"You're out here because you're supposed to receive a performance review? I'm out here because I'm supposed to give one!"

Whether you are the rater or the employee to be rated, performance appraisals can lead to significant anxiety. Tom Coens and Mary Jenkins (2000) indicated in *Abolishing Performance Appraisals: Why They Backfire and What to Do Instead* that anxiety is only one of many reasons that organizations should eliminate this overused and unreliable practice. As they take the reader through an in depth critique of this frequently used tool, they highlight common practices, unintended outcomes, and misconceptions. More importantly, Coens and Jenkins introduce alternatives to this controversial organization mechanism.

Why do you use performance appraisals?

Do they accomplish your intended goals?

What are there real effects?

Do you really need any kind of performance appraisal system?

If not, are there alternative ways to accomplish your intended goals?

P. 4

Peter Block, a fellow human resources (HR) specialist, provided the foreword for this transformational, employee empowerment guide. In his introduction, Block indicates there is an overriding feeling that performance appraisals are from the past, and likely should remain there. They represent "the parental, boss-subordinate relationships that [are] characteristic of patriarchal organizations" (p.1).

Contrary to the current understanding, performance appraisals lack the characteristics necessary to be a developmental process. They often cause more harm than benefits. There is a need to develop processes in most organizations that will promote honest conversation that is viewed as positive, not punishing.

Coens and Jenkins quickly indicate that they support this as they point out that a performance appraisal, "wastes time, causes stress, and

> ...the parental, boss-subordinate relationships that is characteristic of patriarchal organizations.

destroys commitment and relationships" (p. 3). They encourage human resource specialists to remember that the organization's employees are responsible individuals. Thus a different approach is needed in order to reflect the trust that should naturally be given.
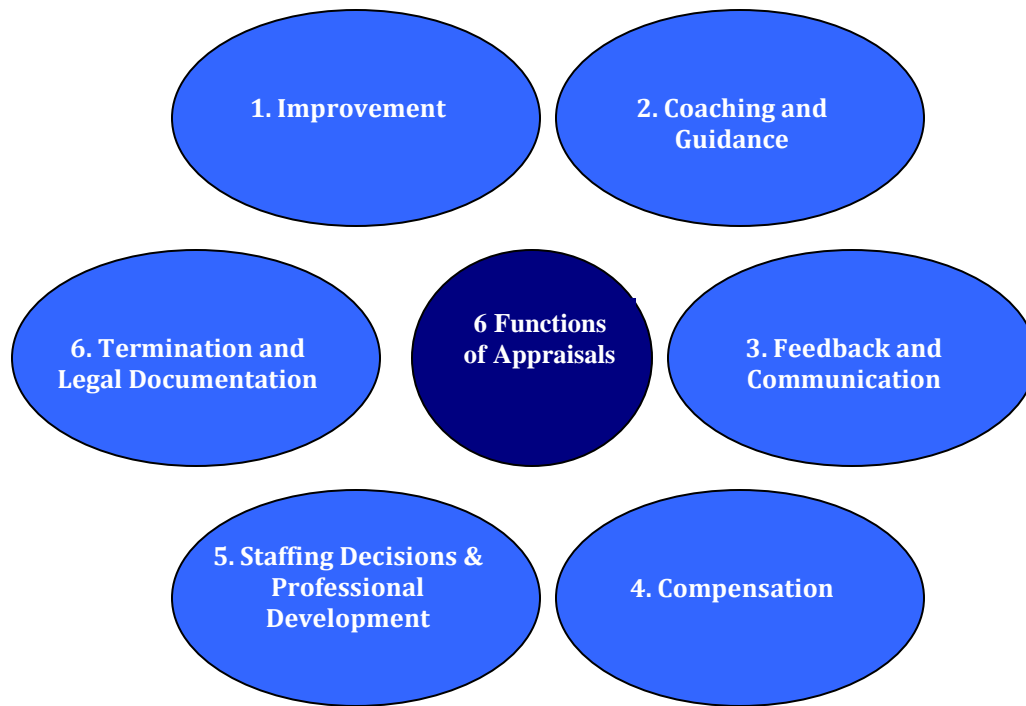
There is a realization that change is difficult, particularly when the tool has such strong historical roots and serves many purposes for the organization. However, Coens and Jenkins provide several strong arguments for abolishing this practice.

