Subject bias in managerial evaluation

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SUBJECT BIAS IN MANAGERIAL EVALUATION

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I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Barbara K. Sholley, Dr. L. James Tromater and Dr. William Walker for their patience, guidance and constructive criticism during this research.

A special note of thanks is extended to those individuals in the "large corporation" without whose help this project could not have been completed.
Subject Bias in Managerial Evaluation

Abstract

The following research considered the influence of the sex of the manager being evaluated, the age, managerial level, educational level and sex of the subject upon the evaluation of management behavior. A five-page questionnaire presenting four examples of managerial behavior for evaluation was administered to 45 male and 133 female managers of a large corporation. Although it was hypothesized that the independent variables would account for the variance in the scores, the multivariate analyses of variance indicated that the research did not produce significant results. Results were discussed in terms of managerial training and implications for future research.
Subject Bias in Managerial Evaluation

In recent years, several theories have been proposed and numerous studies have been conducted to determine why there are consistently fewer women than men in white collar management positions. Although all of the theories have made contributions to understanding the problem, the school of thought which states that various factors in the work situation such as the composition of groups in the organization, desire to maintain the status quo and the attitudes of evaluators towards women, is the most relevant to the problem examined in the present study. This theory has recently been recognized as one that can make a significant contribution to understanding the problem (Riger & Galligan, 1980).

The majority of the research has shown that identical behavior and products are rated lower when presented as completed by a woman versus a man. It has been proposed that these results may be explained by the evaluator's reliance on her/his stereotypes of males and females during the evaluation (Deaux & Taynor, 1973, and Goldberg, 1968). It appears that if the behavior or product was taken from a field that was traditionally associated with the opposite sex of the producing individual, the evaluator's response was not favorable whereas if the behavior was drawn from an area that was traditionally associated with the producing individual's sex, the evaluator's response was positive (Cline, Holmes, & Werner, 1977, and Mischel, 1974). Schein (1973) found that when individuals were requested to describe the typical male, female and middle manager, they perceived the males as having attitudes,
characteristics and temperaments similar to those of middle managers. The females were described as having very dissimilar characteristics from the middle managers. A possible conclusion could be that females in managerial positions would be viewed as performing in a masculine area and therefore be rated lower than men with the same performance.

A great deal of research has provided empirical support for the work factors theory. Rosen and Jerdee (1974a, 1974b, 1975) conducted several studies which found that female applicants for managerial positions were rated lower than male applicants having the same qualifications. They (Rosen & Jerdee, 1974c) also conducted a survey of Harvard Business Review subscribers in which two forms of a questionnaire were utilized, although each subject saw only one form. The questionnaires presented employees of a fictitious company in various work related situations. Form 1 of the questionnaire depicted a male in the first incident and a female in the second situation and so forth, whereas Form 2 was used as a counterbalance. The subjects were asked to evaluate alternative approaches to the situations on a 6-point scale ranging from extremely favorable to extremely unfavorable. The results indicated that managers were biased against women in selection, promotion and career development decisions. Additional studies which found similar results showed that, in general, when equally qualified males and females were evaluated, the males were rated more positively than the females (Dipboye, 1975, Dipboye, Arvery & Terpstra, 1977, Dipboye, Fromkin & Wiback, 1975, McKee & Sherriffs, 1957, Schein, 1975, Shaw, 1972, Staines, Tavris & Jayartne, 1974 and Terborg, 1977).
Several studies have produced results that conflict with these findings. Bartol (1975), Day and Stogdill (1972) and Wextey and Hunt (1974) did not find any significant difference in the evaluation of the behavior of female versus male managers, possibly because the evaluations in these studies were completed by the manager's immediate subordinates rather than by other managers. It could be that the subordinates viewed their supervisors as successful and therefore rated them equally (Pheterson, 1971). Additional conflicting research was provided by Deaux and Emswiller (1974) who gave their subjects objective criteria, a list of correct answers, to use the evaluation of both male and female managers' performance. This was attributed to the use of the objective criteria by the subjects as a basis for their evaluation rather than relying on their internal standards of measurement. In direct contradiction to earlier research, Bigonness (1976) found that high performing women were rated higher than high performing men. It should be recognized that only nonprofessional positions were considered in the study.

