

The Empowering Appraisal

Trainer's Notes

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What is Appraisal?

For a simple definition of appraisal we need look no further than the short appraisee's video **Your Appraisal**, which is an important element of this package.

Helen, who is about to have her appraisal with her manager, explains the purpose of appraisal and the key elements of the process:

- 'to analyse what has happened in the past and what should happen in the future.'
- 'you look at how you performed against your objectives last year; things that affected your performance.'
- 'you talk about key objectives for the next year; and you figure out what support development you'll need to achieve them.'

From this user-friendly explanation, we can deduce some more detailed definition. Appraisal is:

- **A formal management process**, which takes place at planned and fixed intervals, usually annually.
- **A review and planning process**. Certainly the past is appraised, but not to apportion blame. The purpose is to understand the factors which contributed to past performance and to plan to change them so that performance can improve in the future.
- **Objective-based**. The employee's performance is appraised against last year's objectives and the key outcome from the appraisal is a new set of agreed objectives for the following year.
- **A development opportunity**. Two of the major variables affecting employees' performance are their skills and their knowledge. The second key outcome from the appraisal is a development plan to give the employee the extra skills and knowledge they will need both to achieve their new objectives and to prepare them for additional responsibilities in the future.
- **Participative**. Appraisees usually know more than their managers about the reasons for past performance and what could be achieved in the next year. The manager therefore needs maximum input from the appraisee in the formulation of objectives and development plans.

Introduction

- **Empowering.** A well-conducted appraisal involves the appraisee fully in the management process, including problem analysis, what the new objectives should be, and how they will be achieved. Appraisal can therefore be the cornerstone of an empowering management philosophy.

The Benefits of Appraisal

- **Planned performance.** If objectives are set appropriately and the manager gives the necessary planned support, then there is a very high probability that they will be achieved. Each individual appraisal is, therefore, a building block in the pyramid of corporate performance.
- **Improved performance.** The appraisal is an opportunity to identify blocks to performance and potential for any further development of the employee's knowledge and skills. If the blocks are removed and the employee's capability is developed, the result should be an improved performance over the next year.
- **Planned development.** To an extent the appraisal is a negotiation. Two of the key variables are the level of performance desired by the manager and the knowledge and skills of the employee. In order to plan for improved performance the manager must create a matching plan for the development of the employee.
- **Problem-solving.** An important aspect of preparing for appraisal is the identification of factors, especially negative factors, which affected the previous year's performance. The appraisal is, therefore, a formal opportunity to apply joint problem-solving to eliminate barriers to improved performance.
- **Succession planning.** Over a number of appraisals a manager builds up a comprehensive dossier on the employee's performance, attitude, knowledge, skills and development potential. This information can be used to give the employee the most appropriate career guidance and to plan the development of employees for their next promotion.
- **Motivation through empowerment.** The well-conducted appraisal is a practical example of the usually nebulous concept of empowerment. By fully involving the employee in preparation, problem-solving, objective setting and development planning, the manager brings into play several of

Herzberg's¹ key 'motivators': recognition, (potential) advancement, job enrichment, opportunities for achievement, and the responsibility of decision-making. Unless modern motivation theory is disastrously wrong, the most important outcome from an empowering appraisal will be a very committed and motivated employee.

¹Herzberg, F (1968) *Work and the Nature of Man*. Staples Press.

How To Use This Package

The **Empowering Appraisal** package consists of:

- **The Empowering Appraisal** video (28 minutes) – for use in training groups of appraisers
- **Training Notes** – for use by trainers/facilitators of group training for appraisers
- **Self-Study Video** (28 minutes) – distance learning version of the video for appraisers
- **Self-Study Workbook** – to be used in conjunction with the **Self-Study Video**
- **Your Appraisal** (5 minutes) – video for use by appraisees as an explanation of the appraisal process
- **Your Appraisal Self-Study Workbook** – to accompany the **Your Appraisal** video
- Blank originals of **Generic Appraisal Form** and **Your Appraisal Preparation Form** for both appraisers and appraisees.

Introduction

These *Training Notes* contain four main sections:

- **Implementing an Appraisal System (pages 13 and 18)**

This section looks at management decisions which are not covered in the videos or the *Self-Study Workbook*, such as:

- who is to be included in the appraisal system
- the links between appraisal and performance-related pay (PRP)
- the frequency, timing and the logistics of 'cascading' objectives down the organisation
- paperwork
- training.

- **The Appraisal Process (pages 19 to 28)**

This section contains a more detailed explanation of the appraisal process illustrated in the video:

- Prepare
- Discuss
- Follow-up.

This section also includes **Discussion Topics** for use with groups of trainee appraisers.

- **Appraisal Skills (pages 29 to 36)**

The interpersonal skills used by effective appraisers are illustrated by the characters in the video, but are not shown in the graphics. This section gives a structured, behavioural approach to skills such as:

- key principles of empowering appraisals
- questioning
- problem-solving
- active listening.

