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MOBTS 2023

Session Format: Activity/Exercise

Pantomime Performance: Using Charades to Teach Performance Appraisal

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**ABSTRACT**

Performance appraisals have been used in organizations for hundreds of years to assess the performance of employees in their jobs, and they determine important outcomes such as employee promotion, termination, and incentives. However, there are various rating approaches used to appraise employee performance, including graphic rating scales, behavioral observation scales (BOS), and behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS). In this session, we introduce an experiential activity using the well-known game of charades to assist management educators in teaching approaches of performance appraisal.

**KEYWORDS:** performance appraisal; performance evaluation; experiential learning

**Introduction**

Performance appraisal is a topic often taught to undergraduate management students in courses such as Human Resources Management and Principles of Management. It refers to the process of evaluating employees on how well they do their jobs and is an important responsibility of managers. In this paper we present an experiential activity (which can be used in traditional classrooms or adapted for a virtual environment) to assist management professors in teaching the various approaches to performance appraisal. While prior literature has focused on the teaching of performance appraisal via dual role play (e.g., Twomey, 1988), peer

assessment (e.g., Baker, 2008) and case studies (e.g., Liden & Mitchell, 1981), the impetus for the development of the activity presented in this paper was the lack of group-based fast-paced activities to teach specifically about the concepts of various rating scales used in performance appraisals. In this paper we specify the relevant background literature, state the learning objectives of the activity, and provide an overview of the exercise as well as the session.

### **Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications**

The assessment of people's performance at work has been of interest to scholars and practitioners for literally hundreds of years (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Referred to as performance appraisal or performance evaluation, this concept refers to an assessment of how well an individual achieves job-related duties and responsibilities. Performance appraisals are used to make decisions about employee promotions, terminations, and monetary/non-monetary incentives, to identify employee strengths and weaknesses, and to establish training and development needs (DeNisi & Sonesh, 2011). Given the importance of performance appraisals in organizations, it is useful for students of management to have an understanding of the general approaches.

Employees can be evaluated using several distinct approaches, including ranking approaches, absolute approaches, and results-based approaches. Ranking approaches, such as forced-distribution methods, require managers to distribute ratings for those being evaluated into a prespecified performance distribution ranking (e.g., Berkshire & Highland, 1953). Absolute approaches such as a graphic rating scale (e.g., Paterson, 1922) compare individuals to a given standard (see Figure 1). Two well-known behavior-oriented absolute approaches are the behavioral observation scale (BOS) and the behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS). The BOS approach asks managers to evaluate how often employees engage in certain behaviors on

the job (see Figure 2), whereas the BARS approach focuses on evaluating specific examples of behaviors to help provide a guide for managers evaluating employees (see Figure 3).

	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Helpfulness					
Cooperation					
Knowledge					
Creativity					

Figure 1. Example of a graphic rating scale

<b>How often does the employe...</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
Engage with new customers who enter the store					
Follow up with customers within 1 week of their visit					
Provide customer feedback to store manager					

Figure 2. Example of a behavioral observation scale (BOS).

<b>Level of Student Preparedness for Class</b>	
5	Present at the start of class; has copies of all materials; has read the materials in advance
4	Present at the start of class; does not have copies of materials; has read the materials in advance
3	Present at the start of class; does not have copies of materials; has not read the materials
2	Not present at the start of class but arrives late; does not have copies of materials; has not read the materials
1	Not present at the start of class; does not have copies of materials; has not read the materials in advance

Figure 3. Example of a behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS).

Experiential learning is a process of knowledge creation that occurs through the “transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41)—or simply “learning by doing” (Schmidt, 2004). In experiential learning, learners actively practice and apply the usually more abstract or theoretical knowledge they acquire by reading content or during classroom lectures (Kolb, 1984). In this session we seek to contribute to effective teaching and learning in the field of management by providing educators with an experiential learning activity that can be used to assist students in learning about approaches to performance appraisal ratings.

