**[Case Study](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781315400808/epub/OEBPS/xhtml/boxes.xhtml%22%20%5Cl%20%22bck_case_Ch08)**

***Improving Performance Appraisal and Evaluation***

Sergeant Gina Thompson is a 12-year veteran of the police department. She was promoted to sergeant six years ago and currently supervises a platoon of officers that she has to evaluate on an annual basis. Her unit is assigned to Baker 3, a patrol zone in the lower east side of the city. Her zone is composed of predominately low-income government housing apartments. Two years ago, Chief Joe Gonzalez initiated a community-oriented policing program (COP) in Baker 3. Sergeant Thompson was instructed to increase and encourage COP efforts. Performance evaluations would soon be scheduled for her officers and she was becoming concerned about how they would perform. The police department’s evaluation process was traditional and had remained the same over the years with a few tweaks here and there. Given the COP initiative she and her platoon were engaged in, their focus while similar to other units in many ways also included goals and elements that could put them at a disadvantage when being evaluated and compared to police officers doing “regular” police work. Sergeant Thompson’s department, like many other law enforcement agencies, was not without its biases and favoritism. That said, her officers had done an outstanding job with the COP task they had been given.

Community-oriented policing required her officers to interact more with community members in an effort to reduce fear and maintain the peace. It was, in fact, a collaborative effort between the community and police officers. Such an approach takes time and patience in relationship building and building trust. Gina Thompson had been a bit skeptical at first, but in time had come to appreciate that shared decision-making could lead to a greater sense of empowerment on both the part of the community and police officers. Like a local bakery shop owner had told her: “You first have to know somebody before you can trust them.” Ironically, as the COP in Baker 3 zone became more successful, so the crime rate went up rather than down. As citizens began to trust the officers more, they began to more readily report crimes that had previously gone unreported. There was no doubt in Sergeant Thompson’s mind that her officers had done an excellent job, but there was some doubt whether, with the traditional evaluation and performance process, they might not be recognized or given credit for what they had accomplished. She hoped that her meeting with Captain Jesse Davis would dispel her concerns and allow some wiggle room with the upcoming evaluations.

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“Captain Davis, thanks for meeting with me,” Sergeant Thompson said as she slid into the chair positioned in front of the Captain’s desk.

“No problem, Sergeant. What can I do for you?”

“As you know, evaluations are coming up and I’m concerned that given the goals and tasks assigned to the COP assignment the Chief gave us for Baker 3, my officers may be at a disadvantage with the other patrol units.”

Captain Davis leaned back in his chair and smiled. “Our evaluation process has worked pretty damned well for a long time. As I recall, a certain Gina Thompson got promoted to sergeant through that process.”

“No doubt, Captain,” Gina replied. “But I was working patrol, not with the COP program.”

Jesse Davis rubbed his chin. “I realize our process isn’t perfect and on occasion a supervisor’s bias for or against an officer can go over the line. We all remember two years ago when we ended up sacking a lieutenant for giving his ‘favorite’ officer a glowing evaluation that bordered on the preposterous and doing the reverse with one of our African-American officers going up for the same promotion. At least, the whole sorry mess resulted in some positive changes toward safeguarding our process.”

The Captain paused and looked directly at Sergeant Thompson. “Tell you what, Sergeant. Put together a proposal contrasting your unit’s duties and performance expectations with our regular patrol platoons. Include any ‘special features’ you feel need to be included in the evaluation process for officers participating in the COP initiative. We’ll meet again and take a look at what you come up with. I’ll have Ruby contact you when she finds a slot to schedule you in. How does that sound?”

“Thank you, Captain. That’s all I could ask for,” the sergeant replied.

**What Would You Do?**

If you were Sergeant Thompson, what would kind of performance evaluation would you propose for your next meeting with Captain Davis? What changes could be made that would accurately reflect the performance of your platoon’s officers?

[**People Power**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781315400808/epub/OEBPS/xhtml/content.xhtml#bck_Ch08_sec8_1)

Police work is a unique, multibillion dollar, labor-intensive industry built around order maintenance, law enforcement, and the provision of other essential government services. By the early 2000s, for example, more than 17,000 police agencies at all levels of government spent nearly 48 billion dollars to “protect and serve” their constituents. Most of these funds—80 to 90 percent—went to cover salaries and benefits for more than 850,000 full- and part-time law enforcement personnel. Municipal governments spend more than 20 percent of their total budgetary outlay on police services. The per capita expenditure for police service in cities and counties ranges anywhere from $131.00 to $848.00 per year, with a mean expenditure of $264.00. It is estimated that it now costs more than $300,000 per year to field a fully equipped and professionally trained police officer around the clock in urban high-crime areas (Hamblin, 1994; U.S. Department of Justice, 2009).

In light of these phenomenal costs, local governments are now beginning to realize that they have a vested interest in recruiting, hiring, and retaining only the most efficient, effective, and productive personnel. Police managers are becoming sensitive to the fact that numerical strength alone does not guarantee quality service. Quality is much more likely to be determined by the intelligence, ability, skill, experience, integrity, and dedication of the police department’s human resources. Consequently, police managers are forced into being much more personnel conscious.

