

SCORE Model: A Hybrid Approach towards Performance Appraisal of Blue Collar Employees

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Performance appraisal is one of the most crucial processes in human resource management. There are several methods for the appraisal of employees' performance. There is always the scope for upgrading existing performance appraisals. With time, the cost of employees is likely to increase. So, the organizations need to justify that cost at some point of time in order to sustain their businesses. This paper proposes a hybrid approach for a new type of performance appraisal i.e., Specific, Continuous, Objective, Reliable and more Engaging (SCORE model). A performance appraisal problem is discussed and employees are graded as per the modified approach. This comparison concludes that this hybrid approach is more flexible and satisfactory compared to traditional methods.

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Introduction

One of the crucial needs in any type of organization is to evaluate its employees' performance effectively and continuously to find out where they stand, whether they are super-performers, average performers or below average performers. Performance appraisal has been presented by different scholars in various ways.

Dale S. Beach (1980), states that performance appraisal is a systematic evaluation of individual performance with a scope of career development. According to Randall S. Schuler (2005), performance appraisal is a formal, structured system of measuring and evaluating an employee's job related behavior and outcomes to analyze how and why the employee is performing the job and how the employee can perform better for the benefit of all. Heyel (1973) suggests that, it is the process of evaluating the performance and qualifications of the employees in terms of the requirements of the job for which he is

employed, it is also used for administrative purposes like promotions, increments and other actions which reward and recognize better performers.

The Need Analysis

Traditional appraisals are done by comparing present performance with already established standards. The main objective of performance appraisal is to evaluate, motivate and develop existing talent. Further, this is also used to identify specific training needs and accelerate career development and progression. But the real question lies in the fact that, are the performance appraisals effective in true sense. With time, cost on employees will also increase, so there should be a check and balance mechanism that will justify the cost spent on the employees. On the other hand, keeping performance management in mind, the role of performance appraisals is very much important for an organization as well as for employee development.

The major focus of enquiry for several authors (e.g., Freeman, 2002; Seddon, 2001; Wilson and Western, 2000; Randell, 1994; Long, 1986) has been to examine as to why, in this competitive environment, performance appraisal systems generally are not goal oriented and do not cater the needs of the business, or the career development aspects of the employees. According to Harris (1994), the HR strategies adopted by an organization might impact the organizational strategies.

Objective of the Study

Propper and Wilson (2003), Said (2003) suggest that several studies carried out in the past had focused on measuring performance of white-collar employees. However, there are few studies which have focused on performance management of blue collar employees. Hence there is a need to carry out a pilot study on the performance management system of blue collar employees in a manufacturing industry as a case study approach. The study has taken into account the limitations of the system and evaluation methods used for the appraisal, thereby proposing a hybrid approach for PMS of blue-collar employees. The approach will help in improving performance on key deliverables through improved execution at shop floor by blue-collar employees. The objective of this study is to: (a) understand the nature of existing performance appraisal in the participant organization; (b) propose a hybrid approach of performance appraisal for blue collar employees.

Research Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and we have followed the case study approach to address 'why?', 'what?' and 'how?' perspective. The case study approach is time and again used in exploratory research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015). Case study approach can be categorized into: (a) holistic and (b) embedded. If the purpose of the research is concerned only with the organization as a whole, then holistic case study approach is better. However, in our pilot study, we are concerned with the single

organization as a whole and also examining certain logical sub-units within the organization in terms of specific work groups, so embedded case study is being used (Yin, 2003). Case-based approach can be used as an example to show how a fast-growing company implemented its business strategies in order to support their core business processes which resulted in significant benefits out of it (Laesvirta & Ribiere, 2008). The other advantage of using case-based approach is that it provides an understanding of the critical success factors and issues within an organization.

Literature Review

There are many studies that describe the importance of performance appraisals (Pettijohn et al., 2001b; Roberts & Reed, 1996; Pettijohn et al., 2001; Roberts, 2003; Shah & Murphy, 1995; Martey, 2002; Austin, 2008; Simmons, 2005; Ford, 2004; Khoury, 2004; Grifell-Tatje, 2008; Blackmore, 2005; Shih, 2005; McAdam, 2005). Verbeeten (2008) argued that the definition of clear and measurable goal is positively associated with quantity and quality performance. The results suggest that behavioral excellence along with performance excellence sustains businesses and helps them grow at a steady pace.

Performance appraisal methods are generally used to measure / evaluate an employee's performance. Researchers like Decenzo and Robbins in 2002 made some categorization in them. In literature, most common and popular categorizations are: (a) two-group one (Cascio, 1984): i) absolute appraisals; ii) relative appraisals; and (b) three-group one (Fisher et al., 1997): i)

comparative appraisals; ii) behavioral appraisals; iii) output-based appraisals.

