APPRAISAL IN CONTEXT: CLASHING

WITH ORGANIZATIONAL REALITIES

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Abstract

In spite of the efforts of researchers and practitioners, performance appraisal systems remain more of an albatross than an effective organizational tool. The movement toward objective measurement, employee participation, multiple raters, and the like represents a definite improvement over traditional trait ratings. Still, internal improvements of appraisal systems may not be adequate to overcome the contextual factors that inhibit appraisal in organizations. Such things as the nature of managerial work, environmental demands, and organizational characteristics generally clash with the internal structure of appraisal systems. Designing appraisal systems congruent with organizational realities will require a new set of assumptions about what an effective appraisal system should look like.

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> It completely refused to run a) when the waves were
> high, b) when the wind blew, c) at night, early morning,
> and evening, d) in rain, dew, or fog, e) when the
> distance to be covered was more than 200 yards. But on
> warm, sunny days when the weather was calm and the white
> beach close by--in a word, on days when it would have
> been a pleasure to row--the (outboard motor) started at
> a touch and would not stop.
>
> (Steinbeck, 1962, 21-22)

Steinbeck's description of an outboard motor provides an
apt analogy for a discussion of managerial performance
appraisal. When performance has been good, when superior
and subordinate have an open relationship, when promotions
or salary increases are available, when there is adequate
time for preparation and discussion--in short, whenever
it is a pleasure--performance appraisal is well received.
Most of the time, however, and particularly at those times
when it is most needed (e.g., when performance is sub-
standard), performance appraisal refuses to run properly.

Attitude surveys (e.g., Personnel Policies Forum,
1974; DeVries & McCall, 1976) as well as informed opinion
(e.g., Ferrara, 1975; Pym, 1973; Winstanley, 1972;
Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975) confirm the general ambi-
valence toward appraisal. Often viewed with the same en-
thusiasm as income tax forms, performance appraisals are
typically described by both supervisors and subordinates
as "better than nothing at all."

One reason managers describe their current appraisal
systems as "better than nothing at all" is because they
recognize the great potential of appraisal for filling the
void of interpersonal feedback in their organization. Fre-
quent and accurate feedback to subordinates is critical to
both the employees (who want to know where they stand in
the organization) as well as to the organization (feedback
being a central link in the control process).

The lack of valid feedback in organizations is apparent in the responses of managers, graduate students, and professional sports players to the question, "How do you find out how well you are doing?" (see Figure 1, page 3). As indicated in the figure, individuals often have to rely on such indirect indications of their performance as grapevine scuttlebutt, a general self-feeling of competence, and the gain or loss of organizational privileges. For many individuals in organizations, finding out how they stand is not a simple process. At the same time, such feedback is important to them (DeVries & McCall, 1976). Because feedback to employees is important, and yet is not occurring systematically, organizations look longingly toward performance appraisal as the answer to their dilemma.

Lack of research or failure to use the accumulated knowledge about performance appraisal does not explain the continued ambivalence surrounding it. Performance measurement and the appraisal interview have been and continue to be active research topics in industrial psychology. The fruits of the research (e.g., management by objectives, anchored rating scales, participative interviews) have been and continue to be applied by organizations. The psychometric and interview style alternatives generated, while no doubt a vast improvement over trait measures and tell-and-sell interviews, still seem to resemble the cantankerous outboard motor.

The Thrust of Improved Appraisal

While the literature on performance appraisal encompasses a diverse array of approaches, including numerous rating formats and interview styles, several common themes can be isolated. The driving elements of contemporary "ideal" performance appraisal systems include:

1) objective (reliable and valid) measurement of job performance (e.g., Smith & Kendall, 1963; Shetty & Carlysle, 1975);

2) subordinate participation in the rating and/or interview process (e.g., Cummings, 1973; Williams & Seiler, 1973);

3) frequent feedback and/or performance ratings (e.g., Meyer, Kay, & French, 1965);

4) in-depth training in both performance rating and conducting interviews (e.g., Maier, 1958; Latham, Wexley, & Pursell, 1975);

FIGURE 1

HOW DO YOU FIND OUT HOW WELL YOU ARE DOING?

Managers

--My boss has subtle ways of telling me when he's ticked off.
--I know when the boss is proud.
--I'm my own best judge.
--When I really foul up, my boss hears about it and lets me know.
--A secretary told me my supervisor said I was the best they had.
--Am I brought into the action? I'm in trouble when I'm left out.