- Suggested Training Design (pages 37 to 46)

Finally, we propose a simple design for training groups of appraisers. Role play materials and instructions for observation and feedback are included.

To gain maximum benefit from the package, we suggest the following procedure.

- View the **Empowering Appraisal** video and read the main four sections of this booklet and the **Self-Study Workbook**.
- Convene a management decision-making team and work through the issues in the section, Implementing an Appraisal System.
- Prepare the logistical support for the system, such as appraisal schedules, paperwork, instruction and announcement documents, and extra copies of the **Your Appraisal** video, if necessary.
- Implement training, either in groups using this booklet, or as individual managers, using the **Self-Study Video** and workbook, whichever is more appropriate for your organisation

Note: If you use the self-study approach you must make separate provision for instructing appraisers in the logistics of your system.

The Empowering Appraisal

These synopses are provided to help you find your way around the video quickly in order to refer to particular learning points. The synopses include all the scenes in the videos, even those without any training points, as these are useful as reference points in finding the more important scenes. The key learning points are in scenes 2, 5, 7, 9, 14 and 18 of **The Empowering Appraisal**.

Scene 1 – Laboratory Interior

Shots of technicians working on computers to establish that we are in a hi-tech organisation. Final shot of Angela Monroe at a computer console. Angela Monroe, the principal character, is reminded by a secretary that it is 11.00. Angela says that she hates appraisal interviews.

Scene 2 – Angela's Office

It becomes obvious that Angela is the appraising manager. Opening Titles. Angela is concluding an appraisal with Helen Walker. Angela ineptly raises a problem that has arisen during the year and, rather than let Helen discuss it, proposes to send her on a course. Helen is demotivated but sees no point in arguing.

Scene 3 – Brian Briggs' Office

Brian, the managing director and owner of the company, expresses his concerns about Angela to Ted, a computer-generated 'yes-man'. Angela, he says, is technically brilliant but cannot deal with people. Ted tells Brian that he must share his own people-skills with Angela.

Scene 4 – Office Hallway

Brian meets Angela in the hallway. Angela admits her concern about the success of Helen's appraisal, and Brian expresses his concern about the effects of having demotivated staff in his business.

Scene 5 – Chamber

Brian brings Helen into his image-generating chamber. He introduces the three steps of **The Empowering Appraisal** – **prepare, discuss, follow-up** – and sets up the correct environment for appraisal. The scene concludes with Brian giving a useful synopsis of empowerment.

Synopses of the Videos

Scene 6 – Canteen

Helen sits down with some colleagues. She is obviously unhappy. They are incredulous that Helen is being sent on yet another course.

Scene 7 – Chamber

Brian takes Angela through the stages of preparation for appraisal: reviewing last year's objectives, collecting facts about the employee's actual performance, and examining possible reasons for under – and over – performance. Brian stresses that the appraisee must prepare in the same way. Ted is introduced as the appraisee.

Brian also introduces Angela to the idea that the manager must ask the appraisee to review their own performance.

Scene 8 – Canteen

Helen complains to her colleagues that she tried to tell Angela about her ideas for improving systems in the laboratory, but that Angela did not listen.

Scene 9 – Chamber

Brian moves on to the second stage of appraisal – discuss – which has three sub-phases – review, explore, agree. Ted plays the part of a draughtsman. Angela starts to appraise him very aggressively. Brian tells Angela to attack the problem, not the person.

Scene 10 – Chamber

Angela starts again and elicits from Ted both the good and bad points about his performance. This completes the review phase.

Scene 11 – Chamber

Carrying on into the explore phase, Angela gets Ted to admit why his documentation is sometimes late, but does not know how to proceed further.

Scene 12 – Chamber

Ted and Brian show Angela how she can use questions to show Ted his own role in the late submission of documentation and why the lateness is unacceptable.

Scene 13 – Canteen

Helen's colleagues encourage her to apply for a transfer out of Angela's department and into Advertising which is run by Carol Tanner, a much better people manager.

Scene 14 – Chamber

Brian explains to Angela that, having explored the reasons for last year's performance, she and the appraiser must now agree what they are going to do to improve performance, what next year's objectives will be, and what assistance and development Ted will need to achieve them. Brian also explains the parameters for setting objectives.

Scene 15 – Chamber

Angela and Ted agree on Ted's objectives and the extra support Angela will give him.

Scene 16 – Chamber

Brian congratulates Angela on successfully completing the discussion stage and talks her through the final stage – Follow-up. He explains that appraisal may occur formally only once a year, but that it is an on-going process which continues throughout the year. Angela must provide the support she promised and continually review Ted's progress in meeting his objectives.

Scene 17 – Office Hallway

Brian and Angela emerge from the chamber and meet Helen in the hallway. Angela and Helen agree that Helen's earlier appraisal was unsatisfactory for the both of them. Angela suggests they repeat the appraisal a week hence and that they meet briefly that afternoon to plan the preparation.

Scene 18 – Chamber

Angela returns to the chamber to switch it off. Ted is still there and recaps the model of the appraisal process. Angela switches him off and exits.