Although there were some studies that used two-group categorization (e.g., Roch et al., 2007; Goffin et al., 1996; Jelley & Goffin, 2001; Wagner & Goffin, 1997; Heneman, 1986), it is not easy to directly put every performance appraisal method (PAM) into one category. Even if they are forced to be in one category, the methods in the same category may have different features in terms of appraisal errors. Then, instead of evaluating the performance appraisals' categories, it was preferred to evaluate PAMs individually for this study.

As there are many performance appraisal techniques/methods that have different features and evaluation procedures as presented above, it cannot be stated that only one method can be used in a definite situation, sector or organization. We can easily see that even if some organizations that act in the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) world same sector, have equal number of employees, similar structures, resembling visions and missions, these organizations may use different appraisal methods depending on their choice rather than the features they have. Therefore, choosing the most effective appraisal method is one of the most challenging problems that (HR) practitioners' face. However, it is more important to select a method that enables the appraisers to reach a precise evaluation at the end of the performance appraisal process. So, removal of appraisal errors is very much crucial for every organization in order to

identify, evaluate and develop the abilities of the employees.

Case Study

The company under consideration is Amazing Steel Pvt Ltd., a leading steel manufacturing company. In this, manufacturing companies in general are striving to remain competitive in the market and maintain their economic growth and productivity. Uncertainties regarding the changes in product demand, work piece material, product design, and technological advancement, have all imposed pressures across the sectors. Market uncertainties force manufacturing companies to be flexible and responsive in producing different parts, by adapting the existing system without the need for a substantial investments and on the other hand, rising competition demands the right people to be at the right place at the right time.

Amazing Steel Pvt Ltd evaluates the performance of its employees conventionally using classical rating method. There is a decision team whose primary function is to evaluate the performance of the employees. The evaluation team is composed of three decision makers namely, the human resource manager, the supervisor and the department manager. These experts assess the employees based on the five criteria as specified in Table 1. These decision makers selected five criteria from the literature for performance appraisal (Golec & Kahya, 2007; Jereb et al., 2005; Heath & Mills, 2000; Gungor et al., 2009). Then the decision-making team rates all criteria using a scale from 1 (low performance) to 4 (high performance). To get the final performance score for each personnel, individual scores in each criterion are added.

Table 1 Ranked Results of Pair-wise Comparisons for Performance Evaluation Parameters

Performance Evaluation Parameters	Weighted Priority	Rank
Quality achievement	0.224	2
Productivity achievement	0.301	1
Reliability & Punctuality	0.101	3
Adherence to Safety	0.098	4
Self-Discipline	0.082	5
Problem Identification, Solving and Analytic Skills	0.080	6
Cost effectiveness	0.074	7
Consumer Relations/ Hospitality/Service	0.042	8

With time, the cost of the employees also increases. So, there is a need to identify, recognize and engage the better performers for a better outcome. And, in order to do so, the current performance appraisal system needed a facelift. i.e., a more objective performance appraisal/management system that will focus not only on performance monitoring aspect

but also on individual performance development aspect, is the need of the hour. So, a “test run” of the proposed approach was conducted on a sample of 50 employees. In addition to that, unstructured interviews of the decision makers were also taken and performance appraisal was analyzed with the help of the decision makers.



The Hybrid Approach

Step 1: Identify business objectives and then set the goals/ mutually agreed upon targets/KRAs.

Step 2: Continuous feedback mechanism (90° approach) between peers and superiors. This will include monitoring performance aspects as well as desired behavioral aspects.

Step 3: Objective evaluation of every components of the appraisal

Step 4: Employees' individual SWOT analysis

Key Features of Proposed Model

i) Measurable Performance Evaluation; ii) Specific and Result Oriented Behavioral Assessment; iii) Objective Scoring Methodology of Behavioral Indicators; iv) Continuous Scope for Improvement of Employee Performance; v) Sole Focus on Co-development of the Organization as well as the Employees; vi) Behavioral Assessment backed by Engagement Surveys will help the company Recognize and utilize the best of the existing talent and create a “benchmark” for upcoming talents; vii) This model can also

be used to generate individual SWOT analysis and create several developmental avenues.

Analytic Hierarchy Process

Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) technique was used to shortlist Performance Evaluation criteria. The AHP is a method for breaking down a complex and unstructured situation into its component parts, then arranging those parts/variables into a hierarchical order. This method is based on the assignment of numerical values for subjective judgements on the relative importance of each variable, then synthesizing the judgements to determine which variable has the highest priority (Saaty, 2008).

Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) technique was used to shortlist Performance Evaluation criteria.

The list of performance evaluation parameters as identified through literature review was distributed amongst the respondents (line chiefs, HR managers, blue collar employees and union representatives) to rank them as per AHP

scale and their responses were captured. Out of all the respondents the responses of only those were considered wherein the value of consistency ratio (CR) was less than 10% (0.1). Accordingly, the weighted priority of performance evaluation parameters by industrial experts is as shown in Table 1. Accordingly, as desired by the participant organization, we focused on top five ranked performance

evaluation parameter to carry out our study.

Table 2 specifies the performance evaluation criteria to assess the blue collar employees. The employees are evaluated on a scale of 1 to 4, where, 4 stands for the highest score and 1 is the lowest score. The total score is calculated out of 20.

Table 2 Performance Appraisal Criteria

Sl. No.	Criteria	1	2	3	4
1	Reliability and punctuality				
2	Self-Discipline				
3	Adherence to safety				
4	Productivity achievement				
5	Quality achievement				

TOTAL (Out of 20)

Table 3 Performance Appraisal Ratings

Interpretation	Existing Scoring Range	Rating	Modified Scoring Range	Rating
Outstanding	14-20	A	16-20	A
Superior	11-13	B	11-15	B
Average	05-10	C	06-10	C
Unsatisfactory	00-04	D	00-05	D

Table 3 specifies the final ratings of an individual against his/her corresponding score against the parameters as specified in Table 2. The employee is rated accordingly based on the scoring range he/she falls in.

Table 4 addresses the scoring index for modified appraisal with respect to the current appraisal. Each “existing performance appraisal criterion” (Table 2) is matched with behavioral descriptors. For example- “*Reliability and Punctuality*” is an existing per-

formance appraisal parameter. For this criterion, the two important behavioral descriptors are: (i) Effectively budgets time, is punctual, well organized and focused; (ii) Establishes and accomplishes duties on time. Hence, if a person has scored “4” i.e., the highest in “*Reliability and punctuality*”, then it is safe to assume that he fulfills the

Each “existing performance appraisal criterion” is matched with behavioral descriptors.

Table 4 Scoring Index for Modified Appraisal with Respect To Current Appraisal

Current Appraisal Parameters	Main body of Behavioral Descriptors	Scoring Range			
		4	3	2	1
Reliability and punctuality	Effectively manages time, is punctual, well organized and focused	4	3	2	1
	Exhibits time and organizational skills on time	3	2	1	0.5
	Awareness and ability to perform duties	3	2	1	0.5
Productivity achievement	Basic knowledge of job related	3	2	1	0.5
	Identifies own goals with respect to business objectives	3	2	1	0.5
	Takes initiative in reporting, finding and analyzing	3	2	1	0.5
Quality achievement	Sense of responsibility/ownership	3	2	1	0.5
Self Discipline	Footnote on ethical and standardized resources to address problems	3	2	1	0.5
	Follows safety measures and is aware of unsafe conditions	3	2	1	0.5
Adherence to safety	Aware by the rules of the workplace	3	2	1	0.5
Cumulative Average Score (out of 10)		10	5	2.5	2.5

given behavioral descriptors. Therefore, “4” in the existing appraisal is equivalent to “2” as per the modified appraisal. Same is for the other performance criteria as well, a cumulative average score is generated from this conversion table (which is out of 10).

Table 5 was derived after comparing the new model with the existing model. In this step, we took a sample of 50 blue collar employees and using the conversion scale provided in Table 4, we calculated the “modified score” for each employee.

Assumptions

Since, we were performing a “test run” by taking a sample size of 50 appraisals, we need to study the relevance of the hybrid model (modified appraisal) with respect to the existing appraisal. And to do this comparison, we must create a common basis or a scale. The idea here was to answer the question as to “how are we addressing the commonality between the two types of appraisals?”