People who create and use performance appraisals support them because of a belief that they assist in making evaluation more objective. While in some regards this may be the case, the design contributes to the unplanned negativity associated with the tool. A specific feature, the ability to rate numerically versus descriptively, has employees focusing on the

Diagram 1 – 6 Intended Functions of Performance Appraisals

score achieved instead of the information which could be used to improve performance. If this is the case, employees become defensive, resenting both the appraiser and the process itself.

This is not to say that good appraisals cannot occur. They just do not lend themselves to the qualities necessary for improved performance: authentic communication, motivation, fair and impartial judgment, and a sense of support.

At this point it might be best to provide a definition for performance appraisal as denoted by Coens and Jenkins. They indicate that a performance appraisal is "the process of evaluating or judging the way in which someone is functioning" (p. 12). As you can see, the definition contains negative terminology and is "judgmental" by its very nature. This makes it difficult for the previously mentioned positive qualities to be present. Coens and Jenkins outline five features that are typically present in the current evaluative processes (see Table 1).

There are six actual, desired functions of a performance appraisal. *Improvement* refers to the quality of work, efficiency levels, and other production skills. The ideal *coaching*

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p. 337

Table 1 – 5 FEATURES OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

1. An employee's individual work performance, behaviors, or traits are rated, judged, and/or described by someone other than the employee.
2. Such ratings, judgments, and descriptions relate to a specific time period rather than a particular work product or project.
3. The process is systematically applied to all employees or a class of employees (not individual intervention).
4. The process is either mandatory or induced by extrinsic incentive as opposed to a process that is purely voluntary or elective.
5. The results of ratings, judgments, or documentations are kept or preserved by someone in the organization other than the rated employee.

(P. 14-15)

and guidance will motivate the employee to become connected with his work. *Feedback and communication* needs to be reciprocal in order to be effective. Organizations will often provide *compensation* for increases in performance. Efficient *staffing* levels as well as *professional development* needs can be determined through discussions with staff. As the company progresses to meet the needs and demands of production, the skill set and particular staff positions may need to be updated. One of the most frequent arguments for maintaining performance appraisals comes from the belief that objective and impartial paperwork is needed for *Termination and Legal Documentation*.

Are each of these functions met? Possibly but the authors would argue that there are more effective ways to meet the same needs without inflicting the often traumatizing process on the organization's employees. In fact, Coens and Jenkins feel that appraisals impede feedback as well as create distorted and unreliable data. As a result, they attempt to breakdown appraisals and the myths surrounding appraisals by logically addressing the assumptions associated with them.

ASSUMPTIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON APPRAISALS

Assumptions associated with appraisals are treated as true and drive procedures. While this is a natural part of many processes, ready acceptance without questioning can lead to harmful effects. Assumptions need to be made explicit and tested for truth and effectiveness. Even if organizations attempt to revise the appraisal tool, underlying assumptions seem to reappear and dynamically impact employee efficacy when the tool is administered. Coens and Jenkins indicate that, "[a]ccepted on faith, these assumptions are transformed into unquestioned practices that may obstruct the future" (p. 24).

Assumptions are the guiding force behind the authors' argument against appraisals, particularly the misguided assumptions. While it is not necessary to address each of the assumptions brought forth by Coens and Jenkins, a synthesis of the information contributes

Mary Jenkins, a private consultant, previously spent 18 years with General Motors Corporation in progressively responsible human resources positions. Before entering private consulting with Emergent Systems in 1993, she was Director of Salaried Personnel at the GM – Powertrain division which then employed more than 26,000 employees. Over a period of seven years, Ms. Jenkins worked directly with Dr. W. Edwards Deming in abolishing appraisals and creating alternative systems at GM – Powertrain. Ms. Jenkins also served on the Saturn Corporation start-up human resources team where she helped formulate its innovative human resource strategies. Ms. Jenkins' consulting practice through her company, Emergent Systems, focuses on human resources design and organizational development issues. She has worked with a diverse range of clients across North America…Ms. Jenkins has taught graduate courses with the School of Labor and Industrial Relations at Michigan State University and consulted with the University's H.R. department.

P. 338

to the overall message conveyed in this book.

Arguing Against Assumptions

The first assumption *People want to know and need to know where they stand, and appraisals tell people where they stand* (p. 27) is actually paradoxical to the actual beliefs of most employees who experience this practice. Appraisals seldom tell people where they really stand with the company. It is a snapshot in time and, as the previous *Dilbert* comic depicts, often is obscured by other issues such as anger and frustration.

A paternalistic practice, performance appraisals indicate to an employee that the boss knows more about the employee than they know of themselves. This pervasive belief removes any chance of empowerment. Instead of allowing the employee the opportunity to gain incentives based on their own merit, the decision is left to one or just a few people to make this judgment. The decision hinges on where the employee stands in the perspective of others who may not have the entire picture.