Professional Sports

Football Players:

"...taking away his playbook...; summoning him out of an instructional meeting or calling him from his room late at night; the emptying out of a locker; exclusion from the group picture of the team...."

(Plimpton, cited by Ball, 1976)

Baseball Players:

"...you could always tell how you were doing by the way the (pitching coach) said good morning. If he said, 'Well, now, good morning Jimsie boy,' that meant you'd won your last two or three games and were in the starting rotation. If he nodded his head to you and said, 'Jimbo, how are you doin', how are you doin'?' you were still in the starting rotation, but your record probably wasn't much over .500. If he just said, 'Mornin',' that meant you were on your way down, that you'd probably lost four out of five and it was doubtful if you would be getting any more starts. If he simply looked at you and gave a solemn nod, that meant you might get some mop-up relief work, or you might not, but you definitely weren't starting anymore and would never get into a close game again. And if he looked past you, over your shoulder as if you didn't exist, it was all over and you might as well pack your bag because you could be traded or sent down at any moment."

(Bouton, cited by Ball, 1976)

Graduate Students

--Feedback from secretaries on what professors think.
--I was not fired from my assistantship.
--Being called in before an ad hoc faculty committee.
--Getting a scholarship to a special university program.
--The "feeling" I can do things now that I couldn't a year ago.
--My advisor's friendliness and suggested activities.

5) attaching organizational consequences (such as
    pay and promotion) to appraisal ratings (Porter,
    Lawler, & Hackman, 1975; Ivancevich, 1972); and

6) use of multiple raters (e.g., Borman, 1974;
    Lawler, 1967).

Not all of these refinements have been unequivocal successes:
multiple ratings can still be biased (Klimoski & London,
1974), behaviorally anchored rating scales may be only a
marginal improvement over non-anchored scales (Borman &
Dunnette, 1975), participation doesn't seem to work for
everybody (Kay, French, & Meyer, 1962), and tying pay to
performance is a sticky business (Lawler, 1971).

More important, these six elements of performance
appraisal reflect a closed-systems view of the appraisal
process. Implicit in the research on appraisal has been
the assumption that internal improvements--new rating
procedures, nonthreatening interviews--will lead to ef-
fective performance appraisal in organizations. Little
attention has been paid to the context in which appraisal
takes place--those factors external to the appraisal
system that impact on its effectiveness, regardless of the
internal structure. Examination of the external factors
may reveal forces that severely limit the potential of
contemporary internal improvements.

External Constraints on Internal Improvement

Whether described as open systems or something beyond
(Pondy, 1976), there is general agreement that organiza-
tions consist of numerous interrelated parts. Information,
control, appraisal, and many other facets comprise an inter-
connected whole with no part totally independent of the
others. Performance appraisal is a technology which, like
other technologies, is influenced by the way it is used,
the people who use it, and the constraints placed on it by
the larger system. The quality of a camera may have little
relationship to the final print if the photographer is
unskilled, the film is improperly developed, there is in-
adequate time to frame the shot, access to the subject is
restricted, or the lens cap is not removed. Most of the
work on performance appraisal has emphasized building a
better camera, neglecting those factors that reduce the
usefulness of even the finest equipment.

That past performance appraisal research has focused
on the camera itself is important because appraisal is an
organizational tool. Just as a camera is used by an
imperfect human being, so too appraisal is used by an

imperfect organization. Kane (1975) and others have
generated long lists of situational factors impinging
on appraisal. This paper treats only five salient factors:
nature of managerial work, organizational characteristics,
nature of performance, environmental demands, and daily
supervisor/subordinate relationships.

1. Managerial work. A recent study found that mana-
gerial work can be characterized by variety, brevity, and
fragmentation (Mintzberg, 1973). Mintzberg found, for
example, that 50 percent of a manager's activities lasted
nine minutes or less and only 10 percent lasted over an
hour. The vast majority of a manager's contacts were ad
hoc rather than preplanned, and managers showed a strong
preference for "live," current information (as opposed to
looking backward or forward). Further, managers disliked
the routine and concentrated their efforts on the nonroutine.