## Learning Objectives

Participants who engage in these activities will be able to:

- Gain an understanding of the various approaches to performance appraisal ratings
- Distinguish among various approaches to performance appraisal
- Identify strengths and weaknesses associated with each of the approaches to performance appraisal
- Understand the usefulness of using performance appraisal ratings in organizations

## Exercise Overview

- Session Level
  - No pre-exquisite is required; this activity is appropriate for undergraduate students at all levels of experience. Students should be willing to engage in the activity and participate in a game of charades.
- Layout
  - Small teams of 3 to 5 people are formed, either informally or by assignment.
- Time Needed
  - The total time required for the activity is 30 minutes.
- Resource Needs
  - Facilitators need sheets of paper with words for participants to act out (see below for examples), evaluation slips for participant raters (see Figures 1-3 above for examples), and a timer.
  - The words chosen for participants to act can be chosen by the facilitators. Here are some examples: YOUTUBE, INSTAGRAM, EMPLOYEE, GNOME, ENGINEER, ARCHITECT, CALENDAR, DRONE, ECONOMY, OIL

- Activity
  - The activity involves a game of charades, which is a game of pantomimes: a player acts out a word without speaking while other team members try to guess the word and one of the team members. The objective for the team is to guess the word as quickly as possible.
- Preparation
  - Some participants will be “team members” and some will be “supervisors”. There should be an equal number of teams and supervisors.
  - Small teams of 3 people are formed, either informally or by assignment (it is okay if some teams have 4 people).
- Playing
  - Each team is assigned a supervisor. In each team, a round of charades ensues:
  - First, one player from each team should be identified to be that team’s Actor #1 and should draw a slip (each slip contains a different word).
  - Actor #1 has 2 minutes to act out the word using only gestures and movements (no oral or written communication or props allowed).
  - The rest of the team members will start guessing the word during that time based on their understanding of the gestures, but they must stop after the 2 minutes is up.
  - While teams are participating in charades, the supervisor is rating the performance of Actor #1 using a prepared evaluation sheet with a *graphic rating scale* format.

## PANTOMIME PERFORMANCE 7

- After the first round, in each team a new member is identified as Actor #2 and must draw a new word. During this second round of charades, the supervisor is rating the performance of Actor #2 using a prepared evaluation sheet with a *behavior observation scale (BOS)* format.
- After the first round, in each team a new member is identified as Actor #3 and must draw a new word. During this third round of charades, the supervisor is rating the performance of Actor #3 using a prepared evaluation sheet with a *behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS)* format.
- If there is a fourth person on a team, he/she is Actor #4 and acts out a new word during a fourth round of charades. The supervisor can choose to rate the performance of Actor #4 with a prepared evaluation sheet of any of the three formats.

- Prepared Evaluation Sheets

Graphic rating scale:

	<b>Unsatisfactory (1)</b>	<b>Fair (2)</b>	<b>Satisfactory (3)</b>	<b>Good (4)</b>	<b>Excellent (5)</b>
Time Management					
Creativity					
Knowledge					
Rule Adherence					

Behavioral observation scale (BOS):

<b>How often does the actor...</b>	<b>Never (1)</b>	<b>Rarely (2)</b>	<b>Sometimes (3)</b>	<b>Often (4)</b>	<b>Always (5)</b>
... use effective time management?					
... show creativity?					
... display a high level of knowledge?					



... adhere to the rules?					
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Behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS):

Actor Performance	
5	Manages time well; shows creativity; displays knowledge; adheres to the rules.
4	Manges time well; shows some creativity; displays moderate levels of knowledge; adheres to the rules somewhat.
3	Manages time well; shows some creativity; displays low levels of knowledge; adheres to the rules somewhat
2	Manages time somewhat; shows little creativity; displays low levels of knowledge; does not adhere to the rules
1	Manages time poorly; shows no creativity; displays low levels of knowledge; does not adhere to the rules

- Determining a Winner
  - For each team, the supervisor calculates the average score, based on the ratings of each actor. The team with the highest score wins.

**Session Description**

- Introduction of session and presenters (5 minutes)
- Background on performance appraisal rating approaches (5 minutes)
- Engage participants in the experiential learning activity described above (30 minutes)
- Debrief and discuss opportunities for adaptations (5 minutes)

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