Attitudes About Performance Appraisal

Terry L. Dickinson
Old Dominion University

Performance appraisal is integral to the successful operation of most organizations. During this process, employees are evaluated formally and informally to determine the nature of their contributions to the organization. Appraisal occurs during time periods and in meetings that are scheduled to produce a reasoned consideration of contributions, but it also occurs informally as employee contributions are observed, or when an evaluation is brought to the attention of others.

Performance appraisal is instrumental in helping organizations and employees achieve a variety of important outcomes. These outcomes include rewards and sanctions defined by the organization, emotions experienced and knowledge gained by the employees, and goals and plans developed by the organization and its members. The importance of these outcomes suggests that employees often have strong attitudes about performance appraisal. Certainly, if negative attitudes prevail among members, performance appraisal will be unacceptable to many members, and its use may hinder rather than help achieve outcomes. Indeed, when a supervisor discusses the appraisal of a subordinate's performance, the setting of goals for performance improvement may be difficult or impossible. This is especially true if job security, self-esteem, or pay increases are believed to be threatened by the appraisal. Nonetheless, employees desire and often seek out information about their performance. This is particularly true if employees are new to their job or are uncertain about job duties or work assignments.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine employee attitudes about perform-
formance appraisal. Research and theory are reviewed to identify factors that positively or negatively influence these attitudes and to suggest issues to consider in future research efforts.

**PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL ATTITUDES**

In spite of the commonsense logic that attitudes about performance appraisal are crucial to its effective use, researchers only recently began to investigate the nature of these attitudes. In his seminal article, Lawler (1967) proposed a model of the factors that affect the validity of performance ratings. Central to the model is the proposition that attitudes concerning the fairness and acceptability of the performance appraisal system are the major determinants of rating validity. In turn, these attitudes are seen as due to organizational and individual characteristics, as well as characteristics of the system itself. An adaptation of this model is shown in Fig. 10.1.

As conceived by Lawler (1967), characteristics of the performance appraisal system include rater sources and the nature of the attributes that are rated by these sources. Individual differences include the incumbent’s need for feedback and extent of authoritarian personality. Presumably, the greater the need for feedback and the less authoritarian the personality, the more an employee would find peer and subordinate sources of performance appraisal to be acceptable. With respect to organizational characteristics, peer, self-, and subordinate ratings are seen as more acceptable in organizations with a management style that encourages employees to participate in decision making.

Landy, Barnes, and Murphy (1978) were the first researchers to focus attention solely on the relation of attitudinal factors to performance appraisal. Using a single-item measure of perceived fairness and accuracy of the performance appraisal process, they identified an analysis that accounted for 26% of the variance of perceived greater fairness and part of a program, (b) was done of the employee’s performance press feelings, and (c) led to an

In a follow-up study with an...
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In a follow-up study with another sample from the same organization, Landy, Barnes-Farrell, and Cleveland (1980) reported that fairness and accuracy perceptions were not related to the performance appraisal ratings received by the employees. This follow-up finding suggests that the appraisal process accounted for fairness and accuracy perceptions rather than the performance ratings. Thus, favorable attitudes about performance appraisal could not be explained simply as being due to the reception of a favorable performance rating.

In a similar investigation, Dipboye and de Pontbriand (1981) examined attitudes toward the performance appraisal system as well as the performance rating itself. Four characteristics were found with regression analysis that accounted for 56% of the variance in satisfaction with the rating and 40% in satisfaction with the system. These characteristics were (a) perceived level of the performance rating relative to expectations, (b) opportunity of employees to participate in a performance appraisal discussion, (c) relevancy of job appraisal dimensions, and (d) discussion of plans and objectives.

In contrast to the follow-up finding of Landy et al. (1980), Dipboye and de Pontbriand (1981) reported that perceived level of the rating relative to expectations was related strongly ($r = .52$) to satisfaction with the appraisal. More recently, Russell and Goode (1988) reported that employee satisfaction with their own performance appraisal interview correlated significantly with recalled ($r = .64$) and actual performance ratings ($r = .63$). However, employee perceptions that the interview had value for improvement were not correlated significantly with recalled ($r = .09$) and actual performance ratings ($r = -.03$). These contradictory findings suggest that the magnitude of the performance rating has complex relationships with attitudes about performance appraisal.

In a series of four studies, Kavanagh and his colleagues (Kavanagh & Hedge, 1983; Kavanagh, Hedge, Ree, Earees, & DeBiasi, 1985) extensively examined acceptability of a performance appraisal system. They maintained that Lawler's (1967) concept of acceptability had not been adequately measured in previous research, because that research focused primarily on a single aspect of acceptability and tended to utilize single-item measures. For example, Landy and his colleagues used the fairness and accuracy item to reflect the acceptability of performance appraisal, and the only system characteristic examined was frequency of appraisal.

In one study, Kavanagh et al. (1985) administered an 81-item survey to 5,770 civilian employees of the United States Air Force to measure acceptability of
the appraisal system for promotion purposes. Seven factors were found to describe general attitudes about the system. These factors are defined in Table 10.1, and they clearly suggest that acceptability of a performance appraisal system is described by more than the fairness and accuracy of an appraisal. Nonetheless, in the Air Force study and the remaining three studies, regression analyses indicated that fairness and accuracy was the most potent predictor of the overall acceptability of the appraisal system. Other consistent predictors of overall acceptability included: (a) agreement that clear performance standards were communicated; (b) satisfaction with performance feedback; (c) satisfaction with the performance appraisal rating; and (d) agreement that the performance appraisal form distinguishes between good and poor employees.