So how does performance appraisal fit into managerial
work? By definition, appraisal concentrates on past per-
formance. To the degree that it is formalized, it repre-
sents a routine activity which is highly structured. And,
to carry it out properly even for only one subordinate,
appraisal requires a significant expenditure of time (DeVries
& McCall, 1976). Clearly, appraisal systems as currently
structured contradict both managerial work styles and values.

Furthermore, virtually all appraisal systems result in
a need for managerial action. Some are directly or in-
directly tied to such things as salary and promotion and
some involve planned development activities. Even when the
appraisal is intended strictly for feedback purposes (i.e.,
has no formal consequences), the subordinate has every
reason to expect the superior to help arrange develop-
mental activities. The question becomes, what control
does the manager really have over the implicit or explicit
prescriptions?

The answer is that for a variety of reasons managers
seldom have much control. Salary increase ranges are
usually too small to serve much motivational purpose, often
barely matching the inflation rate. Even when the manager
has the authority to allocate increases, the appraisal is
as likely to justify a predetermined level as it is to
predict it. In other cases, allocating increases consists
of finely tuning salaries to reach "equity" among organi-
zational peers, focusing less on performance than number
of years with the company or span of responsibility.
Promotions, too, are seldom at the discretion of the manager

since there may not be any positions open, the manager may
not be informed about available slots, or the actual
decision may be made by higher level managers.

As to developmental prescriptions (often an integral
part of performance appraisal systems) again many managers
lack the control to follow up. They may lack knowledge
of or faith in available training programs, may not be able
to spare the subordinate for the time required, or may
lack either the time or the skill to do the coaching them-
selves.

The uncertainty surrounding managerial ability to de-
liver the goods promised by a careful appraisal leads to
unenthusiastic conducting of appraisals, appraisals likely
to generate, not reduce, frustrated expectations. It's
unlikely that either manager or subordinate will be overly
enthusiastic about surfacing touchy performance issues when
little can be done about them. Even the ultimate sanction--
firing low performers--is seldom a viable option for many
managers.

2. <u>Organizational characteristics</u>. Performance
appraisal, to be effective, should correlate with rewards
(Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975). Yet managers may not
be able to distribute rewards on the basis of appraisals
because organizations either have few rewards to offer or
have so many rewards that everyone gets them. Many organi-
zations emphasize merit-based pay and advancement and build
their performance appraisal systems accordingly. In times
of plenty, organizations may grow so fast that high and
low performers alike get promoted and receive increases.
During recessions, managerial personnel may be cut back
and increases virtually eliminated. In both cases in the
feast/famine cycle, the relationship between individual
performance and salary increase is indirect. More im-
portantly, few organizations, when administering merit pay
systems, directly reinforce appropriate conducting of
appraisal. Because performing appraisals is seldom de-
fined as critical to the managerial role, managers are not
likely to expend much effort on appraisal.

Organizations generally have hierarchies which
clearly specify who reports to whom and who is responsible
for what. Most organizational members recognize that
important goals and procedures will come from the top, as
will the important criteria for judging adequate performance.
While many tactical decisions remain at lower levels, the
performance appraisal process is not a likely forum to
meaningfully increase subordinate participation in such

decisions. Both supervisor and subordinate recognize the top-down nature of organizations as well as the rapidly changing nature of tactical goals. Meaningful participation in setting or measuring goals can result only from a general managerial philosophy of democracy or delegation with day-to-day subordinate inputs. If such an atmosphere exists, use of the annual appraisal review for goal setting is redundant. If not, its utility is marginal.

Another characteristic of organizations is that even major decisions involve subjective, intuitive, and political processes (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Theoret, 1976; Smith, 1963). Decision makers seldom have complete information, and even when they do, decisions are not always rationally made. Why should we expect a comparatively minor decision--the appraisal of a single individual-- to be any more rational and objective? Objectivity in appraisal procedures is a dramatic step forward from global trait ratings, but it's hard to believe that anyone would see managerial performance appraisal as a truly objective process (Kavanagh, 1971). Perhaps deleting the subjective component of appraisal (as in some behaviorally anchored approaches) makes the process sterile and non-intuitive to the managers involved.

   3. _Performance_. The essence of performance appraisal is the performance. Appraising individual performance assumes: 1) that performance varies, 2) that a person's performance is relatively independent of the performance of others, 3) that there is some consensus on what is good or bad, and 4) that performance can be changed (through motivation, development, or elimination of the incumbent).

