the seminar could have been more useful:

how to deal with criticism

You were especially effective when you:

has specific examples

You could have been more effective if you had:

more specific examples & make your points

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<u>Class exercise</u> (Relevance, detail, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Materials</u> (Handouts, overheads, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Organization</u> (Logical flow, discussions, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Instructor</u> (Knowledge, preparation, expression, etc.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

sometimes disorganized

delivery could have been more smooth. Seemed nervous