

Module 4 - case training and appraisals

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Soon after the industrial revolution and steady development in public policy, organizations aligned themselves towards a more strategic way of handling workforce, hence overtime the field of Human Resource Management developed rapidly since mid of 20th century. The traditional employee-employer relationship changed and employees were considered as the most important assets for the business entity, assets that can be developed further and provide competitive edge in the market. This realization resulted in more focus on management of employee performance and development of skills eventually creating business leaders possessing exceptional business acumen with the ability to inspire people and prepare them for future challenges.

The discipline of Human Resource Management introduced various methodologies for managing employee performance, these tools ranged from performance appraisals based on rating scales to objective setting and later on performance surveys were introduced. An essential element of these appraisals was the performance feedback given to the employee after the actual appraisal based on which development efforts were planned by the incumbent supported by the Human Resource department (Greenhaus et al., 2009). The distribution of rewards after the performance appraisal or resulting promotions made this area an important aspect for the employee hence the human element of biasness diluted the traditional appraisal process. To avoid the evils of biasness mostly exhibited by the supervisor and resulting disagreements from the subordinates, performance feedback was taken from multiple sources and 360 degree feedback technique was

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adopted by numerous organizations.

The 360 feedback process reveals the blind spots in behavioral characteristics of the subject by collecting anonymous feedback from multiple sources usually termed as supervisor (s), subordinate(s), peers and customers. The process gives an effective account of one's performance, highlighting the development areas without much biasness and since the feedback is coming from multiple sources there is a lesser probability that the subject would disagree with the results.

The process itself is composed of three stages, preparation and initiation, collection of feedback and development stage. The first stage includes identification of working relationships within the organization determining the important factor of ' who would rate who', behavioral clusters are identified with each having a set of probing questions along with rating criteria; then comes readiness of participants with an assurance of confidentiality through anonymity followed by important guidelines provided to them related to the process and finally the survey is initiated. The second stage begins with a self assessment from the individual on same scale; feedback is collected from all the participants usually a lengthy process as multiple working relationships may exist in an organization. After collection phase certain reports are developed and feedback from others is plotted against the self assessment highlighting gaps and consequently the development areas. The third stage is the most vital stage and success of overall process depends on it, development goals are identified with the help of a counselor or by self and behavioral changes take place over time with carefully planned training sessions and team activities (Bracken, 2009).

The disadvantages associated with 360 degree feedback surveys are related

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to ability of assessors, dishonest feedback given by the participants, too many surveys resulting in consistent answers, lack of action after feedbacks, lengthy process reminding us of old bureaucratic times, conflicting and unknown areas as peers or customers might not know the person too well hence answers can be consistent depending on their moods and stress levels, feedback of supervisor(s) and subordinate(s) who know the subject most well although their weight-age is equal to other parties. Additionally the process relies a lot on technology and human element of traditional one to one sessions and emphasis on technical areas is ignored with much importance given to individual behavioral aspects (Tosti, 2009).

Like any other technique, this methodology can do wonders for an organization and individual if it is planned, executed and followed up with real actions (Newbold, 2008). Although the whole process is cumbersome and has too many dependant factors related to participants and their abilities as raters and assessors. I would suggest that 360 degree survey should only be used for leadership teams (senior management) who would understand, rate and respond to the findings well. The process should not be linked with rewards and an alternative approach should be used for performance management such as management by objective approach (MBO).

References:

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