Kavanagh et al. (1985) also explored the influence of the time since the last appraisal and organizational position on acceptability of the appraisal system. For a sample of 1,149 hospital employees, Kavanagh et al. found that employees who were evaluated within the last year (e.g., 1, 3, and 6 months) had significantly more correlates with their acceptability of the system than employees who were evaluated over a year ago. Only the fairness and accuracy of appraisals made over 1 year ago related to system acceptability. Apparently, attitudes about the acceptability of the performance appraisal system became less differentiated with increases in the time since the last appraisal; after the passing of more than a year, only a general impression remained of the system.

With respect to organizational position, the factors that explained overall acceptability varied by position. Managers had significantly more factors that were related to overall acceptability than employees in other positions. This finding is consistent with the effects of time since the last appraisal. Managers had the richer delineation of attitudes, because they had more experience with performance appraisals.

**TABLE 10.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Name</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fairness and Accuracy</td>
<td>Performance appraisals fairly and accurately describe job performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisory Input</td>
<td>Supervisor is capable and can be trusted to make accurate appraisals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear Performance Standards</td>
<td>Employee has a clear idea of work standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adherence to Appraisal System Procedures</td>
<td>Appraisals are used and made according to policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-worker Input</td>
<td>Co-workers are capable and can be trusted to make accurate appraisals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike of Appraisals</td>
<td>Use self-appraisals or no appraisals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Other Measures</td>
<td>Use job knowledge tests, aptitude tests, or training performance</td>
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*Adapted from Kavanagh et al. (1985).*

Finally, Kavanagh et al. (1985) found that appraisals were positively related to performance evaluations. The appraisal form and the bro...
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Finally, Kavanagh et al. (1985) compared the attitudes of two samples toward the appraisal form and the broader concept of the appraisal system. One sample consisted of nursing supervisors, who had a performance appraisal system that included (a) use of behaviorally anchored rating scales, (b) performance appraisal interviews, and (c) a two-day training workshop for supervisors in rating and interviewing. The second sample consisted of supervisors in a university setting. The university performance appraisal system was less sophisticated; it consisted of trait rating scales, no required appraisal interview, and no training in rating or interviewing.

Both the nursing and university supervisors were unable to distinguish between the performance appraisal form and the system. Virtually identical regression models were found for form and system acceptability. However, nursing supervisors in the more sophisticated appraisal system had significantly more appraisal correlates of acceptability. This latter finding suggests that the nature of the performance appraisal system influences the structural complexity of attitudes about performance appraisal.

Characteristics of the Performance Appraisal System

Rating Source. The immediate supervisor is the most frequently used source for performance appraisals. In fact, Lazer and Wilstrom (1977) estimated that immediate supervisors generate and communicate 95% of the appraisals made in organizations. However, other sources readily available in most organizations include peers as well as the incumbent. Most research on attitudes toward performance appraisal has focused on supervisory appraisals. Only two studies bear directly on peer appraisals (Cederblom & Lounsbury, 1980; McEvoy & Buller, 1987), and none on self-appraisals.

McEvoy and Buller (1987) evaluated a peer-appraisal system for hourly employees, who worked in a food-processing plant. Employees' attitudes toward the system were quite positive. They favored continuing the system that had been in place for a year, were satisfied with peers as a source for appraisal, and were satisfied with their last performance rating. In contrast, Cederblom and Lounsbury (1980) reported low acceptance by faculty members of peer appraisals. A difference between the two appraisal systems was that faculty members were provided with individual signed evaluations from peers, whereas the hourly workers received anonymous averaged peer ratings. It appears that acceptance of a peer-appraisal system is due partly to maintenance of rater confidentiality.

Rating Form. Several studies bear on the effects that rating form has on performance appraisal attitudes. Forms that provide behavioral information about performance are viewed more favorably. For example, Dickinson and Zellinger (1980) compared behaviorally anchored rating scales to mixed standard scales

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| appraisals fairly and accurately describe one's capable and can be trusted to make a clear idea of work standards used and made according to policy capable and can be trusted to make appraisals no appraisals not valid tests, aptitude tests, or training

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and found that raters preferred the anchored scales, because they allowed raters to include written comments about their ratings.

Another unique feature of behaviorally anchored rating scales is the involvement of raters, and potentially, rates in scale development. Although rater-ratee involvement is designed to improve the psychometric properties of rating scales (Friedman & Cornelius, 1976), it also apparently enhances attitudes toward the appraisal process. Silverman and Wexley (1984) compared the perceptions of employees who had and had not participated in the development of behaviorally anchored scales used in discussing performance in appraisal interviews. Those employees who participated in form development reported more satisfaction with their appraisal interview, more motivation to improve, and learning more from the interview. They also reported making more contributions, setting more goals, and having more opportunities to participate during the interview.

