

# Development of a Values Based Performance Appraisal and Evaluation System

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## *Abstract*

*This paper describes current evaluation systems in place in the majority of criminal justice agencies across the United States and in Florida particularly, and their shortcomings. Based on those inadequacies, the process used by the Juno Beach Police Department to develop an appraisal and evaluation system grounded in departmental values is recounted. The paper describes the process used to originate the values and the implementation process that is characterized by high levels of employee input through self-appraisal and a committee evaluation of that appraisal.*

## Overview of Performance Appraisals

Although performance appraisals theoretically are designed for employee development purposes, they typically are used for reward or compensation purposes. According to a 1977 survey by Locher and Teel (Schnake, 1987), 80.6% of small organizations surveyed and 62.2% of all large organizations use performance appraisals for this purpose.

Police performance appraisals come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and philosophies. Behaviorally anchored rating systems, critical statement systems, and others have been tried over the years, each meeting with varying success in terms of employee development and overall goal achievement.

The systems in place rate officers and employees on such factors as thoroughness/quality, with specific items in that dimension characterized by "reports are complete and need little clarification or correction," or "paperwork is neat and orderly."

For example, the Florida Highway Patrol's (FHP) system evaluates troopers on tasks such as "investigate and file written report of accidents, unusual incidents and other investigations," with the corresponding performance standard, "reports are to be neat, legible, accurate comprehensive, in accordance with FHP policies."

The evaluation instruments reviewed actually measure how closely an employee conforms to policy. In that way, the form may be used as a tool of discipline, such as if the employee "fails" the evaluation, then probation, suspension or even termination may result. This use of the evaluation may not be entirely appropriate. Disciplinary or remedial actions should be taken immediately after deviations from policy are noted, not at year's end. Delays between the transgression and the disciplinary action reduce the effectiveness of the action and may not serve to correct the deviant behavior (Tyre, 1991).

None of these systems rate an officer's performance with respect to the contribution that officer makes to community safety and security. They deal instead with how well the officer meets time guidelines, and how complete reports are -- activities rather than results. They also tend to channel the efforts of the officer into tight patterns of behavior that do not reward innovation or creativity, but rather, reinforce the status quo, regardless of how inefficient the status quo may be.

## Values and Performance

Values speak to how things should be accomplished in an organization, so that daily actions reflect organizational philosophy. Value statements, if actually considered in the daily behaviors of employees, should cause them to make that philosophy a part of the fabric of their decision making processes. The goal of the Juno Beach Police Department (JBPD) was to cause this to happen.

Kouzes and Posner (1985) found that clearly articulated values result in significant payoffs for managers, employees and organizations in terms of career success because they are guided by ethical standards. The department and the community would profit from such guidance. Although Kouzes and Posner suggest that leaders should develop tough but measurable performance standards, many misinterpret this statement by quantifying expected, routine and traditional work patterns that do not specifically cause officers and employees to be innovative and creative. In fact, creativity often is stifled and discouraged; the status quo is encouraged.

There is no system of performance evaluation, at least in the literature reviewed, that focuses on values and mission statements and evaluates performance based on those. Most agencies have value and mission statements, but those statements are kept separate from the evaluation process. There are a number of projects underway at this writing that consider the difficulty of evaluating officers on nontraditional measures, for example the "quality of life in a community" rather than the "number of tickets written" or "appearance".

If it is really believed that the job of a law enforcement officer is to prevent crime and improve the quality of life in a community, then evaluation systems must be changed to reflect that. Also, if it is accepted that community policing, values and mission statements are important, then evaluation systems must be changed to reflect that. If "simplest is best," then our evaluation systems must be changed to reflect that. Juno Beach Police Department's new system has been designed to meet all these criteria.

## The Juno Beach System

Previously, the JBPD had different evaluations for each job description -- one for road patrol, supervisors, clerks, detectives, and executive level employees. Obviously, this attempt to match the performance evaluation with the particular job was cumbersome. It was often felt that more time was spent trying to figure out which form to use than on the evaluation itself.

Although it was attempted to make the evaluation objective, in the final analysis, it was still subjective. Often, departments will try to use "objective" criteria such as numbers of arrests, tickets issued, and clearance rates. But because there are so many external factors associated with these items, those departments still really didn't measure employee effectiveness or department efficiency. For instance, how many arrests are because of good police work and how many arrests result because an officer happened to respond to a particular call? Of those arrested, how many are convicted? How many does the prosecutor actually take to court? Are the tickets borderline citations or well founded? Most of these questions can't be answered. These statistics need to be kept, but perhaps given less emphasis in the evaluation process.

The questions that should be asked revolve around the feeling of safety in the

community and the prevention of criminal activity. With these questions in the forefront, a survey was distributed to all employees to determine their level of satisfaction with the current performance evaluation system.

