

Career Development

Personnel evaluations, if administered properly, pinpoint strengths that can be developed and weaknesses that should be corrected, thereby furnishing administrators with a developmental and remedial device of considerable worth. Those employees who consistently maintain a level of performance above the standards set by the department can, based upon their evaluations, be assigned to more responsible duties. Conversely, officers who are unable to meet reasonable standards can be given the guidance, supervision, and training necessary to save a career before it founders.

Supervisory Interest

Systematic evaluations encourage supervisors to take a personal interest in the men under their command. Within this context, appraisals can have a humanizing effect on supervision by holding commanders responsible for the performance of subordinates. Ideally, the program will foster mutual understanding, *esprit de corps*, solidarity, and group cohesiveness.

Salary Decisions

With the current managerial emphasis on rewards won on merit, personnel evaluations serve as a basis, often the only one, for pay increases. Officers with satisfactory appraisals will probably receive raises on time, while increases for those who fall below standards may be temporarily withheld. In industry, superior employees often receive early pay raises, an idea which may be of some value in police work, where it has not been used to any extent.

Evaluate Selection Practices

When entry-level procedures are valid, most men selected for employment will make positive contributions to the department. If, however, many rookie officers on an agency are unable to perform adequately, there may be something seriously wrong with the selection process. Personnel appraisal allows administrators to maintain a continuing check on entrance standards to determine if they are relevant or in need of modification. Furthermore, promotional examinations can be validated if supervisory and command evaluations are accurate.

PERSONNEL EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Personnel evaluations will occur in a police department whether or not a formal system exists. The relationships between supervisors and subordinates make personal appraisals inevitable. However, a formal evalua-

tion system can increase the probability of fairness, accuracy, equity, and comprehensiveness, and give consistency to the procedure.⁶ It also forces supervisors to explicitly justify their evaluations of officers on verifiable grounds. There are a number of recognized personnel evaluation instruments that have been employed in industry and in government.

The Rating Scale

The rating scale, sometimes called *graphic rating*, has been the most universally used evaluation method. Although there are several types of scales, the most common one lists factors in one column (i.e., "job knowledge," "judgment" and "quality of work") and requires raters to place a mark at a point of value. Each personal and professional quality that is thought to be necessary for the successful performance of an employee's job is listed on the rating form to allow supervisors to grade individual factors and tabulate a total grade. This device has become popular because it is simple to construct, easy to grade, and lends itself admirably to a comparison among large numbers of employees. There has been widespread criticism of rating scales because of their susceptibility to personal and technical errors. Studies indicate that as the number of factors on a rating form increases, so too does the probability of error. A reasonable number of factors for evaluation is ten. Any more than that may lower supervisory motivation to rate equitably.⁷

Employee Comparisons

Employee comparisons differ from the rating scale in that they do not require the use of absolute standards. In lieu of comparing a man with a set of factors (standards) the evaluator will make comparisons among individuals, usually the men on a given squad. People performing like duties compete against one another for ratings. In essence, officers provide points of reference for grading, which result in a relative appraisal. There are four types of employee comparisons: 1) ranking, 2) paired comparisons, 3) forced distribution, and 4) combined employee comparison.

Ranking

In ranking, the evaluator identifies the individual to be appraised and rates him from the poorest to the best, using one or more characteristics. This system may be of some value to a police chief in a small department who simply lists his line officers in order of preferences based on reasonable standards. It is of no use in larger agencies, for in comparisons of the results of groups it is possible that the best man in one group may be the worst in another, and vice versa.