Additional studies have been completed in which products of an individual were evaluated rather than the behavior of the individual. Although the research cited does not deal directly with management productions, it is worthwhile to consider these results as they can be generalized to the management situation and because similar procedures will be followed in the present study. Goldberg (1968) presented the same product, a magazine article, to subjects for evaluation. They exhibited a bias in favor of the articles which were supposedly written by men in their evaluations. Similar results were obtained in evaluating a painting (Pheterson, 1971) except under the condition in which the
painting was presented as a winner. In this case, the paintings were rated equally. This finding explained Pheterson’s earlier research (1969) which indicated that magazine articles were evaluated equally by homemakers who apparently viewed all authors as successful.

Numerous factors have been studied in an attempt to explain the exhibited discrimination against women. This study considered the sex, age, educational level and management level of the subject as well as the sex of the manager shown in the situation.

Recent studies have produced conflicting data concerning the influence of the sex of the observer upon his/her evaluation. In those studies which showed a differential evaluation, the men in all cases except Bigoness (1976) rated the female managers lower than the male managers. The data dealing with the women's evaluations of the productions or behaviors were somewhat contradictory. The majority of the research (Deaux & Taynor, 1973, Dipboye, Arvey & Terpstra, 1977, Goldberg, 1968, 1971, Mischel, 1974, Pheterson, Kiesler & Goldberg, 1971 and Rosen & Jerdee, 1973, 1974a) has indicated that women discriminate against other women to a degree equal with men. Suprisingly, Cline, Holmes and Werner (1977) found that women when asked to evaluate quotations gave higher scores to the women than the men. In contrast to this, Staines, Tavris and Jayartne (1974) found that successful women were especially harsh when evaluating other women. They referred to this discriminatory behavior on the part of successful women as the "Queen Bee syndrome" and attributed it to the evaluator's personal success within the system.
Varying results have been found concerning the influence of age of the subject upon the evaluation of female versus male behaviors over the years. In 1965, Bowman, Worthy and Greyser found that older subjects were less biased in their evaluations than younger subjects. The younger subjects showed only slightly more discrimination against women than the older subjects in 1973 (Schein). In contrast to these earlier studies, Rosen and Jerdee (1974a) and Schein (1975) found no difference in the amount of exhibited bias as a function of age. Thus it appears that by 1975, the reduction trend in the amount of discrimination against women shown by younger versus older subjects had continued to the point of there being no difference. Because of this perceived trend, it was hypothesized that the present study would demonstrate that younger people would continue this pattern and show even less discrimination in their evaluations than older people.

Previous research indicated that the education level of the evaluator also influenced the evaluations of the subject. In looking at three management styles, it was found that the level of educational achievement was inversely related to the subject's bias against women (Haccoun, Haccoun and Sallay, 1978). Mischel (1974) found that the degree of bias against women was dependent upon the interaction of the area of expertise and the educational level of the subject.

Previous research has not considered the level of management. Although earlier studies considered various combinations of sex, age, and level of education of the subject, this was the first to consider the four factors simultaneously. This research required the subjects to
evaluate situations or products depicting management behavior. Only management employees were utilized as subjects. It was hypothesized that both men and women would discriminate against women to an equal extent. Due to the conflicting results of previous research concerning the effect of subject sex, the results of this study were reported by sex of subject even though no hypotheses were made. It was hypothesized that the exhibited degree of bias against women would increase as the age of the subjects increased. Although no previous research has produced this result, this hypothesis was based on the trend reflected in the earlier studies that considered subject age (Bowman, Worthy & Greyser, 1965, Rosen & Jerdee, 1974, and Schein, 1973, 1975). It was also hypothesized that there would be a negative relationship between the level of education and the amount of bias exhibited. This was based on the assumption that the increased awareness and open-mindedness that results from continuing education would reduce the amount of bias exhibited and on the findings of Haccoun et al. (1978). The final hypothesis dealt with the level of management. It was hypothesized that the level of management and degree of exhibited bias against women would be inversely correlated. This was based on the assumption that the increased emphasis on equal employment opportunity regulations and the additional training in management evaluation techniques provided to higher level management would reduce their reliance on stereotypes in their evaluations.
Subjects