First, does performance vary and, if so, how much? If one believes in self- and organizational-selection, or even just organizational Darwinism, it is likely that managerial personnel--and particularly those at higher levels--exhibit a relatively narrow range of performance (Pfeffer, forthcoming). Unlike the normal distribution of ability found in the population in general, one expects (hopes?) that the distribution of talent among organizational managers is positively skewed. Certainly there are differences in ability, but the range restriction is probably enough to make those differences hard to measure reliably except at the extremes. This can result in appraisal ratings clustered at the high end (often attributed to halo) or in an artificial spread of ratings forced by technologies, like forced distribution.

Given that differences across individuals are hard to tease out, what about performance by one person over time? The old saw, "Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior," comes into play here. Temporary discontinuities and daily fluctuations are likely to characterize performance over time. Learning a new job, for example, should result in an upward performance trend until competence is achieved. Still, many of our attempts to deliberately change people (e.g., Mischel, 1968) have not produced dramatic effects. For most managers, overall performance is probably stable over long periods of time. The same strengths and weaknesses are likely to emerge in several annual appraisals, and changes may simply mean that the principals are tired of rehashing the same old things. Although still unresolved, these issues are being addressed in current work by Kavanagh (personal correspondence) through a comparison of ipsative and normative uses of appraisal.

Second, to what extent is performance truly individual? Isn't it reasonable to conjecture that most managerial jobs are by nature interdependent? Certainly the criteria most often applied in studies of organizational leadership (group productivity, group satisfaction) imply that leadership is of a group nature. Given lateral and sequential dependencies, it is extremely difficult to tease apart individual and group performance. The status of the profit and loss statement is hardly determined by a single person. Although personnel decisions based on appraisals must be made at the individual level, the data used often describe group performance.

Third, is there consensus on good and bad? Work with multitrait-multirater matrices of performance would suggest some consensus, but not as much as hoped (Lawler, 1967). Other work has shown that different rating groups evolve different performance criteria (Borman, 1974), even in an MBO-oriented organization (Bishop, 1974). Not only is performance multifaceted (Kavanagh, 1972), but apparently so is the observation of performance. Whether performance is perceived as good or bad--or even perceived at all--depends on who is observing.

Finally, can performance be changed once it has been appraised? One way to modify behavior is to attach sanctions to performance. We have already mentioned, however, that organizational rewards are often of insufficient magnitude to dramatically affect performance. Further, a myriad of factors--from equity to seniority--restrict the dispersion of formal rewards on the basis of performance alone. So, even if performance differences can be appraised, connecting them with differential sanctions is extremely difficult.

Another way to change behavior through appraisal is by diagnosing developmental needs. Once diagnosed, however, can development be delivered? Even if developmental programs are available at the right time, one cannot be overly optimistic about the effectiveness of managerial training programs (Campbell, 1971; Hinrichs, 1975; Stogdill, 1974).

4. Environmental demands. Many organizational constraints on performance appraisal are a direct result of environmental forces. Unions, for example, often resist merit pay systems (Newsweek, 1976). The preferred seniority criteria can eliminate appraisal as an administrative tool.

Recently, EEOC and OFCC guidelines have begun to impact on appraisal. Virtually any mechanism, casual or formal, used to make employment decisions is a test. When discrimination is suspected, it must meet stringent guidelines for reliability and validity (Federal Register, 1970). The threat of legal entanglements can have profound effects on the nature and application of performance appraisal systems.

5. Day-to-day relationships. Perhaps the most important reason that even sophisticated appraisal systems may not work is the nature of established interaction patterns between supervisor and subordinate. The dynamics of these interactions are determined by day-to-day working relationships evolved over time (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). It is folly to believe that an annual review can effectively change the ground rules established the other 364 days of the year. A hard-driving, authoritarian boss is not likely to be convincing in a participative appraisal interview. More importantly, a supervisor may be justifiably reluctant to surface in an appraisal those factors which might jeopardize working relationships. Particularly since the supervisor may feel constrained in doing something about deficiencies, raising them as issues in appraisal would be frustrating for both parties.