As such, patriarchy must be eliminated in order to create an atmosphere of authenticity, openness, and partnership, a partnership where each participant has equal responsibility in his own present and future, as well as that of the organization. If this were the case, the employee would have continual awareness of where they stand in relation to the work they do rather than just once a year at appraisal time. In referencing John Bradshaw,

> **Assumption: People want to know and need to know where they stand, and appraisals tell people where they stand.**

Coens and Jenkins indicate that characteristics of patriarchy that must be eliminated include:
1. Blind obedience.
2. Repression of all emotion except fear.
3. Destruction of individual willpower.
4. The repression of thinking whenever it departs from the authority figure's way of thinking.

With the elimination of these expectations, employees will start to have a voice in the process of their own evaluation. If employers buy into this, it will assist in eliminating the second assumption, *Organizations and supervisors are responsible for individual employee's morale, performance and development* (p. 29).

Application: Within education, are their currently opportunities for professionals at all levels to break away from the typical appraisal process to reflect on their own values and capabilities?

> " Accepted on faith, these assumptions are transformed into unquestioned practices, that may obstruct the future."
> (p. 24)

> "Appraisal is primarily the paper-shuffling that sanctifies decisions already made."
> (p. 28)

> "…perpetuate[s] an outcome of dependant, de-motivated people"
> (p. 39)

FIGURE 2.1 (P. 44) – CLASHING VALUES

Empowering People → ← Forced Process

Collaborative Terms → ← Individual Accountability

Unleash Intrinsic Motivation → ← Motivate with Incentives

Respect Diversity → ← One Size Fits All

Emerging Structures → ← Controlling Structures

Just in Time → ← Annual Event Appraisal

Improve Processes → ← Rely on Inspection/MBO

Improve Whole System → ← Improve Parts

Historically the appraisal process has gone through a number of changes. In 1950, numerical performance goals were introduced into the process as they were determined measurable and could be clearly communicated, reflecting the Management by Objective (MBO) practices. As data was often manipulated, this practice was dropped from appraisals in the 1980s. Appraisals became behaviour based in the 1990s and we started to see 360° evaluations – co-workers, supervisors, and all other relevant stakeholders had an opportunity to provide feedback. This was to alleviate bias but did not truly serve its purpose.

Additional changes in industry provided similar cosmetic changes but they do not address the underlying practices that are most harmful in this process which is why Coens and Jenkins propose even further changes. However, their recommendations address such problems as the inconsistencies that exist between the word of the employer (I value you as an employee) and the action (I provide lower scores as there is always room for improvement). Policies, HR practices, and culture all contribute to this mixed message. Table 2 notes a number of key practices with which negative

connotations have been associated. Good intentions are outweighed by a legacy of emotion associated with ingrained structures.

While Table 3 indicates the opposing viewpoints to those displayed in Table 2, Coens and Jenkins put forth additional recommendations (p. 42) for eliminating patriarchy in the company:

1. Organizations, as a system, cannot improve when the focus is on the individual.
2. To create meaning and effective people, there needs to be choice.
3. Less control and structure will result in greater motivation and productivity.
4. Employees cannot be motivated to perform their best, but conditions of openness and trust can unleash intrinsic motivation, spirit, and heart-felt commitment to organizational goals.
5. Focus should be on improving the system, not the individuals.
6. Freely evolving systems are crucial to growth. These systems must include variation, differentiation, and diversity.

In this post-modern approach, Coens and Jenkins analyze the principles of the past in order to create a system of interdependence (Figure 2.2; p. 46) with

TABLE 2 – NEGATIVE COMPANY PRACTICES OF OLD (AND NOW)

- Rules
- Policy manuals
- Time clocks
- Leave approval slips
- Attendance awards
- Incentive pay
- Performance appraisals

TABLE 3 – POST-MODERN COMPANY PRACTICES IN AN INNOVATIVE ORGANIZATION

- Trust
- Freedom
- Less control
- Greater autonomy
- A focus on creating commitment of employees to the company.
- A willingness to exploration of employee ideas.