More recently, Hedge, Teachout, and Dickinson (1987) examined attitudes about several rating forms to be used in a research program for validating the Air Force's selection and classification test battery. For eight job specialties, four rating forms were used that measured employee performance at the task, dimensional, or global levels. Using all forms, job incumbents rated themselves, whereas supervisors and co-workers rated the incumbents. Factor analysis was used to identify factors of form acceptability, motivation to rate, job satisfaction, and rater trust of the researchers. Form acceptability involved perceptions of fairness and accuracy, clarity of instructions, and confidence in the obtained ratings. Regression analyses indicated that motivation to rate and trust of the researchers were highly predictive of the acceptability of each form. Mean comparisons indicated that the task-level rating form was significantly less acceptable to the raters. Although the task-level form allowed assessment of performance with greater detail, this form also required more effort to use. Apparently, raters disliked the task-level form, because it contained 25 to 40 items compared to the 6 to 9 items contained in the dimensional-level form and the 2 items in the global form.

The Appraisal Interview. Perhaps the most important aspect of a performance appraisal system is the performance appraisal interview. In the interview, performance is reviewed, usually by the employee's supervisor, and performance-related information is discussed that may affect the employee's future work behavior. As depicted in Fig. 10.2, structure and process characteristics influence outcomes from the performance appraisal interview.

The interview can serve a variety of purposes, including discussing performance ratings, solving performance problems, setting goals, and discussing administrative decisions (e.g., pay raises, promotion, and disciplinary actions). Meyer, Kay, and French (1965) were the first to suggest that a single interview session should not be used to accomplish multiple purposes. They maintained that interviews focusing on employee development should be held separately from those focusing on personal and administrative matters. The two purposes force the interviewer and judge. The interviewee to act in the capacity of a facilitator, whereas the judge acts as a judge. An interviewer attitude in the interview session typically emphasizes administration, and consequently, the interviewee is threatened with performance goals and employee attitudes and performance development.

Other researchers have questioned the validity of performance appraisal interviews (Igen & Feldman, 1986; Kavanagh, 1978; McCa, & Kavanagh, 1978; Kavanagh et al., 1985) at least once a year have more favorable results, no guidelines are available as to the type of interview. Very frequent interviewing by supervisors and frequent feedback from the interview process is needed to ensure effective interviews. The interview process has been identified as critical to employee development.
ules, because they allowed raters to improve rating scales is the involve-ment of development. Although raters'-psychometric properties of rating system enhance attitudes toward 1984 compared the perceptions of the development of behaviorally oriented in appraisal interviews. Those that reported more satisfaction with system, and learning more from individual contributions, setting more goals, during the interview.

inson (1987) examined attitudes toward the program for validating the system. For eight job specialties, employee performance at the task, incumbents rated themselves, incumbents. Factor analysis was conducted to identify job satisfaction, acceptability involved perceptions, and confidence in the system that motivation to rate and trust in the acceptability of each form. Meaning was significantly less affirmative than the form allowed assessment of performance, because it contained 25 to 40 points on the dimensional-level form and the most important aspect of a performance appraisal interview. In the interview, the employee’s supervisor, and that may affect the employee’s 2, structure and process character-istics, including discussing performance-setting goals, and discussing ad-justment, and discriminatory actions).

*Fig. 10.2.* Characteristics of the performance appraisal interview.

separately from those focusing on administrative decisions. Meyer et al. argued that the two purposes force the interviewer into two conflicting roles (i.e., facilitator and judge). The interviewer’s role for employee development requires acting as a facilitator, whereas that for administrative decisions requires acting as a judge. An interviewer attempting to accomplish both purposes in a single session typically emphasizes administrative decisions to the exclusion of development, and consequently, the interviewer must deal with an employee who feels threatened about job security or pay. Meyer et al. reported improvements in employee attitudes and performance when the two roles were split into separate interview sessions.

Other researchers have questioned the advantages of a strict separation of performance appraisal interviews by purpose (Dorfman, Stephan, & Loveland, 1986; Hagen & Feldman, 1983; Prince & Lawler, 1986). For example, motivational theory suggests that developmental goals should be linked to feedback and rewards to increase the likelihood of goal achievement (Cummings, 1973). One strategy to consider is a separation of interviews based on relative emphasis. A 6-month interval could be used between an interview emphasizing employee development and another emphasizing rewards. This strategy would allow progress in solving problems and meeting goals that were identified in the first interview to be linked into administrative decisions made in the second interview. The suggestion is supported by Keaveny, Inderrieden, and Allen (1987), who found no effects on satisfaction with the interview when developmental and administrative functions were combined in the same interview. Further, employees were more satisfied with the interview when a linkage was perceived with performance goals that were set in a previous interview.

Of course, more than two interviews could be conducted annually (cf. Beer, Ruh, Dawson, McCaa, & Kavanagh, 1978). Although research (Landy et al., 1978; Kavanagh et al., 1985) suggests that employees who are evaluated at least once a year have more favorable attitudes about performance appraisal, no guidelines are available as to the optimal number of performance appraisal interviews. Very frequent interviews could be viewed as controlling and intrusive by supervisors and employees. As noted by Cederblom (1982), further research is needed on the effects of interview frequency.