Figure 2 summarizes the external constraints, the ways they conflict with performance appraisal, and the internal factors they might affect. Training managers in appraisal comes out almost unscathed; attaching consequences and multiple raters are a bit more incompatible with

FIGURE 2

CLASHES BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL REALITIES AND APPRAISAL SYSTEMS

Constraints External to Performance Appraisal Systems	Nature of Conflict With Performance Appraisal	Internal Factors Inhibited
Managerial work		
activities short in duration	requires extensive preparation	multiple raters, frequency, participation, objective measures
ad hoc contacts	requires formal interviews	frequency
prefers current information	focuses on past behavior	frequency, objective measures
prefers nonroutine	formal system is routine	frequency
action constrained	results of PA demand action	attach consequences, frequency, participation, objective measures, multiple raters
Organizational characteristics		
limited available resources	administrative or developmental programs required	attach consequences, objective measures, participation, multiple raters, training
hierarchical structure	mutual problem solving required	participation
subjective decisions	objective appraisal attempted	objective measures

FIGURE 2 (continued)

Performance

low variability	tries to distinguish among people	objective measures
interdependence	focuses on individual appraisal	objective measures, participation
lack of agreement on good/bad	objectivity in appraisal	objective measures, multiple raters
performance hard to change	goals of motivation or development	participation, objective measures, frequency

Environmental demands

seniority system	attempts to reward performance	frequency, objective measures, participation
EEOC demands for validity	attempts at mutual goals setting	participation

Day-to-day relationships

authority relationship	interview/goal setting style conflict	participation, frequency, objective measures
preserving relationships	possible surfacing of insoluble problems	participation, frequency, objective measures

organizational realities. Frequency, participation, and objective measurement are three recommendations which clash repeatedly with other organizational forces.

What is clear is that powerful forces external to appraisal systems can have profound impacts on their effectiveness. Improved measurement tools or interview skills alone will not overcome the external forces, and may in fact exacerbate some of the problems. More research on what and how contextual variables influence the appraisal process is badly needed.

What Causes the Clashes

It is puzzling to realize that so much research has been expended on an organizational tool which conflicts with organizational realities in so many ways. Why do even the most recently proposed performance appraisal alternatives contradict rather than support the context within which appraisal must be used?

Multiple and possibly conflicting purposes served: Although only one finite organizational tool, appraisal is expected to serve many purposes (cf. Personnel Policies Forum, 1974; Feild & Holley, 1975). The majority of organizations polled in recent appraisal surveys use appraisal for most, if not all, of the following purposes: promotion/retention/discharge decisions, salary administration, employee training/development, and employee counseling. Creating an appraisal system ideal for salary administration (requiring objective data--infrequently collected, outcome-oriented, and norm-based) may create incompatibilities with a system useful for counseling employees (requiring frequently collected, process-oriented data). By demanding that performance appraisal be an organizational tool for all seasons, the tool has in turn taken on properties which make it incompatible with the organization it is meant to serve.

Staff/line conflict: In most organizations appraisal procedures are designed and administered by personnel departments. The data collected and the use of such data are often dictated by personnel department needs. These needs may include forming "management audits" in which the number of high potential managers is documented, or filing reports to the EEOC indicating number of minority group employees and their rate of and basis for promotion. Although staff departments use appraisal data, the responsibility for generating the data and using it for feedback falls on the individual line manager. Effectively using the appraisal may prove difficult for the manager

(for example, distributing his subordinates along a normal distribution on performance when he/she sees them as comparable) with the resolution often taking the side of meeting the larger organizational need of the personnel department.

Form vs. process: One clear image of managerial work painted by Mintzberg (1973) and others is that managing is a process, not a product. Being a manager involves deciding, planning, leading, and mediating, to name only a few functions. The appraisal process, by contrast, is defined by a series of forms which are filled out, signed, reviewed, and signed again. Appraisal yields a product, forcing closure and documentation alien to an organization constantly in flux.

Merit pay myth: A major historical force in the evolution of appraisal systems is the notion of "an honest day's wages for an honest day's work." Appraisal is thus seen as a tool for allowing organizations to more objectively determine an "honest day's work." This, of course, ignores the following realities: 1) organizations, even after extensive investment in appraisal, are finding it difficult to define managerial effectiveness, 2) rewarding individuals requires resources (such as additional wages, or promotions) not necessarily available in an organization, and 3) even if resources are available, promotions and raises are often dictated by nonperformance-related factors (e.g., seniority, minority group membership, parity). By using appraisal to support the myth of merit pay, appraisal has often taken the form of an organizational albatross.