Figure 2.2 – The System
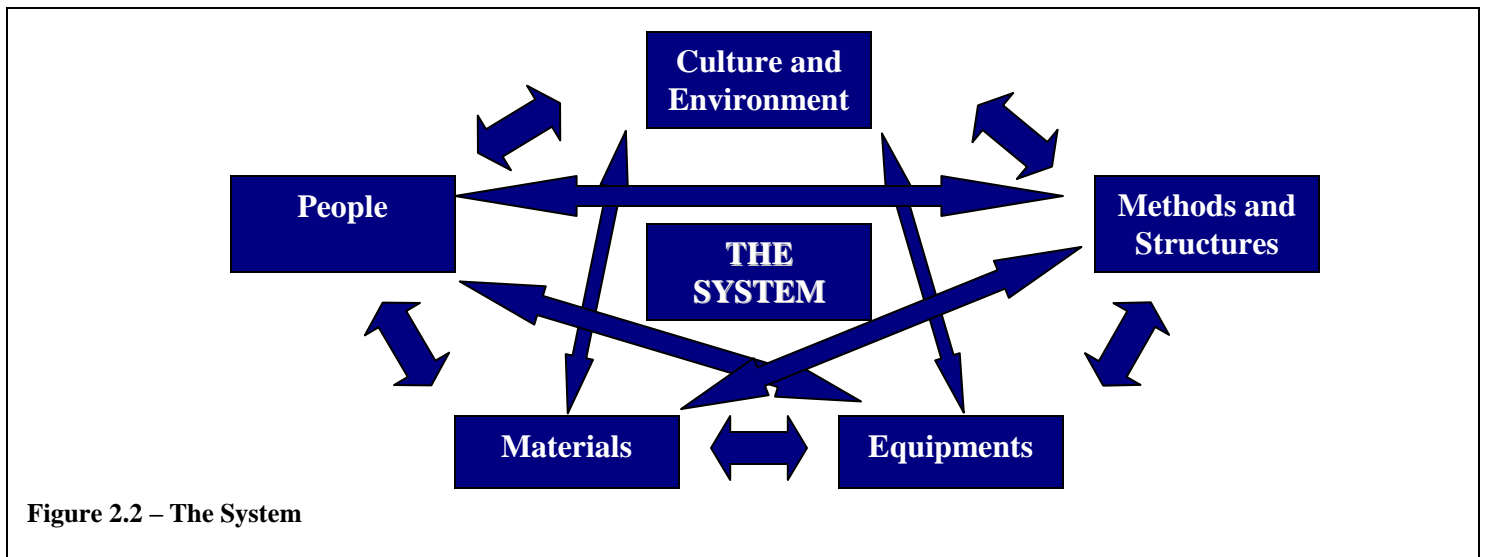
a focus on *human* resources in the new model.

Frequently, individuals are appraised based on the output of an organization or based on personal output. In a systems model, there is an understanding that all factors influence the overall output and therefore a single individual would have little or no effect if he was to change his methods. If an organization continues to use output as a measure of employee success, these measures must be made reliable and fair to the individual employee.

Additional issues include rater bias (gender, race, and age) and ignorance; a tendency to categorize and stereotype (based on characteristics and limited observed behaviour); as well as favouritism. While some might not consider this final factor a problem, leniency error also exists. In this case, the manager may rate an individual much more generously in order to preserve existing relationships. Employees may also experience severity error as a result of a rater's own experiences rather than the employee's actual capabilities. See the side panel for supplementary rating errors.

Returning to assumptions, there is a common belief that *supervisors and rated employees will not try to manipulate performance ratings to get desired outcomes*. However, multi-leveled organizations experience a natural tendency of competition for advancement. Decisions on appraisals are made in advance so that desired outcomes can be achieved. This is an inherent problem when benefits are linked to performance appraisals. Appraisers will also see increased congeniality during appraisal time. Employees attempt to politick in order to skew perceptions, i.e. brownnosing

or drawing attention to successes while downplaying errors.

While this game playing may be obvious to the appraiser, placing responsibility on him to see the whole picture in all aspects of appraisal may be inappropriate. *Raters can adequately distinguish an individual's performance from the situational constraints* is one such assumption that may conflict with this supposed omnipotent perspective. Recall Coens and Jenkins' belief that employees work within an interdependent system. If this is the case, no one factor can stand alone. The employee's performance is reliant on the materials and procedures available to him.

While assumptions will continue to be embedded throughout, it is important to address an appraisal for the function it is to serve.

Application: Consider your employer. Identify connections between the various departments and how appraisal dishonesty might affect the functions of each department.

5 Functions of Appraisals

Coaching is a crucial component of all job preparation. While employees may be accepted based on qualifications, it is important to recognize that each job has particular expectations that another job may not. It is essential to begin coaching of this new role immediately after hiring.