The interview process has been extensively examined, and several characteristics appear to influence interview outcomes (cf. Burke, Weitzel, & Weir,
1978; Burke & Wilcox, 1969; Ilgen, Peterson, Martin, & Boeschen, 1981; Kay, Meyer, & French, 1965; Maier, 1958; Nemeroff & Wexley, 1979; Wexley, 1979). First, employees who report more participation in the appraisal interview also report more satisfaction with the interview, more motivation to improve, and more actual improvement. Second, the support shown by the interviewer for the employee has also been linked to positive outcomes from the interview. Interviewers are more effective when they listen to employee points of view, minimize criticisms, and acknowledge good performance. Third, solving problems that hinder employee performance has been linked to positive outcomes from the interview. Finally, mutual goal setting by the employee and interviewer is related to satisfaction with the interview, motivation to improve, and reports of actual job improvement.

Interviewing style has been used as a means to encourage employee discussion of job performance and, consequently, to obtain greater participation, minimization of threat, problem solving, mutual goal setting, motivation to improve, and satisfaction with the interview (e.g., French, Kay, & Meyer, 1966; Wexley, Singh, & Yukl, 1973). The classic tripartite description by Maier (1958) reflects important variations in interviewing style. The “tell and sell” style involves informing the employee about the interviewer’s appraisal of strengths and weaknesses and then persuading the employee to follow the interviewer’s suggestions for improvement. The “tell and listen” style adds to the interview the opportunity for the employee to express feelings about the appraisal. Finally, the “problem-solving” style emphasizes a nondirective discussion to encourage the employee to express ideas and feelings about strengths and weaknesses. This discussion leads to a mutual agreement about goals and plans for improving performance.

Although interviewing style is clearly important, attributes that the interviewer brings to the interview also influence the effectiveness of the interview. An interviewer who is perceived to be credible is more likely to provide performance-related information that is acceptable to the employee (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979). Credibility can be acquired, because the source is perceived to (a) be an expert with respect to job performance, (b) have formal power (e.g., the immediate supervisor), and (c) have trustworthy motives.

The highly sensitive nature of the appraisal interview makes employee trust of the interviewer especially critical to the acceptance of an appraisal. In a constructive replication of the Landy et al. (1978) research, Fulk, Brief, and Barr (1983) included a measure of the trust between supervisor and employee. Fulk et al. obtained correlations nearly identical to those reported in the original research. Further, they developed a causal model of supervisory effects on perceived fairness and accuracy. As shown in Fig. 10.3, significant direct and indirect paths were obtained from the supervisor’s knowledge of the subordinate’s performance to fairness and accuracy of appraisals. Direct paths were also obtained from trust in the supervisor and the development of action plans with the performance appraisal to fairness and accuracy.

The findings of Fulk et al. hypothesized that acceptability by perceptions of fairness and appraisal interview. In addition, vs. administrative) and the freq perceptions of the performance ed multi-item scales to measure in relation to others), accuracy (and acceptability (e.g., apprais performance).

Secunda (1983) used struct nized relations. His final trim suggests that acceptability of (b) by several direct and indirect perceptions of fairness and ac performance appraisal system. Acceptability was indirectly in supervisor and performance appraisal. Further, perceived fairness antitudes about the supervisor and performance rating. Finally, attit by attitudes about the supervi.

Another attribute that influ appraisal is the content of the fee appraisal (see Fig. 10.5). The n
Martin, & Boeschen, 1981; Kay, Kroff, & Wexley, 1979; Wexley, participation in the appraisal interview, more motivation to im- pove, the support shown by the linked to positive outcomes from ve when they listen to employee wledge good performance. Third, mance has been linked to positive goal setting by the employee and interview, motivation to improve,

to encourage employee discussion, a greater participation, ministation, motivation to improve, and satis- fied Meyer, 1966; Wexley, Singh, & Maier (1985) reflects important sell' style involves informing the of strengths and weaknesses and interviewer’s suggestions for im- to the interview opportunity appraisal. Finally, the ‘’problem- usion to encourage the employee and weaknesses. This discussion plans for improving performance.

ant, attributes that the interviewer: iveness of the interview. An in- more likely to provide performance- employee (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, the source is perceived to (a) be (b) have formal power (e.g., the orthy motives.

il interview makes employee trust cceptance of an appraisal. In a con- b research, Fulk, Brief, and Baren supervise employee. Fulk to those reported in the original model of supervisory effects on per- fig. 10.3, significant direct and in- or’s knowledge of the subordinate’s raisals. Direct paths were also ob- development of action plans with accuracy.

FIG. 10.3. Trust in the supervisor and performance appraisal attitudes (adapt- ed from Fulk et al., 1985).

The findings of Fulk et al. (1985) were expanded by Secunda (1983), who hypothesized that acceptability of a performance appraisal system is determined by perceptions of fairness and accuracy, the supervisor, and the performance appraisal interview. In addition, the purpose for the appraisal (i.e., developmental vs. administrative) and the frequency of appraisal were hypothesized to influence perceptions of the performance appraisal interview. Notably, Secunda constructed multi-item scales to measure perceptions of fairness (e.g., ratings are fair in relation to others), accuracy (e.g., my rating represents my true performance), and acceptability (e.g., appraisal program is an acceptable way to evaluate performance).