Moving Toward Congruence

One conclusion that can be drawn from the clash between performance appraisal and its context is that appraisal, as it is currently practiced, will never be fully effective. Contemporary directions, focused as they are on internal factors, are not tackling some fundamental problems. Can appraisal systems be designed to maximize congruence with some of these external forces? If so, what would they look like?

Figure 2 (page 10) provides an interesting place to start. Congruence would be more likely if the appraisal system had the following characteristics: 1) it were more like other managerial work (e.g., short, ad hoc, current, nonroutine), 2) it incorporated competition for resources, authority differences, and subjectivity, 3) it accepted low performance variability, included group as well as

individual performance, and dealt only with behaviors
that can be changed, 4) its purposes did not contradict
established environmental constraints, and 5) it were
flexible enough to fit a particular manager's style and
preserve his or her prerogatives not to surface damaging
issues.

Sound far-fetched? Indeed, but at the same time it
represents an exciting challenge with potentially high
payoff for both individuals and organizations.

Resurrecting Appraisal: New Research Directions

It may be presumptuous to expect new research approaches
to set straight such an entrenched organizational practice
as performance appraisal. One can at least expect re-
search along the following lines to suggest underlying
causes of the managerial ambivalence felt toward appraisal:

Internal vs. contextual factors: This paper argues
(without a great deal of empirical support) that the
success of appraisal is determined more by contextual
variables (such as nature of managerial work and job
interdependence) than by the appraisal procedures them-
selves (such as the use of performance vs. trait scales).
This hypothesis clearly needs to be tested. Such re-
search will allow us to evaluate whether a dramatically
new focus, namely how and where appraisal is used, is a
productive alternative to current trends.

Reaching congruence: Grass-roots integration:
Returning to the camera analogy, better results will be
obtained if the person who will use the camera--the person
who best knows the kind of equipment most likely to work
in a particular setting--chooses it. Appraisal systems
are too often presented as fait accompli by corporate
level personnel departments that have misread the environ-
ment in which the appraisal is to be used.

In some organizations appraisal systems were struc-
tured largely by committees of line personnel, with such
committees deciding how appraisal should be conducted,
what should be appraised, and what information should
be fed back to the subordinates. Appraisal systems
generated in this fashion appear more congruent with the
organizational context. Interventionist research assess-
ing the impact of this grass-roots form of introducing
appraisal could generate creative alternatives to current
practices.

Divide and conquer: A good photographer does not use one single camera for all shots. Several cameras, and certainly multiple lenses, may be required for consistently good prints across situations. So too with appraisal--one mechanism may not meet the demands of the multiple organizational purposes to which it is put. Meyer (1976) suggested one way of subdividing appraisal procedures. Another tack might be to isolate the two major categories of purposes of appraisal--employee feedback (and subsequent development) and organizational documentation. Employee feedback might be best served by frequent, informal supervisor-subordinate "wrap-up" sessions in which the subordinate's performance on a discrete task is reviewed. No documentation of the wrap-up is required. What is said is considered confidential. The documentation demands of the organization are met by a separate annual completion by the supervisor of an appraisal sheet in which performance is summarized and salary and promotion recommendations are made. This information is then filed with the organization. Whether such alternative appraisals are more congruent with organizational realities needs to be tested through systematic research efforts.

How do they find out? Perhaps research on appraisal needs to step back and ask, "How do employees find out how well they are doing?" Our asking this question of over 400 managers led us to conclude that looking at performance appraisal ratings is not how managers determine how well they are doing. If appraisal, as currently conducted, is not rich in feedback, how do employees find out? Clearly some employees have a better feeling for their status than others--how so? Do they use peer judgment? Client reports? Do they generate more "hard" data? Or do they have more clearly defined internal standards? Studies of this natural variation in feedback richness could provide a valuable set of hypotheses on how to make appraisal a more meaningful experience for employees.

Appraisal via the assessment center: One response to the vagaries of taking fine pictures is to place the process in the hands of a professional photographer. The analog in appraisal is to assess individuals through the most formal appraisal system yet designed--the assessment center (Bray & Grant, 1966). Bray and others have designed a technology which can predict future managerial performance. Whether performance in the assessment center correlates with current job performance is another question which would have to be answered. Even more important is the question of whether a vastly more efficient (in terms of staff and time required) form of the assessment center can be generated.

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