There are 12 agreed upon common factors for coaching which are further broken down into five areas as depicted in Figure 4.1 on the next page (Coens and Jenkins, 2000, p. 75). These factors include: 1.

providing and clarifying direction, 2. encouraging the development of performance goals, 3. giving feedback and listening, 4. serving as a source of expert guidance and advice, 5. making suggestions for improvement, 6. helping people with their work, 7. providing encouragement and building self-confidence, 8. Motivating and keeping up morale, 9. Removing barriers and providing resources, 10. providing technical training, 11. assisting and guiding career development, and 12. supporting people in personal development.

Figure 4.1 – Coaching Tasks and Intended Effects

	Tasks	Effects	Results
COACHING	Guidance and Direction	• Alignment • Motivation • Increased Capability	**PERFORMANCE**
	Goal Setting		
	Feedback		
	Development		
	Training and Assistance		

As depicted in Figure 4.1, job coaching causes effects such as alignment with the organization. Through alignment, the right tasks are accomplished, targets and priorities are clear, and the work of the new employee meshes effectively with the work of others. Coaching also assists in building confidence through encouragement, resulting in greater motivation of the employee. By encouraging employees to develop the knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies, and healthy mental outlook, coaches assist in increased capabilities. Each of these areas can be planned and guided through assessment that measures strengths and weaknesses. It then becomes a tool of learning instead of judgment. Of course, there is an assumption that a supervisor has the necessary skills to be an effective coach as well as the knowledge to guide an employee through this process.

Because of the diverse span of supervision expected from the modern manager, Coens and Jenkins indicate that an expert is needed for coaching purposes. Most appraisals do not allow for this as the supervisor is typically responsible for conducting them, a supervisor who may not have the necessary background to recognize strengths and weaknesses for the given job.

Assumption: *To get alignment and desired performance, people require formal and specific direction*. Modern organizations need to value team work. The previously stated assumption violates this due to the implied control. While coaching is important, one should recognize that employees have the skills to do their jobs. Aside from indicating the basic parameters of a position, providing support and demonstrating a connection to the company's ultimate vision, coaching should allow an

Performance appraisals have been designed with good intentions. Bad experiences overshadow the actual purpose of the tool. Control and judgment are the overpowering message communicated to the employee. Past practice has seen many changes to the appraisal in order to compensate for the problems that occur. Coens and Jenkins feel that you must address the underlying assumptions and completely restructure the process, not just make changes to a failing tool. In order to motivate change, Coens and Jenkins put forth a strategic approach to assessment.

individual to fulfill the responsibilities using the skills he has acquired. If coaching is viewed as controlling through its design (written judgment, employee's signature, personnel file storage), it negates any positives that were previously intended.

Performance appraisals ignore the variability of the person, both as an employee and a manager. In the case of the manager, the tool assumes that the manager wants or needs to use the same approach as other managers to guide, develop and manage people. It is interesting to note that predictions regarding management style can be made based on gender. Men are more likely to display formal, transactional leadership style whereas women are much more transformational typically.

When administering appraisals to employees, experience training, and employee needs are all overlooked. As a common tool for everyone (may have a number of tools but they are not usually customized to the individual, only the job, department, or level of employment), performance

etc. However, the nature of the work may change throughout the evaluation period. Appraisers are most likely to consider the circumstances of the job that are apparent at the time the appraisal is administered.

One of the central features purportedly assigned to the performance appraisal is that of a tool to assist with goal setting. A supposedly good coach will assist with this process as *Individual goal setting is an effective motivational tool and strategy for improving performance*. It is argued that goal setting removes bias. If the employee accomplished the goal that they set then performance has been satisfactory throughout the year. While the goal might be personalized, it is often accomplished or not based on the system as the entire system would need to be involved. Setting the goal does not automatically allow the employee to see the path necessary to the finish line. See Table 4 for additional concerns for goal setting.

Coens and Jenkins suggest that companies should drop mandated

TABLE 4 – GOAL SETTING CHALLENGES

1. Acceptance of and Commitment to Goals
   - Unless an employee has both of these qualities present, goal setting is ineffective – acceptance does not ensure commitment
2. Multiple and Complex Goals
   - Keep it simple as achieving one goal could result in sacrificing another
3. Quantity Goals
   - Quality suffers
4. Unintended Consequences
   - Undermine intrinsic motivation due to pressure and control
   - Impede teamwork
   - Dishonest behaviour

appraisals do not account for the variance among job performers or the factors affecting the performance.