Forty-five male and 133 female management employees of a large corporation participated in the study. The subjects were drawn from only one company in an attempt to control the previous executive policies and management training experienced by the subjects. They were one of three levels of management: supervisors of non-management personnel, office managers or district managers.

Apparatus

Each subject was provided a letter of consent which made four points, their participation in the research was not required by their employing company, the subject was free to withdraw at any time during the experiment, the individual results would remain confidential and the overall results would be available upon completion of the study. A copy of this letter is contained in Appendix A. All subjects agreed to participate. The subjects were given a 5-page questionnaire. Each subject was required to supply her/his sex, age, level of education and level of management. The following instructions preceded the managerial situations: "A variety of factors have been determined to be important in effective management. We would like to get your opinion concerning the appropriateness and effectiveness of various managerial behaviors."
Please read the following situations and indicate your opinions by placing a check in the appropriate space on each of the three scales shown beneath each sample. Space is provided for any additional comments that you may have." The questions to be scaled were, How effective is this manager?, Is this manager ready for promotion to the next managerial level?, and How willing would you be to work for this manager?. Each scale measured from 1 to 7. Any additional comments the subjects had were also requested. Sample questionnaires are contained in Appendix B. Two forms of the questionnaire were utilized. The same samples occurred with the only difference being the sex of the manager depicted in the situation. In Form A, a female manager was shown in situations one and three while a male manager was depicted in situations two and four. The managers were reversed in Form B. Each subject saw only one questionnaire. Approximately 50% of the males and 50% of the females received Form A and the remainder received Form B.

Situations included in the questionnaire were chosen as the result of two pilot studies. First, sixteen undergraduate students enrolled in business related courses evaluated ten situations on 5-point scales for the three previously mentioned questions. Four situations which evidenced a high degree of variability were selected for inclusion. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the selected situations. The four-situation questionnaire was then administered to
sixteen managers employed by the same company from which the subjects were obtained. The variability was similar to that found in the undergraduate study (See Table 2).

Insert Table 1 and Table 2 about here

Procedure

The questionnaire was administered by the same female experimenter to the management personnel in their work locations. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, the subjects were advised that this was an experiment to determine how management behavior is evaluated. Each subject was then given an advisory letter. The questionnaire was administered to those subjects who elected to participate. Upon completion of the questionnaire, the subjects were asked to indicate any training they had received in techniques of management evaluation within the twelve months prior to participating in the study. This information was obtained to aid in the interpretation of the study.
Results

Due to the complexity involved in interpreting the interactions which could result from a five-factor analysis of variance, a three-factor multivariate analysis of variance followed by two additional analyses was completed on the data. The independent variables in the MANOVAs were the sex of the manager depicted in the situation, the age, educational level, managerial level and sex of the subject. The dependent variables for each of the MANOVAs were the scores on the three scales for each of the four situations. All tests of significance were conducted at the p .05 level.

Sex of the manager depicted in the situation by subject age by educational level of the subject

The Cochran's C test for homogeneity of variance for the three-factor MANOVA considering the independent variables of sex of the manager depicted in the situation, age of the subject and educational level of the subject indicated that the responses to those questions associated with situation three of the questionnaire resulted in a significant variability. This information should be considered when evaluating the results of this study as this had a limiting effect on the potential significance for the MANOVA. Interestingly, while the MANOVA found a nonsignificant result F(48,407) = 1.07, p .05, the univariate tests produced a significant result for each of the questions associated
with situation three. The results of the tests considering the main effects and all possible combinations of the independent factors are contained in Table 3. Each of these was not significant.