The survey results indicated overwhelming dissatisfaction with the appraisal system that had been used for the past four years (at least at the patrol officer level). The employees reported that they didn't like the form, the way in which the form was used, or the process by which they were evaluated. Among the weaknesses they identified in the current system were lack of employee input, the tremendous influence of a single rater, and the length of the evaluation. They also expressed concern that merit raises were tied to the evaluation.

As the administrator of the department, this author was not satisfied with it either, particularly because it did not seem to link our values with behavior. An appraisal system was needed that was values based, pertained directly to behaviors that further those values, and involved a high degree of employee input. A few clear, descriptive value statements were also needed that would guide an employee in his/her day-to-day work and that would encourage ingenuity, innovation, and creativity. Furthermore, "simplicity" was to be the key word in this process.

Based on the survey and the desire to have an instrument that more accurately reflected the values of the Juno Beach Police Department, a committee was formed to clearly articulate those values. The committee, which included the Chief of Police, a road sergeant, a detective, and a civilian employee, began meeting in January, 1992.

The committee considered rewriting value statements from other well known departments, such as Tampa, but most recognized authorities such as Posner and Kouzes (1987) believe that value statements must originate from within the organization if they are to be truly representative of the department using them. Instead, employees were encouraged to submit three or four statements that reflected the values of the department. Throughout the process the department held regular meetings with employees to ensure clarity and consensus on the values being discussed. By March, 1992 the committee had merged employee submissions into nine value statements and the following mission statement:

*The mission of the Juno Beach Police Department is to enhance and support an environment of safety and security for our residents and visitors through the conscientious provision of professionalism and excellence.*

The values of the JBPD were condensed to nine statements that reflected what the members of the organization thought were important in terms of guidance for employees in day-to-day tasks:

1. We must continually reinforce ethical decisions and ethical behavior.
2. We must treat all persons with respect and dignity at all times, regardless of status: coworkers, citizens, witnesses, victims, suspects and all others.
3. The United States Constitution must be defended, and the laws of the state of Florida, Palm Beach County, and the town of Juno Beach, must be fairly and equitably enforced using discretion and good judgement while keeping with the spirit and intent of those laws.

4. We must provide our clients with access to the criminal justice and social support system to help ensure that their call for service is handled in as appropriate manner as possible.
5. We must place an emphasis on education to prevent crimes and unsafe behaviors.
6. We must strive for excellence through an emphasis on education, training, use of technology/equipment, and encourage creative and innovative ideas with results oriented solutions.
7. We must be respectfully irreverent of "the way we've always done things" and look to the future.
8. We must be an integral part of the community and have a commitment to customer service.
9. The department must act as a team with self and corporate responsibilities.

The committee then developed a form based entirely on the mission statement and the department values for use in the evaluation process. Consensus on both the values and the form's design was reached by May, 1992 and copies of the form were distributed to all employees.

To make the system as fair as possible, and to address the problems mentioned earlier, the implementation process began with trimester evaluations that were completed by the employees themselves. The first set of evaluations were completed in June, 1992 and the second at the end of September, 1992.

For an evaluation, each employee was required to describe specific actions or behaviors that represented the value statements. For example, one civilian employee detailed how she set up a "Crimestoppers" television reenactment of an armed robbery that occurred in Juno Beach. Even though this is actually the responsibility of the investigator on that case, the clerk took it upon herself to help out the investigator. This example was cited for value #9, which says that we "must act as a team with corporate responsibilities."

Each employee also completed sections of the evaluation form that dealt with commendations and disciplinary actions received. The form then went to the employee's immediate supervisor for comments and corroboration. Next, a committee made up of the Chief of Police, a sergeant, a civilian employee, and a member of the Juno Beach Civic Association<sup>1</sup> ranked each statement on a scale of one to four, with "one" representing "not acceptable" and "four" representing "outstanding." The scores were then tallied and averaged to arrive at an overall score:

Outstanding	36.0 - 31.5
Above Average	31.4 - 22.5
Satisfactory	22.4 - 13.5
Unacceptable	13.4 - 9.0

The committee gave each employee feedback that contained suggestions on how to improve his/her performance over the next trimester.

As previously noted, in some departments, performance problems are not addressed until evaluation time. The values based evaluation system is prefaced with

the understanding that the evaluation system is not used as a disciplinary tool. Violations of policy, incomplete reports, excessive absences from duty, and so on, are part of the employee's evaluation, but are corrected at the time of the violation to maximize effectiveness of the corrective action.