Appraisals are administered on a cyclical basis, i.e. annually, bi-annually,

ratings and evaluations (except when legally required or it is the best tool), foster new roles for supervisors (allow employees to monitor own work so that managers can inspire

commitment and productivity), and create a variety of freely chosen delivery systems (coaching tools and how-to's). As part of the coaching tools, include goal setting, multi-source feedback, competency identification, etc. Be sure that the practices are elective, not imposed and that all documents generated stay with the employee versus being stored as a permanent document in an employee file. If goal setting is part of the process, it needs to be effective and clearly identified as organizational, work unit (department/team), or individual.

Application: Consider the coaching model for student teachers and for more senior teachers. Are there qualities of this *mentorship* that are more valuable than others?

Feedback is a second function of the traditional appraisal. There are two types of feedback, positive and negative. Good feedback is given and heard, timely and helpful, as well as trustworthy. Feedback will have a clear message that is helpful to the receiver. It should be given in person in order to avoid miscommunication. If all of these recommendations hold true, feedback will be positive. If even one aspect is missing, the communication could be perceived as negative.

As a feature of the appraisal, it would seem that feedback is primarily the responsibility of the supervisor. Coens and Jenkins argue that the employee has an equal, if not greater responsibility to ensure that feedback is received. In fact, it is their belief that if an employee actively seeks this information, it will be more beneficial as there is easier acceptance and ownership.

Motivation is usually the hoped for result of feedback. This is possible but is not always the case. Feedback can be demotivating if unfair, critical, not situationally appropriate, or destroys intrinsic motivation. Senders of information should be aware that there is frequently *noise* that will distort the message. It is important to ensure that noise (awe, fear, nervousness, defensiveness, etc.) is not apparent at any stage of the communication.

Coens and Jenkins suggest that companies create a clear vision of the culture that it desires. As with many other aspects introduced while abolishing performance appraisals, education is critical for all staff in regards to the proper way to seek and provide feedback. It is essential to recall that, "[p]eople's needs and preferences for feedback are highly variable in terms of format, frequency, and content" (p. 152).

Application: What was your most recent feedback? Does it reflect all of the criteria outlined by Coens and Jenkins?

Pay will often be a deciding factor for an offered position, or so most people would argue? The traditional performance appraisal clearly was designed with this in mind as well, since considerable rewards were attached to it. Pay serves as the third function of appraisal.

Coens and Jenkins believe that money is not our sole motivator, that "each of us has a deep desire to do meaningful work" (p. 154). However, pay can motivate in the short run, when tasks are simple, as well as when work is based on quantity produced not the quality.

While rewards serve a purpose, they tend to be seen as a means of control, rupture relationships through competition, and discourage risk-taking and creativity. It is better to play it safe and earn the bonus than to take a chance and be penalized. If seen as unfair or inadequate, pay can significantly demotivate an employee. If comparisons are made between employees, there is a likelihood of dissatisfaction due to a bias towards own performance. You are always better than the person beside you.

Pay systems have a couple of objectives. The first is to be used as a tool for recruitment and retention. The second is to remove focus from pay. Wages need to be sufficient enough as to not be a factor. Pay should not be used to gain action. Structures are in place to take care of this. However, this does not account for market adjustments, merit pay, cost of living adjustments, and the like.

Career ladder pay is determined based on education. Experience pay is based on length of employment. Both of these approaches are straight forward and leave little room for interpretation and negative side-effects. Another method used to avoid merit pay is through company promotion which might include adding responsibilities to the current assignments, being put into a trainer role, or another method of increased responsibility. In this case, the job is reclassified, not the person. Once again, this negates the judgment of professional effectiveness. Merit pay would only be used where an individual is clearly outstanding. If pay cannot be guaranteed to motivate an employee, what is recommended? Coens and Jenkins recommend

creating opportunities for success supported by a compelling vision that is connected to company purpose, mission and values. Above all else, create a climate where people work together for achievement, not in competition with each other.

Closely related to this, as it reflects a number of alternatives to merit pay, is the function of *staffing, promotions, and development*. The process of staffing an organization, as well as the movement within the organization, is very complex. There is an attempt to ensure that all selection criteria are precise. The guidelines are highly structured and the processes are objective wherever possible. "Best fit" is still the deciding factor.

Currently internal promotion in most organizations employs the use of appraisals both formally and informally to reduce the applicant pool. The assumption is that *performing well in one job predicts success in performing well in another*. The skills necessary to accomplish a technical job are not the same as (or at least not limited to) the skills needed to achieve as a manager. These same appraisals are also used with the hope of eliminating bias so that the EEO has no case for discrimination. A word of caution, while appraisals appear objective, they have frequently been used as the evidence needed to prove a case.