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**Insert Table 3 about here**

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**Sex of the subject**

The Cochran test indicated the variability in the scores given to question one of situation two was significantly different than the variances of the other cells. The MANOVA considering the sex of the subject as the independent variable resulted in a nonsignificant F value, $F(12,152) = 1.55, p > 0.05$ as expected.

**Management level of the subject**

The test for homogeneity of variance for the MANOVA considering the management level of the subject showed that for five cells, question one of situation one, all questions associated with situation two and question one of situation four exhibited significantly different variability than the other questions. The MANOVA indicated that the managerial level of the subject produced a nonsignificant result, $F(36,444) = .73, p > 0.05$. 
Training

A post hoc MANOVA was completed to determine the effect of subjects receiving training in techniques of managerial evaluation in the twelve months prior to taking the questionnaire. Results indicated that the training did not result in a significant difference, $F(12, 149) = 1.17$, $p > .05$.

Discussion

While there was a relatively large variance in the scores given to the management behavior depicted in each of the situations (see Table 4), the results of the completed MANOVAs indicated that there were no significant differences between the scorings based on sex of the manager shown in the situation, sex of the subject, educational level of the subject, managerial level of the subject or the age of the subject. This finding is contrary to the majority of the previously cited research dealing with discrimination in managerial evaluation based on the sex of the manager being evaluated.

Insert Table 4 about here

The results of this study may be attributed to one or some combination of the following factors.
All of the subjects involved in the study were employed by a firm that in the last ten years has placed a great deal of emphasis on equal employment opportunity through employee training programs and actual hiring and promotion practices. This increased emphasis and resulting employee awareness may have caused subjects not to discriminate based on the sex of the manager or at least to be more attuned to possible discrimination and therefore avoid it in their answers. It appears that the practices of the company reinforce the training on a daily basis, which could account for there being no significant difference in the ratings of subjects based on whether training was received in the twelve months prior to participating in the study. The subjects may have become testwise as a result of their training. Future research could include a comparison among companies which place varying amounts of emphasis on equal employment.

The situations included in the questionnaire were selected in the pilot study due to the variability in the responses. The question still remains as to what factors account for the wide variances in the scores, shown in Table 4, given to the same management behavior. In this study, an attempt was made to minimize the amount of information provided in the situations in order to force the subjects to rely on their stereotypes. Perhaps the situations did not contain enough information upon which to base an evaluation and therefore resulted in widely varying scores. Numerous comments were made by the subjects stating that insufficient information was provided to enable them to answer the questions. Expanded situations could result in a reduction in the variance of the scores. Another alternative for explaining the variance is that factors other than the ones selected in this study could be
important. Future research could consider the leadership type or personality characteristics such as assertiveness of the subject or the leadership style of the manager to be evaluated. Research (Bartok & Butterfield, 1976, Haccoun, Haccoun & Sallay, 1978 and Rosen & Jerdee, 1973) has indicated that the effect of sex of the manager upon the evaluation may vary with the managerial style depicted. Matteson's (1976) research indicated that the amount of job experience may influence the subject's evaluations.

The questionnaire while appearing to result in large differences in the scores given to identical behavior may not, in fact, have been a reliable measure of discriminatory behavior in subjects. Research (Wuebben, Straits & Schulman, 1974) has indicated that answers provided on a questionnaire do not equal behavior in the real world. The results may have been obtained due to the "demand characteristics" (Wuebben et al., 1974, 80) of the situation; the subjects' desire to please the experimenter.

The subjects may have discerned the underlying purpose of the questionnaire. While still a possibility, this was not indicated by the subjects' questions and comments upon completion of the questionnaire.

The subjects' answers may have been biased by the questionnaire being administered by a female who was introduced as a previously successful business person and current graduate student. Pheterson (1971) found that women who are viewed as successful are not discriminated against in evaluations. Some transference of the success of the administrator to the female managers depicted in the questionnaire could have occurred.
Several of the subjects indicated that they had not noticed the sex of the manager in the situations. Future research could utilize as videotape of the situations rather than the written format.

