

DESIRABILITY OF PERIODIC SERVICE RATING OF LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

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I assume that most of the departments represented in our Law Enforcement Association have service rating or performance evaluation programs of some type and, without doubt, have encountered problems incident to the administration of their systems. My department is in the process of adopting a new rating report form that appears to have the same basic defects of the one we have been using for several years. Following my remarks, I would like to hear some discussion relevant to programs that are being conducted in other states.

Periodic service reviews, or *evaluations of work performance*, document how effectively employees are performing their assigned duties and discharging the responsibilities delegated to them. Since the reports serve as an *important permanent documentary reference* of individual performance and progress, and since it is *used for various administrative purposes*; extreme care must be exercised to prevent any distortion or exaggeration of either the good or bad qualities of an employee. This fact makes it imperative that work requirements and performance standards are clearly understood by both the employee and the rater.

Our service report system requires that the evaluator apply the same knowledge he uses in supervision. A knowledge of the work to be done, of the way the work should be done, and of the way the work is being done.

A definite and serious obligation is placed on the supervisor or rater to avoid bias, partiality, and unfairness in his evaluation of a subordinate. Likewise, it is incumbent upon those who have the responsibility to review and judge the merit of the evaluation to determine that the reports are objective and positive, free from assumptions based on effort and results. Good work performance should be justly commended, deficient performance carefully examined and constructively appraised.

To be effective and accomplish the objectives of management, service ratings require thoughtful, careful and honest preparation. The competence of the evaluator and the importance of the reviewer cannot be over-emphasized in the administration of any impartial and effective service report program. Achievement values placed by the rater on the multitude of responsibilities of the conservation officers should be uniform. Judgments must be based on fact and examples that can be explained. Emphasis should be on the future and not on the past.

The evaluator must *appraise* work results, not analyze the imperfections of the individual or use the report as a means of disciplining the officer. An employee should not be judged on a single recent incident, good or bad, but on his performance throughout the period covered by the service review. It is of much importance that the supervisor *have the courage to freely discuss job performance with officers* and have the ability to tactfully avoid or conceal any conflict in personalities that may exist between them.

The supervisor must impress the employee with the importance and significance of the rating and sincerely demonstrate his interest and confidence in the individual that he is rating. He must refrain from leaving any indication that as *the rater* he is only carrying out a supervisory assignment or procedure delegated to him by higher authority. By all means, he should never create an impression that he is in any way unfavorable to the rating system. Unless these basic principles are closely observed and enthusiastically practiced, the service review may lose its primary value and defeat its objective to encourage individual progress and constructively direct attention to poor performance.

Before a service rating program can be effectively applied and receive favorable acceptance, job or performance standards, rules of behavior and department policies must be clearly understood by both the evaluator and his subordinate.

It has been my observation that service reports frequently reflect the kind of supervision that is administered and the effectiveness of our lines of communication. We, as head of our division or section, have been given the assignment to diligently and efficiently enforce the wildlife laws or regulations promulgated by our Commissions or legislative bodies. In addition to this primary function, many other duties or responsibilities are delegated to the enforcement staff. The department furnishes us with what is considered to be sufficient manpower to carry out these obligations. The effectiveness and the results of our endeavors as a manager of this manpower is dependent upon how well we personally understand our assignment and objectives and on our ability to clearly communicate these assignments and objectives to our subordinates.

Frankly, I must admit that too often I may take for granted that each supervisor and each conservation agent completely understands and fully comprehends all of the functions, policies and procedures of our section and all of the programs or projects that are delegated to us from various administrative sources. Even though periodic conferences are held with the supervisory staff and district or regional meetings are frequently conducted; new conservation officers are subjected to four months of detailed training and instruction in all phases of their assignment and responsibility; and the field force is furnished both written and oral information on new work programs and revisions in policies and procedures are explained, *do the men in the field fully understand what is expected of them?* What results are anticipated? And what we demand in the way of achievement?

I have "back tracked" service reports of poor work results, undesirable behavior, and "wheel spinning", etc. to insufficient instructions, lack of proper supervisory attention and inadequate information on job performance standards. In other words, the blame for an unsatisfactory or even a conditional performance report may be rooted in or have its emergence from complacent leadership or a communication breakdown or failure.