Instead of implementing this tool, Coens and Jenkins recommend establishing clearly defined requirements and processes which should be tested for inequalities by referencing the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines or an equivalent document in the appropriate jurisdiction. This will assist

Learning the Lingo

Promotion or Selection Process: competitive

Career Track Advancement: pre-determined based on skills, education, experience, etc.

Career Planning: individuals actively seek improvement of self and credentials

Career Management: the organization plans for future and current needs

Layoff: intended, temporary suspension of employment

RIF (Reduction in Force): purposeful termination

Job Abolishment: obsolete or reassigned (does not mean reduction in numbers)

EEO (Expansion of Equal Opportunities): Organization whose purpose is to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of employees regardless of age, gender, race or other discriminatory factors.

the employer in testing for validity and reliability as well as attempting to ensure that it is discrimination free. The side panel lists a number of tools which can be validated for reliability and can be implemented in place of a performance appraisal.

It is the employee's responsibility to seek opportunities and training for advancement yet organizations can support them. Appraisals have been used to determine professional development needs. If the employer takes ultimate responsibility in these circumstances, it sends a message to

planning for future company positions, and by budgeting costs for potential needs. Increased skill sets benefit the company by retaining employees who have a commitment to the organization by promoting them from within the structure.

Conversely, appraisals were not only employed to facilitate hiring and promotions. They have been used to justify layoffs in tough times. It is important to once again recall that employees cannot always be separated from the system. Poor performance can be linked to other

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TABLE 5 – ALTERNATIVES TO APPRAISALS IN LAYOFFS AND DOWNSIZING

1. Voluntary separation, extended leaves, retirement incentives, buy outs
2. Seniority
3. Create a committee with clearly outlined criteria
4. Determine layoffs based on operational needs
   a. What positions are needed?
   b. What qualifications are essential to moving forward?
   c. Subjective but often acceptable as it is seen as rational and logical.

---

the employee that the employer believes:
- Employees are resistant to managing their own careers
- Employees want someone else to lead development
- Employees do not know how to take care of pursuing their own needs.

This makes the manager into a mentor or career counsellor and, as an authority figure potentially responsible for new hires, this creates a conflict of interest. It also removes intrinsic motivation for self-direction.

An alternative approach would be for organizations to support employees in their own plans by promoting professional growth,

factors. Using this tool creates bitterness because of the faulty process. It also creates problems as a negative experience is associated with the tool. This emotion will carry into the future. Table 5 discusses some alternatives. If layoffs are based on performance, the company can expect backlash.

Application: While educators have little opportunity to earn rewards, what are some ways your employer currently acknowledges extra work you have done?

Legal documentation is the final function of a performance appraisal. Having a "paper trail" as protection in

the event of litigation, may actually cause the organization additional problems. See the comparison below for an illustration of the pros and cons.

Coens and Jenkins suggest a three step alternative:

1. Help the individual improve to an acceptable level.
2. Alter the job or find a position that is better aligned with the individual's skills and potential.
3. Take measures to remove the employee from the organization in a manner that is respectful and caring. An honest dialogue may facilitate a voluntary departure. Ensure that the pursuit of all avenues has been evidenced. (p. 250)