In conclusion, while the factors accounting for the results of this study remain obscure, two alternatives present themselves as the most likely explanations for the findings. Either the training in management evaluation and the emphasis placed upon equal employment opportunities has been successful in that the subjects did not discriminate based upon the sex of the manager or the subjects have become testwise and are able to answer the questions in the "appropriate" manner because it is what is expected of them.
References


Mateson, M. T. Attitudes Toward Women as Managers: Sex of Role Differences. *Psychological Reports, 1976, 39, 166.*


Mischel, H. N. Sex Bias In the Evaluation of Professional Achievements. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 1974, 66, 157-166.*


   Psychology Today, 1974, 7, 55-58, 60.
Table 1
Pilot Study 1-Undergraduate Students

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<th>Question 3</th>
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<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>.87</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.32</td>
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<td>1.11</td>
<td>2.71</td>
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<td>Pregunta 3</td>
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<td>Desv. Std. (SD)</td>
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Table 3
Multivariate Analyses of Variance

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<td>Education by sex of manager in situation</td>
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<td>.93</td>
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<td>Age by sex of manager in situation</td>
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<td>Sex of manager in sit</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>.73</td>
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Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations of Scales of Questionnaire

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To: Potential Research Participants

I will be conducting research to determine how management behavior is evaluated. Your management has agreed that you may participate in this study if you so choose. You will be asked to evaluate four examples of managerial behavior. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any point. The individual results of each participant will be confidential. Upon completion of the study, the overall results will be distributed.

If you would like to take part in this research, please sign your name in the space provided.

Sincerely,

D. M. Persing

I understand that I am not required to participate in this study and that I may withdraw from it at any time.

Name

Date
MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide the following information:

Age _________

Sex _________

Management Level

High School Course Work

High School Graduate

College Course Work

College Graduate

Post Graduate Course Work

Post Graduate Degree

A variety of factors have been determined to be important in effective management. We would like to get your opinion concerning the appropriateness and effectiveness of various managerial behaviors. Please read the following situations and indicate your opinions by placing a check in the appropriate space on each of the three scales shown beneath each sample. Space is provided for any additional comments that you may have.
Ted Johnson was asked at 9:00 a.m. to prepare a speech for his division manager by 5:00 p.m. that same day. The speech was to review the productivity and cost figures of the organization. In order to accomplish this, Ted obtained the telephone numbers of each of the offices from his secretary and made the appropriate calls. Only two of the seven offices could provide the necessary productivity figures. The central accounting office was able to develop a rough estimate of the division's costs. At 3:00 p.m., Ted advised his boss that because the regional offices and the accounting office could not provide exact, complete information, he was unable to prepare the speech.

How effective is this manager?

Not Extremely Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Effective

Is this manager ready for promotion to the next managerial level?

Yes No 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How willing would you be to work for this manager?

Not At All Very Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Additional Comments

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
During the last month, Jane Walker had become aware, through direct observation, of a problem with the accuracy of the work of one of her newly hired employees. She called the employee into her office to discuss the problem. She questioned the individual concerning the causes of the inaccuracies and then suggested several methods for eliminating them. Jane also advised the employee that if the accuracy did not improve, the position would be given to another trainee.

How effective is this manager?

Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Effective

Is this manager ready for promotion to the next managerial level?

Yes : : : : : : No
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How willing would you be to work for this manager?

All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Additional Comments

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________
An irate customer called the office shouting that the "problem" had not been taken care of and that it deserved "special attention right now". Michael Doyle explained the cause of the problem and advised the customer of the actions that were being undertaken to correct it. He discussed what remained to be done and provided the customer with an expected completion time. In response to this information, the customer angrily shouted "that's not good enough" and hung up.

How effective is this manager?

Not Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely Effective

Is this manager ready for promotion to the next managerial level?

Yes 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No

How willing would you be to work for this manager?

Not At All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very

Additional Comments

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
The following letter was prepared by Lois Taylor in response to an enhancement proposal from an Operations Manager.