Many observers have come to the conclusion that personnel development may be the only truly viable solution to problems caused by an erosion of the tax base and dwindling resources in the public sector. According to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (2011), an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 local law enforcement officers were laid off and approximately 30,000 police positions unfilled in 2011 due to the poor economy. With personnel shortages, police agencies have had to make up the difference with more efficient and effective use of existing personnel. Personnel development focuses on the employee. It is a management strategy designed to improve both the quantity and the quality of each individual’s output, while ensuring that employees work collaboratively (in groups) to achieve the organization’s mission, goals, and objectives. Based on modern management theory, personnel development is an ongoing process that begins on the day the rookie police officer joins the police department and continues throughout his or her career.

Systematic performance appraisal is regarded as the key to employee development and is now viewed as the centerpiece of an effective police personnel system (Travis & Brann, 1997; Kramer, 1998; Gul & O’Connell, 2012).

[**Performance Appraisal**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781315400808/epub/OEBPS/xhtml/content.xhtml#bck_Ch08_sec8_2)

Evaluation of job performance is a managerial task that is normally delegated to first-line supervisors in healthy, work-based organizations. Formal (objective) performance appraisal has been emphasized in government and has become the standard by which the legitimacy of any public sector personnel system is judged.

Many police supervisors do not fully understand the purpose of, or need for, regular performance appraisal. They approach the evaluation of subordinates in a negative manner. Evaluation becomes an unpleasant and stressful chore that requires them to assume the awesome responsibility for honestly assessing the job-related strengths and weaknesses of their fellow police officers. Some police supervisors are simply not prepared to take on this very important role-related responsibility.

In a generic sense, seven common justifications are used by management for requiring first-line supervisors to evaluate their personnel. They are summarized here.

1. To determine whether subordinates are doing the job they were hired to do.
2. To measure the quantity of work and quality of performance and provide rewards for those who are doing well.
3. To correct specific problems and improve the employee’s overall performance.
4. To estimate employee potential and prepare that employee for promotion within the organization.
5. To assess employee attitudes and strengthen each supervisor’s understanding of subordinates.
6. To let employees know exactly how they are doing, where they stand, and what they can do to improve their own on-the-job performance.
7. To provide supervisors (and management) with sufficient objective data to make and, if necessary, defend decisions concerning personnel within the agency.

In addition to these specific objectives, many management theorists contend that an objective and fair performance appraisal tends to fortify and enrich supervisor–subordinate relationships in the workplace (Swanson et al., 2012).

A great deal of time, effort, and creative thought have gone into the search for a comprehensive, multipurpose performance-appraisal process designed to give police managers objective data that can be factored into administrative decisions concerning salary increases, promotions, transfers, discipline, or personnel development. While progress is being made, no such process presently exists, and it is doubtful that one will be perfected in the near future (Travis & Brann, 1997).

Many personnel specialists, or human resources managers, as they are now called, believe that the achievement of multiple objectives is not feasible and think that a performance-appraisal system should be limited to one (and only one) objective: to inform employees about the quality of their work so that they can strive to improve their own performance. This is commonly referred to as “developmental” as opposed to “judgmental” performance appraisal (Steinmetz & Todd, 1992).

According to Leonard (2013), the purpose of a formal merit rating, performance review, or employee appraisal is to synthesize, in objective terms, the performance, experience, and capabilities of individual employees and to compare them with the requirements of a particular job. This assessment is almost always based on observable criteria, such as cooperation, dependability, productivity, quality of output, follow-through, judgment, and safety. Regular performance appraisal provides rank-and-file police officers with some assurance that they are not being overlooked and that the supervisors, managers, and various superiors within the police organization know something about them as individuals.

The key to effective performance appraisal is knowing exactly who is responsible for doing what and how it (the job) is to be done. The essential components or elements of the total job must be carefully identified and communicated to the subordinate personnel. The most important elements of performance appraisal have the following characteristics.

1. They are job centered and focus on the specific task or tasks to be performed.
2. They are clear and simply stated.
3. They are observable as well as objective.
4. They target actual on-the-job performance.
5. They are measurable in terms of predetermined performance standards.

The second step in effective performance evaluation is applying a standard designed to specify the minimum level of acceptable performance for each particular job. This standard becomes critically important as a performance-measuring device (Jones, 1998). It clearly delineates what is expected from the police officer in terms of productivity, accuracy, completeness, timeliness, dependability, or safety. The firstline supervisor, normally a sergeant, is in the best position to utilize the information concerning elements of the job, performance standards, and objective appraisal criteria to forge a meaningful composite that reflects each subordinate’s job performance accurately (Iannone et al., 2013). The performance profile is an invaluable source of information for management decision-making.

There are literally thousands of different performance-appraisal instruments in use today. Virtually all of them incorporate elements of the job (based on a job description), some type of graduated performance measurement, and objective evaluative criteria. Needless to say, none of them is perfect.

The four universal aspects of performance appraisal are (1) a performance goal, standard, or plan; (2) measurement of job-related performance; (3) comparison of employee performance with the goal, standard, or plan; and (4) use of corrective action as required in a given situation (Walsh & Donovan, 1990). These represent the conceptual pillars on which the employee evaluation process is built.