Table 5 Performance Rating comparison (Existing vs Modified Performance Grade)

Employee Name	Actual Score	Performance Grade based on existing appraisal scoring criteria	Modified Grade	Modified Score
E1	7	C	D	5
E2	10	C	C	6
•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•
E10	9	C	C	6
E11	13	B	B	11
•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•
E35	B	13	B	11
E36	A	14	B	11
E37	A	15	B	12
E38	A	16	B	11
E39	A	18	B	12
E40	A	16	B	12
•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•
E50	A	18	A	16

Table 6 Performance Rating of Employee #1

Sl. No.	Existing Score	Modified Score				
	Criteria	1	2	3	4	Given Score Corresponding Score / converted score
1	Reliability and punctuality	•				1 0.5
2	Self-discipline	•				1 0.5
3	Adherence to safety	•				1 0.5
4	Productivity achievement		•			2 0.5
5	Quality achievement		•			2 0.5
	TOTAL (Out of 20)		7			Cumulative score = 2.5 Final score = 2.5*2 = 5
	Grade		C			D

Table 7 Performance Rating of Employee #2

Sl. No.	Existing Score				Modified Score	
	Criteria	1	2	3	4	Given Score / Corresponding Score / converted score
1	Reliability and punctuality		•			2 0.5
2	Self-discipline	•				1 0.5
3	Adherence to safety		•			2 0.5
4	Productivity achievement			•		3 1
5	Quality achievement		•			2 0.5
	TOTAL (Out of 20)		10			Cumulative score = 3 Final score = 3*2 = 6
	Grade		C			C

Table 8 Performance Rating of Employee #10

Sl. No.	Existing Score				Modified Score	
	Criteria	1	2	3	4	Given Score / Corresponding Score / converted score
1	Reliability and punctuality			•		3 1
2	Self-discipline	•				1 0.5
3	Adherence to safety		•			2 0.5
4	Productivity achievement		•			2 0.5
5	Quality achievement	•				1 0.5
	TOTAL (Out of 20)		9			Cumulative score = 3 Final score = 3*2 = 6
	Grade		C			C

Table 9 Performance Rating of Employee #11

Sl. No.	Existing Score				Modified Score	
	Criteria	1	2	3	4	Given Score / Corresponding Score / converted score
1	Reliability and punctuality		•			2 0.5
2	Self-discipline		•			2 0.5
3	Adherence to safety	•				1 0.5
4	Productivity achievement				•	4 2
5	Quality achievement				•	4 2
	TOTAL (Out of 20)		13			Cumulative score = 5.5 Final score = 5.5*2 = 11
	Grade		B			B

Table 10 Performance Rating of Employee #36

Sl. No.	Existing Score				Modified Score	
	Criteria	1	2	3	4	Given Score / Corresponding Score / converted score
1	Reliability and punctuality				•	4 2
2	Self-discipline		•			2 0.5
3	Adherence to safety		•			2 0.5
4	Productivity achievement				•	4 2
5	Quality achievement		•			2 0.5
	TOTAL (Out of 20)		14			Cumulative score = 5.5 Final score = 5.5*2 = 11
	Grade		A			B

Table 11 Performance Rating of Employee #37

Sl. No.	Existing Score				Modified Score	
	Criteria	1	2	3	4	Given Score / Corresponding Score / converted score
1	Reliability and punctuality				•	4 2
2	Self-discipline		•			2 0.5
3	Adherence to safety		•			2 0.5
4	Productivity achievement				•	4 2
5	Quality achievement			•		3 1
	TOTAL (Out of 20)		15			Cumulative score = 6 Final score = 6*2 = 12
	Grade		A			B

Table 12 Performance Rating of Employee #50

Sl. No.	Existing Score				Modified Score	
	Criteria	1	2	3	4	Given Score / Corresponding Score / converted score
1	Reliability and punctuality				•	4 2
2	Self-discipline				•	4 2
3	Adherence to safety			•		3 1
4	Productivity achievement				•	4 2
5	Quality achievement			•		3 1
	TOTAL (Out of 20)		18			Cumulative score = 8 Final score = 8*2 = 16
	Grade		A			A

For the ease of calculations the following assumptions were made:

- The original scoring range of 4 - 1 (where, 4 stands for the highest score and 1 is the lowest score) is scaled down to 2 - 0.5 (where, 2 stands for the highest score and 0.5 is the lowest score)
- In the existing scale- "2" and "1" corresponds to very low score, so, any employee getting this score will have the minimum number of behavioral descriptors matched
- To calculate the Modified score: final score (out of 20)= (Cumulative score obtained * 2)

Illustrative Calculations of Performance Ratings are as in Table 6 to Table 12.

Observations

The final scores of the current appraisal and the modified appraisal were plotted on a bell curve to check for the

reliability/validity of the modified appraisal (fig 1, fig 2)

This "Gap" is due to the fact that, there are some shortcomings in those particular employees and there is future scope of career development / individual development of the employees.

Out of the sample of 50 employees, 5 employees (E36 to E40) were given "A" Grade, but actually they deserved a "B" (Table 5). This "Gap" is due to the fact that, there are some shortcomings in those particular employees and there is future scope of career development / individual development of the employees.