Periodic appraisals of field work performance when properly conducted provides a valuable and significant measure of the effectiveness of our supervisory staff. They also furnish us the opportunity to assess the quality of our administrative procedures, determine weaknesses in lines or methods of communications, detect potential managerial problems and assist us in eliminating "bottlenecks" in work accomplishment.

My concluding comment is in regard to the private conference between the evaluator and the worker. I believe we will all agree that this should be the most useful part of the service review program. Again whatever is accomplished, good or bad, depends largely on the manner and the atmosphere of the interview.

The evaluator is under an obligation to the employee, not to substantiate his appraisal, *but* to see that the employee clearly understand the assessment of his work results and how and where improvements may be reached in the future. Extreme care should be taken to avoid creating an impression that the meeting is for the purpose of criticizing, reprimanding or judging. The supervisor should make much thoughtful preparation for this "face to face" visit, otherwise it may turn into a "mouth to mouth" dispute.

Decisions relative to job performance should have been completed and any criticism of work results or disciplinary actions should have been made at the time that such was proper. The rater must refrain from making an effort to justify questionable items since this usually creates a greater controversy terminating in hostility towards both the rater and the rating system. Instead, the rater should direct the discussion towards next year's plans and objectives. Comparisons of job performance must be tactfully avoided by encouraging the employee to appraise or evaluate his own work results, his job knowledge, attitude, cooperativeness, punctuality, and other items that may have influenced something less than an outstanding report. It is not difficult to prepare a work evaluation on an outstanding officer to discuss his report with him. It is not too hard to document someone who falls far behind in several areas of his responsibilities; however, it takes courage and

skill to "lay the cards on the table" in such a manner that animosity is held to a minimum and the employee can identify where improvement is needed. Interviews of this kind should not be hurried and the evaluator must be an attentive listener.

The in-between or average performer is probably the most difficult problem for the evaluator. In my opinion, the officer who continually rates only "satisfactory" or "average" on our rating form is just as near the bottom, perhaps even closer, than he is to the top. I doubt that in this day of extreme work pressures we can tolerate mediocre performance for very long.

Much more could be said relative to the desirability of service ratings and their application; however, as previously stated, I would like to hear some discussion of this subject from the floor. I would like to state that it is much easier to ask questions regarding this subject than it is to supply answers.

SPOTLIGHTING IN WEST VIRGINIA

By Raymond J. Eye
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For approximately the next twenty minutes we are going to discuss the problems that we have had in West Virginia with "spotlighting." It is very possible that our problems may be somewhat different, but I feel that basically they are almost the same. So, if you disagree with what I am going to say, remember I am speaking about West Virginia and our problems with this type of illegal hunting, which we have had over the past years.

When we speak of spotlighting we are referring to the methods used to take and kill wild animals at night; however, "spotlighting" refers mainly to deer, since this appears to be the main wild animal that is being hunted. The term "jacklighting" is also used, but in West Virginia among the officers and local people, the word "spotlighting" is used more commonly. So, when I mention this word you will know what I am speaking about.

Prior to World War II, West Virginia had no problems with spotlighting; however, as veterans returned from service, it appeared that this type of deer killing was learned by the soldiers while serving in Europe. As veterans returned, night hunting of deer started to pick up, until deer were being killed almost every night. Also, black market of deer meat picked up and became a common occurrence. It also became evident that many people were getting in on the act, age made no difference, and people of all types of background were involved. Officers spent many hours trying to cope with the problem and many lessons were learned by our officers.

One of the problems that was very evident from the beginning, and still holds true today, is the fact of the mountainous terrain in West Virginia. Mountains range from 4,860 to a low elevation of 274 feet, almost everywhere in the eastern panhandle (where we have most of our problems with spotlighting), there are fertile valleys and fields where deer come at night to feed and browse and hundreds of miles of dirt back country roads, which in the wintertime require 4-wheel drive vehicles in order to get into the back country. Roads intersect and lead everywhere and it is impossible to get a spotlights pinned up so that he cannot make a getaway.

Spotlighters working in gangs have very good and accurate radio communications with each other. One example of how radio communications work is where a vehicle is parked with a man and a woman along a road where the gang is intending to work. When the officer's vehicle or any strange vehicle shows up in the area, they simply radio ahead and advise those that are after the deer that an officer's car has been spotted. If the officer had received a call about this and knew where they would be working, by the time he has arrived, he would not find anything going on, simply because by communications, the spotlighting gang had been warned, and had ample time to get away. Telephones are also used where people watch to see if any officer's