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ADOPTION OF A PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM
USING BEHAVIORIAL DIMENSIONS
BY

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I. THE SYSTEM

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The Performance Evaluation System using behavioral dimensions was designed as a "spin off" of the highly successful Assessment Center technique. In 1975 the Rochester Police Department implemented an Assessment Center patterned after Kansas City's effort. Rochester used the system to choose officers for the rank of investigator. After a lengthy program, 82 officers were chosen to comprise a promotional list for the rank of investigator. While the Rochester Police Department had now picked the "cream of the crop" to fill the rank of investigator, it was still saddled with a totally subjective type of performance evaluation which had been in use since the late 1950's. Since the success or failure of the Assessment Center could only be measured by results, it was decided to conduct a yearly rating of the investigators using the same dimensions by which they had been chosen originally. The Assessment Center had used 11 dimensions, however, it was decided to par this to six for the sake of the time factor involved. The Rochester Police Department still had four other ranks of detectives and they were also to be rated under the new system. The 4 other detective ranks included plain-clothesmen and detectives, grades A, B and C. The purpose of the

Assessment Center was to select personnel for the new rank of investigator, but through union negotiations, the other detective ranks were grandfathered into the job and could only be reduced through retirement, disciplinary action or poor performance evaluation.

A. Explanation of consultant assisted Task Analysis dimension identification.

As part of the Assessment Center a consultant was hired to conduct a Task Analysis for the Rochester Police Department. The consultant, whose expertise was in the Personnel Management Performance Evaluation line, gathered together a group of officers, based upon their years of service, job title, etc. and through a lengthy Task Analysis, 12 dimensions were identified which were considered the most important aspects of a good investigator. During the Assessment Center training, one of these dimensions was dropped due to problems occurring in filling the dimensions with pertinent information about the candidate. It should be noted here that well over 300 qualities were identified but were boiled down to the 11 most germane to the role of investigator.

As was stated, six of the dimensions were chosen to be used in the new Performance Evaluation System. Those dimensions were:

INITIATIVE

Actively influences events rather than passively accepting; self-starting

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Effectiveness in seeking out pertinent data and in determining the source of the problem.

DECISIVENESS

Readiness to make decisions or to render judgments.

PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION

Effectiveness in planning and organizing own activities and those of a group.

JUDGEMENT

Ability to reach logical conclusions based on the evidence at hand.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Do the officers record reports containing the essential information in readable form and is it logically organized.

Based on the use of these dimensions, the Rochester Police Department felt that it could obtain a totally objective look at the performance of its personnel.

It should be noted here that these dimensions are pertinent to all types of police personnel and a small or medium sized department could save itself the expense of hiring a consultant to conduct a Task Analysis by using these already identified dimensions. It is true that a consultant adds credibility to any system, but the fact that this system has been used successfully in other departments should lend the necessary credibility. It should be easy to see that the use of these dimensions to judge personnel in any field of endeavor is worthwhile and it is our contention that an individual who exhibits these dimensions in his behavior could be put in any position within a police department and perform at a satisfactory level.

B. User Education

No system works well unless it is easily understood by all involved. Naturally, weights and mechanics of the scoring system should not be revealed, but all other aspects of the system should be available to ALL personnel.

Poster board cards were drawn up listing the six dimensions and placed in each substation. In this manner all personnel were made aware of the exact dimensions that they would be rated on. Most personnel were already familiar with the "nuts and bolts" operation of the Assessment Center and knew how the ratings were arrived at; but in a department instituting this system, User Education should be expanded to make the department aware of all aspects of the system.

C. Rater Training

The word "rater" in this system is a misnomer in that the personnel assigned to carry out the system do not rate. The term facilitator ("to make easy") has been used since all the personnel involved do is transfer comments from panel members to the appropriate dimension.

Rater/facilitator should be given an extensive course in the system. The usual classes, role-play situations, etc. will make them able to handle the system when it comes down to the actual panel formation.

II. PANEL INFORMATION

A. Location

It is suggested that locations divorced from the police atmosphere be utilized for panel reviews. The constant radio calls, telephone interruptions and overall pressures exerted on command personnel attempting to rate their personnel while in an "on-duty" atmosphere, do not lend themselves to total concentration on the assigned task.

B. Personnel Involved

Personnel involved in the actual panel discussions should include the candidate's immediate supervisor(s) (sergeants), his lieutenant, and the section commander. Usually the commander has little input into the discussion, but serves as a catalyst to generate conversation. This is also helpful to a commander in that he can observe essentially how much his command personnel actually know about their subordinates.