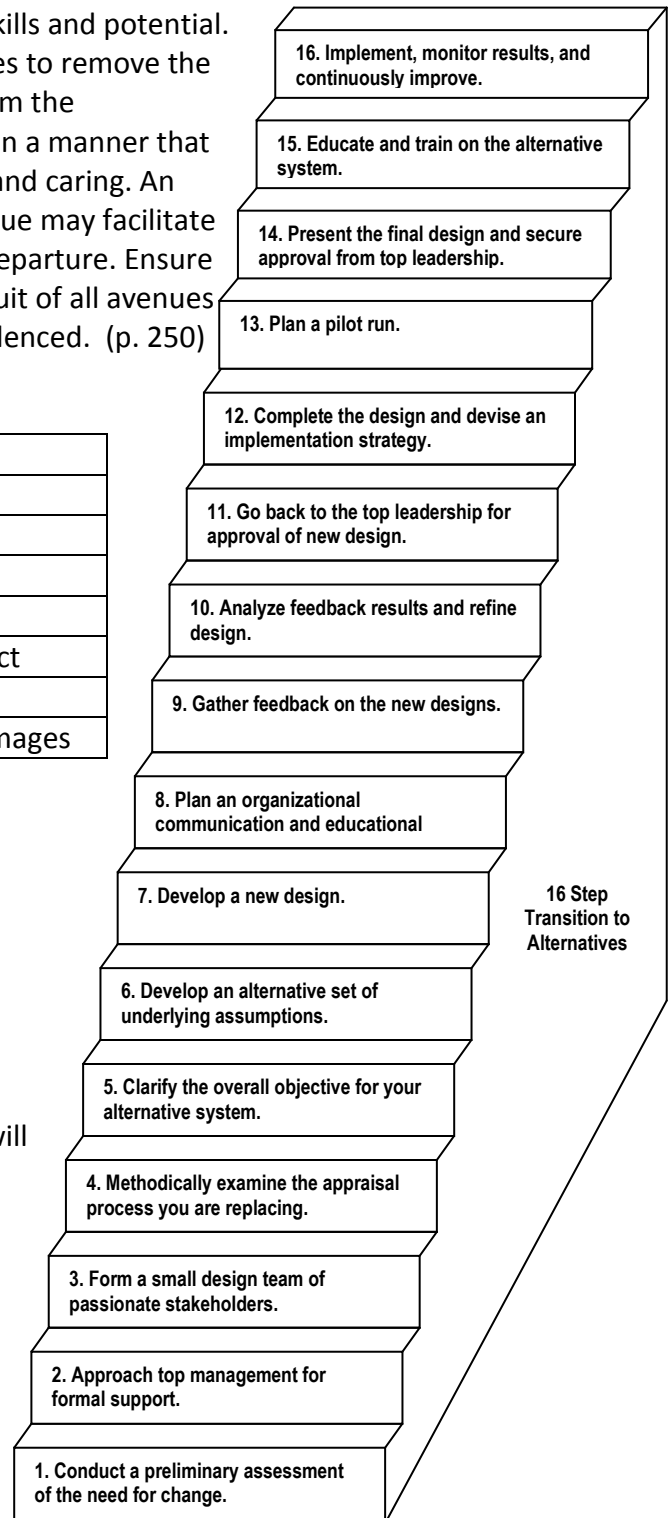| Appraisals as Legal Documentation – A Comparison ||
Perceived Positives (p. 228)	Negatives (p. 233-35)
Notice of Expectation	Defamation/Libel
Reasonableness	Negligence
Evidence	Discrimination
Fair Investigation	Implied Employment Contract
Consistently Applied Standards	Challenge for Layoff/RIF
Discharge is a Fair Penalty	Emotional Pain/Punitive Damages

Transition to Alternative

It is impossible to change without education. Before beginning Coens and Jenkins' 16-step process, do research. Understand the best ways to inspire the same buy-in for others in the organization. Above all else, realize that it is complex, may require taking a step back at various points, and that change cannot be achieved overnight. You will likely do worse in the beginning than you were doing with the old tool. Baby steps will help you on the road to abolishing performance appraisals.

Critical Evaluation

Tom Coens and Mary Jenkins provide a comprehensive analysis of performance appraisals. Their purpose is not to teach an HR specialist how to use them; it is to deconstruct historical assumptions and myths for the purpose of showing alternatives to this method of evaluation.

In this easy-to-read how-to manual, discontinuing appraisals appears logical and simple. The concept is thoroughly explained with supporting examples for the arguments. While undertaking this endeavour is by no means *simple*, Coens and Jenkins will have you convinced that it is *possible*.

Particularly interesting are the assumptions presented. Inherent to the process of performance appraisals, these assumptions are underlying missiles ready to destroy the HR specialists every attempt at fair and impartial evaluation in a non-threatening environment. It is worth having your ideals challenged to read this well-written manual.

16 Step Transition to Alternatives

1. Conduct a preliminary assessment of the need for change.
2. Approach top management for formal support.
3. Form a small design team of passionate stakeholders.
4. Methodically examine the appraisal process you are replacing.
5. Clarify the overall objective for your alternative system.
6. Develop an alternative set of underlying assumptions.
7. Develop a new design.
8. Plan an organizational communication and educational
9. Gather feedback on the new designs.
10. Analyze feedback results and refine design.
11. Go back to the top leadership for approval of new design.
12. Complete the design and devise an implementation strategy.
13. Plan a pilot run.
14. Present the final design and secure approval from top leadership.
15. Educate and train on the alternative system.
16. Implement, monitor results, and continuously improve.

Reference: Coens, T & Jenkins, M. (2000). *Abolishing performance appraisals: Why they backfire and what to do instead. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.*