C. M. Smith
Operations Manager
124 Maple St.
Richmond, Virginia 23225

November 15, 1981

Dear Chris:

The evaluation of your proposal concerning additional enhancements to the computerized accounting system has been completed. Although the recommended changes would have significantly improved the work flow in the metro office, the study indicated the operation of the rural offices would have been negatively affected. To implement the enhancements for only the metro office would not have been economically justified. Therefore, no changes will be made in the accounting system at this time.

Please continue to submit recommendations that you have. If any questions remain concerning this matter, you may contact me on 201 555-0987.

Sincerely,

L.C. Taylor
Area Manager

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How effective is this manager?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Not Effective</td>
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<th>Is this manager ready for promotion to the next managerial level?</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<th>How willing would you be to work for this manager?</th>
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<td>Not At All</td>
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Additional Comments

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________
MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide the following information:

Age -------

Sex -------

Management Level

High school Course Work
High School Graduate
College Course Work
College Graduate
Post Graduate Course Work
Post Graduate Degree

A variety of factors have been determined to be important in effective management. We would like to get your opinion concerning the appropriateness and effectiveness of various managerial behaviors. Please read the following situations and indicate your opinions by placing a check in the appropriate space on each of the three scales shown beneath each sample. Space is provided for additional comments that you may have.
Susan Hudson was asked at 9:00 a.m. to prepare a speech for her division manager by 5:00 p.m. that same day. The speech was to review the productivity and cost figures of the organization. In order to accomplish this, Susan obtained the telephone numbers of each of the offices from her secretary and made the appropriate calls. Only two of the seven offices could provide the necessary productivity figures. The central accounting office was able to develop a rough estimate of the division's costs. At 3:00 p.m., Susan advised her boss that because the regional offices and the accounting office could not provide exact, complete information, she was unable to prepare the speech.

How effective is this manager?

Not Effective Extremely Effective
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Is this manager ready for promotion to the next managerial level?

Yes No
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How willing would you be to work for this manager?

Not At All Very
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Additional Comments

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________________________________________________________________________
During the last month, Steve Kerby had become aware, through direct observation, of a problem with the accuracy of the work of one or his newly hired employees. He called the employee into his office to discuss the problem. He questioned the individual concerning the causes of the inaccuracies and then suggested several methods for eliminating them. Steve also advised the employee that if the accuracy did not improve, the position would be given to another trainee.

How effective is this manager?

Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Effective

Is this manager ready for promotion to the next managerial level?

Yes : : : : : : No
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How willing would you be to work for this manager?

All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Additional Comments

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
An irate customer called the office shouting that the "problem" had not been taken care of and that it deserved "special attention right now". Katherine Fisher explained the cause of the problem and advised the customer of the actions that were being undertaken to correct it. She discussed what remained to be done and provided the customer with an expected completion time. In response to this information, the customer angrily shouted "that's not good enough" and hung up.

How effective is this manager?

Not Effective Extremely Effective

Is this manager ready for promotion to the next managerial level?

Yes No

How willing would you be to work for this manager?

Not At All Very

Additional Comments

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
The following letter was prepared by Rick Bolton in response to an enhancement proposal from an Operations Manager.

C. M. Smith
Operations Manager
124 Maple St.
Richmond, Virginia 23225

Dear Chris:

November 15, 1981

The evaluation of your proposal concerning additional enhancements to the computerized accounting system has been completed. Although the recommended changes would have significantly improved the work flow in the metro office, the study indicated the operation of the rural offices would have been negatively affected. To implement the enhancements for only the metro office would not have been economically justified. Therefore, no changes will be made in the accounting system at this time.

Please continue to submit recommendations that you have. If any questions remain concerning this matter, you may contact me on 201 555-0987.

Sincerely,

R.C. Bolton
Area Manager

How effective is this manager?

Not : : : : : Extremely Effective
Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Effective

Is this manager ready for promotion to the next managerial level?

Yes 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No

How willing would you be to work for this manager?

Not At All : : : : Very
All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Additional Comments

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________