Secunda (1983) used structural equation analysis to evaluate the hypothesized relations. His final trimmed model is depicted in Fig. 10.4. This model suggests that acceptability of the performance appraisal system is determined by several direct and indirect effects. Acceptability was directly influenced by perceptions of fairness and accuracy of the appraisal rating, and whether the performance appraisal system was used primarily for growth and development. Acceptability was indirectly influenced by the effects that attitudes about the supervisor and performance appraisal interview had on fairness and accuracy. Further, perceived fairness and accuracy were each directly determined by attitudes about the supervisor and appraisal interview as well as the actual performance rating. Finally, attitudes about the appraisal interview were determined by attitudes about the supervisor and the frequency of appraisal.

Another attribute that influences employee attitudes about performance appraisal is the content of the feedback provided by the supervisor during the appraisal (see Fig. 10.5). The most important aspect of content is the sign of
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Feedback (Herold & Greller, 1974) is more acceptable than negative feedback when supervisors distort feedback (Egan & Knowlton, 1980), only giving employees improvements in their performance.

The sequencing of feedback about that feedback without disapproval, and McIntosh (1984) in an interview, first and criticize-later approach to employees. Stone et al. (1995) in a performance appraisal, perceived as more accurate that the sequence effect occurred only with expertise. Although these results suggest that a praise-first approach increases the perceived effectiveness.

Another aspect of content is that nonspecific feedback is of little value. The informal responses, goal appropriateness, and leads to more favorable attitudes is the response value of the appropriate responses, because goal setting and the acceptance of feedback.

Aside from its content, feedback is often given rather than being used to control behavior. Perceptions of personal congruence and maintaining intrinsic motivation is a manner to generate feelings of feedback. Research is available, this provides feedback information value of the feedback.

Individual Characteristics

Several personality theories suggest that information to maintain face, self-esteem theories propose that self-evaluation and to increase self-esteem, worth, and effectiveness assumes that people have the limits of their knowledge and that the longer the drive into these limits (Shrauger, 1975). Further, self-esteem theories, or abilities can be o
feedback (Herold & Greller, 1977; Ilgen et al., 1979). Although positive feedback is more acceptable than negative feedback, and there is research evidence that supervisors distort feedback by making it more positive (Fisher, 1979; Ilgen & Knowlton, 1980), only giving positive feedback is not realistic. Many employees need improvements in their job performance.

The sequencing of feedback by its sign is a strategy for influencing attitudes about that feedback without distorting its content. A laboratory study by Stone, Gueutal, and McIntosh (1984) investigated the commonsense notion that a praise-first and criticize-later approach to feedback makes that feedback more acceptable to employees. Stone et al. found that a positive–negative sequence of feedback in a performance appraisal interview about in-basket performance was perceived as more accurate than a negative–positive sequence. Further, this sequence effect occurred only when the supervisor was perceived to have high expertise. Although these results need to be replicated in a field setting, they suggest that a praise-first approach in the appraisal interview by a credible supervisor increases the perceived accuracy and acceptance of feedback.

Another aspect of content is the specificity of feedback. French et al. (1966) cautioned that nonspecific feedback in the appraisal interview, even if positive, is of little value. The information value of the feedback (e.g., correctness of responses, goal appropriateness) probably enhances the credibility of the source and leads to more favorable attitudes (Steers & Porter, 1974). More important is the response value of the feedback (e.g., identifying goals, rewards, or appropriate responses), because it impacts on the motivation to respond (e.g., goal setting and the acceptance of specific goals) and ultimately on performance.

Aside from its content, feedback must be seen by the employee as helpful rather than being used to control work behavior (Deci, 1975; Ilgen et al., 1979). Perceptions of personal control are important for attaining a sense of competence and maintaining intrinsic motivation. Thus, feedback should be given in a manner to generate feelings of accomplishment (Fisher, 1978). Although no research is available, this probably requires a delicate balancing of the sign and information value of the feedback.

Individual Characteristics

Several personality theories support the notion that individuals distort performance information to maintain favorable attitudes about one's self. For example, self-esteem theories propose that individuals have the need to enhance their self-evaluation and to increase, maintain, or confirm feelings of personal satisfaction, worth, and effectiveness (Jones, 1973). Self-enhancement theory assumes that people have the basic desire to think favorably of themselves, and that the longer the drive is unsatisfied, the more it increases in strength (Schaug, 1975). Further, self-concept theories predict that when skills, qualifications, or abilities can be or are negatively evaluated, the self-concept is
threatened. Under these conditions, protection of self-concept would be a probable reaction (Wiener, 1973). In sum, performance appraisal information probably arouses desires to enhance self-esteem, think favorably of one’s self, or protect self-concept.

**Self-Esteem.** Although several personality variables have been related to performance feedback (Ilgen et al., 1979), little research has been reported that relates these variables to performance appraisal attitudes. In the research by Ilgen et al. (1981), self-esteem was investigated as a correlate of subordinate reactions to their performance appraisal interviews. However, self-esteem was not related to overall satisfaction with the session or the extent to which the session was friendly, helpful, or focused on specific performance issues.