	<u>June-Nov 1991</u>	<u>June-Nov 1992</u>
Citations Issued	1315	1300
Calls for Service	1087	1142
Arrests	70	80
UCR Part 1 Crimes	18.6 per month	13.75 per month
Clearance Rate	12.11% average	23.42% average
Disciplinary Actions	2	7
Letters of Commendation	6	9

Performance guidelines are articulated in the policy manual and all employees are expected to conform. They are not a road map of how to do the job. They are, instead, a compass heading that allows for flexibility, creativity and innovation, guided by our values and our mission statement. For example, our bicycle patrol was the first in Palm Beach County. Our field training program is based almost entirely on scenarios and job competency, and not on the traditional 16 week San Jose model. These have led to greater officer effectiveness, and a greater feeling of safety among residents, according to anecdotal comments received.

The goals of the department, which also serve as our vision statements, are relatively short and to the point. Our goals are: 1) to respect all individuals; 2) to provide professional service; and 3) to search for excellence. Those goals are turned into reality through the behaviors described in our value statements, and the performance standards set by the work force. By comparing the work force to our best performers, the ability to determine what is "good" or "outstanding" has been enhanced. It is still quite subjective, but there is a defensible basis for the subjectivity. This comparison process is one primary reason why all evaluations are conducted at the same time.

If an employee doesn't perform up to standards required of him/her, coaching or counseling is provided as appropriate. This remediation is given as called for, and not always in a disciplinary setting. Sometimes it's as informal as a mention of something observed while walking down the hallway with an employee, and other times it is as formal as an internal affairs investigation and suspension. Care is given to ensure that officers and civilians know what is expected of them, and this is reinforced through the trimester evaluations.

The final evaluation that determines the employee's placement on the merit scale is in September. The previous two evaluations are taken into consideration, and an overall score is determined. The timing of the evaluation is designed to coincide with our October 1 - September 30 fiscal year.

The merit raise issue was the subject of a great deal of discussion. The committee, after consultation with the Town Manager and employees, recommended that merit raises be given consistent with the rankings described earlier. Further, the issue of longevity pay was discussed and incorporated into this system. The final

recommendation was that all employees who receive a "satisfactory" ranking will be awarded a 2% longevity increase. "Above average" will warrant an additional 1.5% merit, and "outstanding" will warrant a 3% merit. In the final analysis, a person could receive additional pay of 2%, 3.5%, or 5%, depending on the rating assigned by the committee.

Appeals from employees who feel they have not been treated fairly by the committee will be addressed through the procedure outlined in the town's personnel policy.

### Summary and Conclusions

The first part of the project has been successful in that a values based performance appraisal has been developed and put into practice. Even though the system is being used, it will be some time before it is known whether there has been success in creating a new evaluation system that is fair, is received favorably by employees, and guarantees adherence to the values of the department. To help determine this, the new system was evaluated and compared to the old system in terms of employee satisfaction, citizen satisfaction, and some peripheral measures such as clearance rates, Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) statistics, and activity reports during a comparable time period, shown at left.

This information suggests that, at least, the new system does not adversely affect enforcement statistics as some had feared it would. Some supervisors were concerned that if traffic tickets were not counted, then nobody would write tickets. That does not appear to be the case. These evaluative criteria are still being monitored and will be measured again at the conclusion of one year.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that employee acceptance of the new evaluation system is high and a second employee satisfaction survey tends to corroborate that, but it would be premature to claim conclusive evidence of this. On the second survey, 66% of the 15 people responding preferred the new to the previous system. Positive comments such as "this process gives me a feeling that I can sort of brag about what I've done," "this isn't perfect but it's much better than anything else I've seen used," or "this process really links what I do and how I'm evaluated," were common. The negative comments stemmed primarily from the part the committee played in the evaluation role, and one officer pointed out that he didn't feel as though proficiency or skill was rated accurately.

Only half of those surveyed felt that the new system accurately measured employee productivity. Since we do not specifically ask for that information in the evaluation, that statistic is not surprising. However, the officers can put that information in the self-evaluation, and many of them were told by the committee that they should provide that information.

Comments from the town's citizens seem to indicate that they can see the difference in the crime prevention focus being emphasized by the officers. The officers are on bikes more often now, and are giving out a number of Crime Opportunity Warnings, a form developed as a result of this project.

The comparisons of data from the time period preceding the new system to the present time indicate that employees are happier with the new system, and the other data suggest that performance of the employees is not suffering. Further monitoring will

probably result in modifications to the system, and additional departmental meetings are planned to help ensure complete understanding and acceptance of the process.

#### Endnotes

1. The civic association member was chosen as a representative of the community in order to increase the department's contact with the community, and so that the community could have direct input into the operations of the department. The civilian, who has a background in personnel management, has by her own account gained a new appreciation of the work of all our employees, and shows even greater support of the department. She also serves as the liaison between the Police Department and the Civic Association. (To minimize apprehension from employees about an "outsider" evaluating their efforts and having a role in whether they would get merit raises, a training program was designed for the civic association representative.)

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