C. Requirements

First-line supervisors are required to bring to the panel discussion their candidate's personnel files and any or all reports that show positive or negative factors under the various dimensions. The first-line supervisors are made aware of the fact that they must have enough objective statements (statements that can be proven through reports, etc.) to adequately show the candidate's performance within a given dimension.

In Rochester a form was distributed which called for the supervisor to list all investigations, both felony and misde-

meanor, which the candidate was assigned. The form required a percentage be given to the number of cases cleared (whether it be from arrest, no prosecution, false reports, etc.) and the unit average of clearances. The form also required the supervisor to list all cases that were initiated by the investigator above and beyond his normally assigned cases. To back up the claims made by the supervisor regarding his candidate, he was also required to bring a report to back up every crime report number that was listed on the form. This made the evaluation objective rather than subjective since each pro or con statement about the candidate had to be backed up by conclusive evidence of that statement actually occurring.

A small percentage of subjective "feelings" were allowed and was usually used at the beginning of each dimension to set the tone and show what the supervisor thought of the individual. However, all statements of a negative nature had to be proved.

III. SCORING:

A. Average Performance

Scoring was done by the facilitators on a 1 to 5 scale.

1. Very little of the dimension was shown.
2. Less than a moderate amount of this dimension was shown.
3. A moderate amount was shown (average).
4. More than a moderate amount was shown.
5. A great deal of the dimension was shown.

Scoring however is not broken down on a plus or minus scale.

That is to say, a candidate who has four plus factors and one

minus factor does not qualify for a three, conversely a candidate who has seven plus and no minus factors does not qualify for a five. All statements must be scored on their importance in the dimension. It is possible to have a candidate who has seven plus and no minus factors score a three based solely on the fact that all of the positive factors were considered as average performance of what an officer is normally expected to do. (This scoring system is covered in-depth in the facilitator/rater training period.)

B. Weights

After the raters separately score the individuals based on the statements that they have independently put under each dimension, the scores are multiplied by the weight factors assigned to each dimension, totaled and divided by the number of dimensions to arrive at a percentile score. (Weighting was arrived at through the Task Analysis portion of the Assessment Center.) In Rochester there were no "0%" since the lowest a candidate could receive for a score in a dimension was a one. Therefore, the lowest rating was 20% and 60% was considered average performance. Sixty percent was considered the base line to determine pass or fail aspects of the evaluation.

C. Scenario

At the bottom of each dimension page the facilitator/rater writes a short scenario detailing the reasons for the scoring assigned, e.g.;

"Although the candidate had seven positive traits, most of the positive traits are normally expected of a police officer and when compared to the seriousness of the negative traits, which he exhibited, call for a score of two in this dimension."

Once the evaluation sheets are typed, the section commanders are called in and each scenario is explained to them. They then return to their units and call in each affected party and explain their rating to them pointing out their strengths and weaknesses in each dimension. Candidates are not allowed to possess a copy of the evaluation form, but can copy any statements they may want to use for a possible appeal.

D. Appeals

Appeals are handled by the candidate's disproving statements assigned to him under the various dimension. Naturally the appeal must be solidified by proofs. Since no names are attributed to the statements on the rating form, the candidate can only attack the statement and not any individual supervisor. Appeals are channeled thru the section commander to the facilitator/rater team and for final review by the Deputy Chief of the Operations Division. In Rochester there were eight (8) appeals out of approximately 180 ratings with one granted for cause.

If a candidate scores below the 60% mark, he is notified that he has four (4) months to correct his deficiencies or disciplinary action will be taken. In Rochester this notification was solidified by a letter from the Chief of Police

telling the investigator that if he did not improve his score within four (4) months, he would be returned to uniformed status. In Rochester 21 investigators and detectives failed the system the first time around. Fourteen of these passed four (4) months later, four (4) were returned to uniform and three (3) retired.

IV. USAGE

A. Promotion

In a small or medium sized department this objective form of rating system could very easily be used as a promotional tool. Where Civil Service is involved, it would be possible with Civil Service approval, to use the rating as a percentage of the final mark, probably, coupled with a written exam.

B. Rating/Growth

Naturally the percent figure is a rating and allows the candidate to know where he stands as far as his performance is concerned. The system also stimulates growing in that it allows the candidate to see his strengths and weaknesses and concentrate on upgrading the weaknesses.