Two aspects of this research qualify the results. First, the organization had recently instituted a performance appraisal system oriented to Management by Objectives, and supervisors had been given extensive training in goal setting and conducting appraisal interviews. These organizational changes resulted in very positive attitudes about performance appraisal. Thus, there could have been a ceiling effect on the relationships between attitudes and self-esteem. Second, the outcome of the appraisal was not controlled. Personality theories suggest that the relationships of self-esteem with attitudes about an appraisal depend on the content of that appraisal.

In their laboratory study, Stone et al. (1984) controlled the feedback given to high and low self-esteem individuals. All individuals received the same appraisal feedback, except for its positive-negative sequencing. High self-esteem individuals perceived the feedback to be more accurate, and their perceptions were influenced by sequence. High self-esteem individuals perceived feedback to be more accurate when it was in the positive-negative sequence. No sequence effects were found for low self-esteem individuals. Apparently, the greater the self-esteem, the more likely an individual avoids or ignores the negative aspects of performance appraisal.

**Age and Job Experience.** These variables have been hypothesized to be inversely related to acceptance of performance feedback (Ilgen et al., 1979). The rationale is that older and more experienced employees would have accumulated knowledge of performance standards, and they would not need feedback or find it to be acceptable. Three studies relate to this hypothesis. Ilgen et al. (1981) reported positive but nonsignificant correlations of age and years with the company with attitudes about performance appraisal interviews. In contrast, McEvoy and Buller (1987) reported small negative correlations between attitudes toward the peer-appraisal system and years with the company. On postsurvey comments, more senior employees indicated that peers with less experience did not have a good understanding of job requirements. Steel (1985) also reported that more senior employees (i.e., 15 years plus service and 56 years plus in age) had less favorable attitudes about performance appraisals. Unfortunately, interactions between employee attitudes and age and years of service were not studied.

**Feedback Seeking.** Finally, others about their own performance to be tied to motivations for enhancing self-esteem (Ashforth et al., 1981). Individuals differ in their history and work, as they differ in motivations related to work and Cummings suggest that a greater when the feedback is a greater set of feedback-seeking propensities for feedback-seeking about performance appraisal.

**Organizational Characteristics.** Organizations can do much to control performance appraisal. Performance appraisal systems, organizational role (Katz & Kiely, 1980), and time to make appraisals, training of their appraisals. Of course, one of the factors to performance appraisal as time (Rowe, 1964). If performance appraisal systems are not only fair and objective at all levels in the organization, employees tend to rate their performance positively.

**Policies.** Kavanagh and Taber consider implementing policies in appraisal systems. These right incentives, use of performance standards. Kavanagh and Taber hypothesized that rewards for performance improvement would improve employee acceptance. Fortunately, no research has been conducted on this hypothesis.

A theoretical rationale for employee participation could be based on theory. Distributive justice refers to the procedures used in decision making, whereas procedural justice refers to the procedures used in decision making in organizational decision making. Performance appraisal related to these outcomes incl...
of self-concept would be a probability appraisal information probably, think favorably of one's self, or

ity variables have been related to the research has been reported that article attitudes. In the research by ated as a correlate of subordinate views. However, self-esteem was ejection or the extent to which the specific performance issues. results. First, the organization had system oriented to Management by extensive training in goal setting organizational changes resulted in raise. Thus, there could have been attitudes and self-esteem. Second, filled. Personality theories suggest titudes about an appraisal depend 984) controlled the feedback given individuals received the same aptive sequencing. High self-esteem re accurate, and their perceptions :em individuals perceived feedback re-negative sequence. No sequence iduals. Apparently, the greater the odds or ignores the negative aspects

ables have been hypothesized to be once feedback (Igen et al., 1979). enced employees would have ac- urds, and they would not need feed- lies relate to this hypothesis. Igen nificant correlations of age and years ance appraisal interviews. In con- mall negative correlations between i and years with the company. On yees indicated that peers with less high of job requirements. Steel (1985) (i.e., 15 years plus service and 56 years plus in age) had less favorable attitudes toward a new performance appraisal system. Unfortunately, none of these studies measured curvilinear relations between employee attitudes and age and job experience.

Feedback Seeking. Finally, individuals often actively seek feedback from others about their own performance. This feedback-seeking behavior is thought to be tied to motivations for achieving competence as well as protecting and enhancing self-esteem (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). According to theory, individuals differ in their history and propensity for feedback-seeking behavior just as they differ in motivations related to competence and self-esteem. Ashford and Cummings suggest that acceptance and desire to respond to feedback is greater when the feedback is actively sought. Perhaps, individuals with a greater propensity for feedback-seeking behavior also have more favorable attitudes about performance appraisal.

Organizational Characteristics

Organizations can do much to create a favorable context for performance appraisal. Performance appraisal should be viewed as an integral part of a manager's organizational role (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Managers should be given adequate time to make appraisals, training, and rewards for the fairness and accuracy of their appraisals. Of course, employees attach the same degree of importance to performance appraisal as they perceive being attached by their superiors (Rowe, 1964). If performance appraisal has visible and continued support from all levels in the organization, employees should evaluate the appraisal process positively.