Final Decision by Management & Conclusion

The findings were shared with both the management and individual employees of Amazing Steel Pvt Ltd who were rated on a modified scale. After detailed deliberations, the proposed model on PMS

Fig. 1 Bell Curve for Existing Appraisal

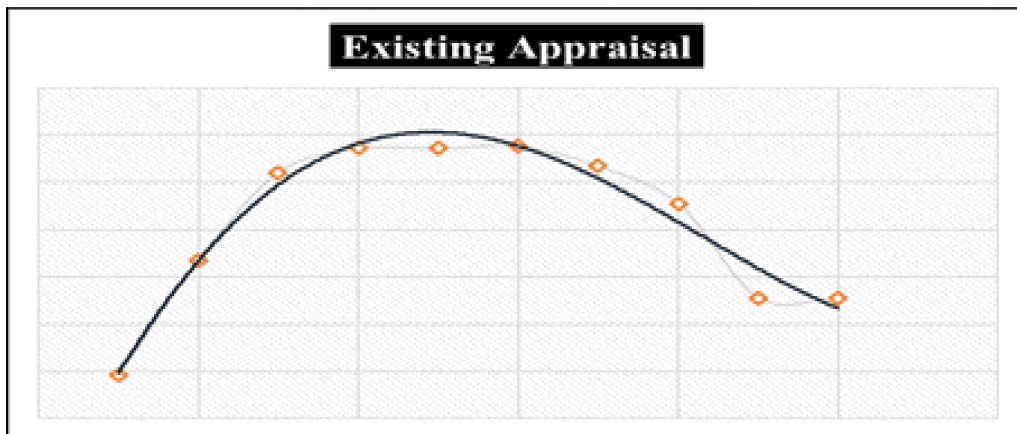
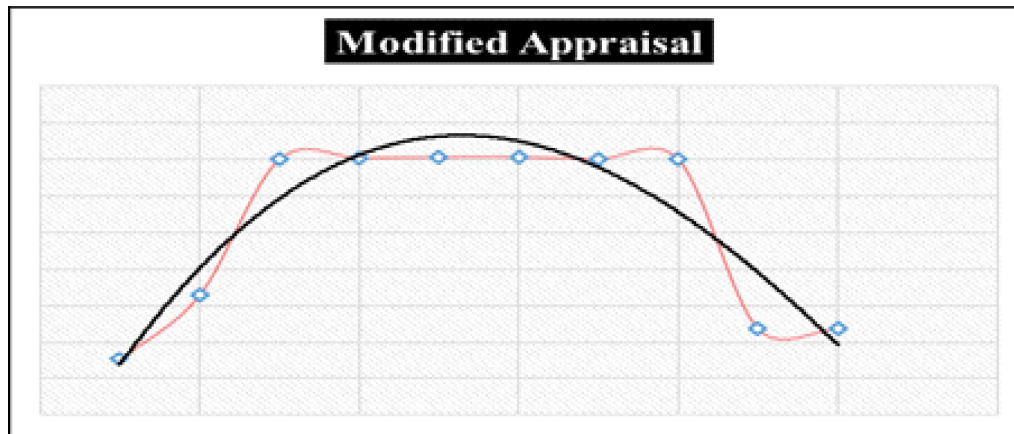


Fig. 2. Bell Curve for Modified Appraisal



was accepted by both management and employees for rolling it out for all the blue collared employees for their mid-term and end term assessment.

It has become quite evident from the study that blue-collar employees form the base of the organization and are the first step on the organization's ladder. Hence, it is imperative to have a robust performance management process for them and link their key result areas to attain organization's objectives. Performance management system helps in aligning the efforts of the team and fosters collaboration amongst the team members to ensure organization's goal attainment.

However, the management need to ensure fair and transparent performance management system to facilitate the buy-in of all the stakeholders including blue-collar employees which in turn will instill their faith and confidence in the process. This can be done through appropriate communication on the PMS process and its guidelines. One must ensure that the

process should be free from biases to avoid diluting the overall PMS process effectiveness.

One point which also came out from the study is that administration of effective and objective PMS has resulted in identification of training needs related to functional and behavioral aspects which is being aligned to goals of Amazing Steel Pvt Ltd. The implementation of the proposed PMS framework will also help in identifying the skill gap (desired state vs actual state) of the individual employees. The concerned employees can be imparted training in the requisite area (functional/ behavioral) to bridge the gap thereby preparing them to move up the ladder into supervisory roles. This in a way would facilitate in the career progression of blue-collar employees.

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