Policies. Kavanagh and Taber (1987) have argued that organizations should consider implementing policies that affirm employee rights in performance appraisal systems. These rights include fairness and accuracy of appraisals, privacy, use of performance standards, and supervisor competency for appraisal. Kavanagh and Taber hypothesized that organizations incorporating these rights would improve employee acceptance of the performance appraisal process. Unfortunately, no research has been conducted that directly bears on this hypothesis.

A theoretical rationale for establishing organizational policies for performance appraisal could be based on the concepts of justice developed in social psychology. Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of the outcomes of decision making, whereas procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the procedures used in decision making (Folger & Greenberg, 1985). Outcomes in organizational decision making include wage scales, labor-management agreements, performance appraisal ratings, and performance goals. Processes related to these outcomes include job evaluation systems, dispute-resolution
procedures, performance appraisal interviews, and Management by Objectives, respectively. Most organizations already have policies concerning outcomes such as wage scales and labor-management agreements as well as the processes of job evaluation and dispute resolution used to attain these outcomes.

In support of the rationale, Greenberg (1986) has already demonstrated that perceived fairness in performance appraisal can be understood in terms of the notions of procedural and distributive justice. He had managers, who claimed to have had at least 30 experiences giving and receiving performance appraisals, describe incidents in which they received a particularly fair or unfair performance appraisal. A second group of managers was then asked to identify categories reflected in these incidents using the Q-sort technique. A final group of managers rated the categories for importance as determinants of fair appraisals. A factor analysis of the importance ratings yielded two factors that accounted for 95% of the rating variance. One factor dealt with procedural processes (e.g., soliciting input prior to making an evaluation and using it; two-way communication during the appraisal interview). A second factor dealt with the relation between the appraisal rating and subsequent administration action (e.g., recommendation for salary–promotion based on rating).

Programs. Although most employees would welcome an appraisal that helps them to improve and leads to performance-based rewards, they could believe that the appraisal is based on inadequate or irrelevant information. Clearly, supervisors must be encouraged to attain first-hand knowledge of employee performance, an understanding of job duties, and the ability to conduct appraisals. Otherwise, performance appraisals would lead to few improvements and be unacceptable to employees.

Training programs have been shown to be effective for improving supervisory ability to make appraisals (DeCotiis & Petit, 1978; Dickinson & Baker, 1989; Landy & Farr, 1980). Effective training should illustrate and provide practice in observing performance, recording relevant information, and making performance ratings (Wexley & Latham, 1981). Training should also be provided in how to conduct performance appraisal interviews. Ivancevich (1982) reported a field study that examined employee attitudes toward appraisal interviews that were conducted by supervisors who received training in providing feedback and/or assigning performance goals (i.e., variations of the “tell and sell” style). These training programs increased employee perceptions of the fairness, accuracy, and clarity of the appraisal interview.

In some organizations, performance is constrained by factors in the work environment that are not under employee control (Eulberg, O’Connor, Peters, & Watson, 1984). For example, employees may receive services and help from others to do their job, or they may have to wait for previous stages of the work flow to be completed. In these situations, performance can be impeded by poor coordination of work activities or unplanned changes in work schedules. If super-

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The motivation of the managers who use a performance appraisal system is also critical to its acceptance. Unless managers perceive support from top management for the appraisal system, they may not be motivated to use that system. Beer et al. (1978) described a comprehensive appraisal system, whose acceptance by managers was still in doubt after several years of operation. The system included extensive training for most levels of management, an emphasis on goal setting and development, and the splitting of salary and developmental interviews. Although the system was highly accepted by those managers who did use it, this enthusiasm did not spread throughout the organization. Managers who did not use the system reported that they do not use it because top management had not endorsed the system. Apparently, nonusers were reluctant to engage in the time-consuming process of using the new system, unless they were encouraged to do so by top management.

Managers should not only be encouraged by top management to use a performance appraisal system, but they should also be rewarded for performance appraisal. In a unique study, Napier and Latham (1986) asked managers to describe the outcomes that they expected from conducting performance appraisals. The outcomes included “nothing,” intrinsic satisfaction, financial reward, and promotion. Napier and Latham also found that a majority of managers expected “nothing” as the primary consequence of giving employees positive or negative appraisals. Importantly, appraisals were perceived not to depend on financial reward or the likelihood of promotion. Although managers did expect appreciation from employees and superiors for positive appraisals, they expected little appreciation for negative appraisals. Napier and Latham asserted that expectations of few positive outcomes from conducting performance appraisals explain why managers tend to make inaccurate ratings. Obviously, these outcome expectations also help in understanding managerial attitudes about performance appraisal.
Context. On the other hand, managers do engage in activities that support and enhance employee performance. These activities are important for managerial and organizational success, because they create the context for job performance. As suggested by Lawler (1967), organizations and managers differ in characteristics that determine not only the context for job performance, but also the context for performance appraisal.

Recently, Davis and Dickinson (1987) investigated the influence of contextual variables on attitudes about performance appraisal. State employees were surveyed from organizational units that provided mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse services. Attitudes about performance appraisal were related to unit- and individual-level contextual variables. The unit-level variables represented differences between sets of supervisors and subordinates (e.g., member communications, enforcement of work policies), and the individual-level variables reflected aspects of managerial style.

Both unit- and individual-level variables accounted for unique variance in acceptability. Employees in units characterized by good lateral and vertical communications among members perceived performance appraisals to be more acceptable. Openness in unit communications apparently included open discussions about performance. Greater unit standardization also led to more acceptable performance appraisals. When operating rules and policies were strictly adhered to within the work unit, it probably resulted in greater clarity and consistency in performance standards, and subsequently, to favorable attitudes about performance appraisal. With respect to individual-level variables, several aspects of managerial style influenced attitudes. Performance appraisals were more acceptable to subordinates when they perceived their supervisors as trustworthy and supportive, receptive to change, and able to facilitate positive interactions among unit members.

CONCLUSIONS

The research on performance appraisal attitudes has supported Lawler’s (1967) contention that these attitudes are determined by characteristics of the appraisal system, the individual, and the organization. A summary is shown in Fig. 10.6 of the characteristics that have been shown to influence various appraisal attitudes.

Early research focused on single-item measures (Dipboye & de Pontbriand, 1981; Landy et al., 1978), whereas later research attempted to develop and use multi-item scales (Davis & Dickinson, 1987; Kavanagh et al., 1985; Secunda, 1983). This is a desirable trend. The use of single-item measures restricts reliability and raises questions about the conceptualization of the constructs. For example, Landy et al. included several items that reflect goal setting in the performance appraisal interview, and several others that reflect the expression of emotion during that interview. In contrast, two studies used factor analysis of their attitudinal items to develop appraisal interview. Namely, G and distributive justice, where of appraisal satisfaction and imp of these constructs, develop adequate usefulness for understanding p

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of their attitudinal items to develop different constructs for understanding the 
appraisal interview. Namely, Greenberg (1986) identified factors of procedural 
and distributive justice, whereas Russell and Goode (1988) identified factors 
of appraisal satisfaction and improvement value. Clearly, several constructs 
derlie attitudes about performance appraisal. Future research should delineate 
ese constructs, develop adequate scales to measure them, and determine their 
 usefulness for understanding performance appraisal.

Early research also viewed the performance-rating level as a parsimonious 
explanation for attitudes about performance appraisal. The argument was that the 
avorability of performance appraisal attitudes could be simply due to the perform-
ance rating per se rather than the nature of the processes that determined the 
ating. Although the principle of parsimony is useful in model building and verifica-
ation, a broader perspective includes the performance rating and process mea-
ures in a nomological network for explaining appraisal attitudes. In this way, 
earch evidence can accumulate to help in model building and verification. The 
odel developed by Secunda (1983) illustrates that the level of the performance ating helps but does not solely explain attitudes about performance appraisal.

Perhaps the single most important determinant of employee attitudes about 
formance appraisal is the supervisor. When the supervisor is perceived as 
trustworthy and supportive, attitudes about performance appraisal are favora-
. Specific attitudes about performance appraisal must be viewed as tied to the 
eneral issue of supervisory effectiveness (Igen et al., 1981). Supervisors ten lack knowledge of their subordinates’ job duties, and they are poorly trained 
in providing performance feedback, gauging employee reactions to that feed-
back, and setting improvement goals. A focus on supervisors must also include attention to the expectations that they have for conducting performance appraisals. If supervisors believe that performance appraisal is a negative and non-rewarding endeavor, their subordinates are likely to have attitudes that match these expectations.

Another focus for research is the influence of organizational differences on attitudes about performance appraisal. Appraisal attitudes are shaped by variables that are properly conceived at the organizational level. This level of research is difficult to conduct because it requires the sampling of organizations or the sampling of distinct units in very large organizations. However, attitudes about performance appraisal systems are formed in a milieu of other organizational subsystems and variables (McCall & DeVries, 1976). These subsystems and variables probably shape appraisal attitudes and the usefulness of the appraisal system to a much greater degree than is currently known.

Organizations also differ in their policies about performance appraisal, and the extent to which these policies are known and enforced by management. Policies can reflect that top management is serious about the importance of performance appraisal and its central role in organizational decision making. They help to foster widespread use of the performance appraisal system as well as favorable attitudes about that system. Mechanisms for establishing appraisal policies (e.g., procedural and distributed justice) and the effects of those policies on appraisal attitudes need to be considered in future research.

Another research issue to consider is the unsettling possibility that individuals who are exposed to sophisticated appraisal systems probably have more complex appraisal attitudes. For example, in organizational settings where appraisal is done infrequently, employee attitudes are probably not well differentiated and are strongly determined by performance-ratings level. A related issue is that attitudes toward other job-related attributes (e.g., pay and benefits) probably determine the complexity of appraisal attitudes. Such possibilities suggest that models of appraisal attitudes will be exceedingly difficult to validate, because they may not readily generalize across organizations. Further research investigations should carefully describe the nature of the organizations, performance appraisal systems, and processes under investigation.

In summary, the broad categories suggested by Lawler (1967) must be considered a starting point for the development of models of appraisal attitudes. At a minimum, the models should be based on constructs that are measured with multi-item scales. The models should be sophisticated and include constructs about supervision and the appraisal process, performance ratings as determinants, and organizational context variables. When possible, these models should be compared across organizations to evaluate their generalizability for understanding attitudes about performance appraisal.

REFERENCES

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10. ATTITUDES ABOUT PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

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