

# Rethinking Annual Performance Evaluation: Indian Steel Sector Scenario

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## Abstract:

Increasing dissatisfaction with their annual performance evaluations (APEs) among employees had led top managers to rethink about their APEs and have started to adopt a sophisticated approach of continuous feedback and development or continuous performance management (CPM). This paper investigates do managers of Indian Steel Units also hold a similar view? For this, 612 managers were contacted randomly to elicit their views about APEs. The findings provide an answer to this as affirmative. Encouragingly, the leadership in the steel sector is heading in the right direction and it's the time to change for these steel units to take a right step forward for higher organisational performance and overall employee satisfaction.

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## I INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Annual Performance Evaluations (APEs) does not measure truly, harness people talent required for maximising organisational performance. APEs focus on static figures only which negatively impact the employees psychologically rather than enabling them to be more responsible, motivated, involved in maximizing their contributions. Increasing dissatisfaction with their APEs had led top managers to rethink about APEs in vogue. They have started to adopt a more sophisticated approach of continuous feedback and development or Continuous Performance Management (CPM). Many multinational companies got rid of APEs and had adopted CPM - Rock David et al (2014), Ott Jogi (2015), Buckingham and Goodall (2015), Adler (2016)<sup>1</sup>, Mc Elgunn (2019). More than 72 percent employees dislike, fear and call it biased or annual

ritual still organisations continue to conduct APEs even though they yield unpleasant results that are worse than before SHRM research. On the contrary, a survey by People IQ<sup>2</sup> confirmed that 87 percent of the organisations have realised that APEs are ineffective and not useful Williams. Increasing number of organisations are switching to CPM as they found it to be value based and suit well in a team based work environment, there is a paradigm shift seen in this direction across the world.

## II NEED AND SCOPE

This research collects the opinions of managers and examines them to check, whether the steel unit employees, managers hold the same view and thoughtfulness is in line with the current research on APEs? Is the steel sector ready for change? The researcher felt the need to examine the same

in the current changed work environment and support the steel units by providing necessary information to strengthen the system to the top management to formulate HRD strategies for executive satisfaction and enhancing their performance, in turn, the organizational performance. Self introspection would help make necessary corrections if any Levinson (1976).

The scope is limited to large steel manufacturing units located in various states in India, that follow similar policies and procedures of APE. All the respondents are employees with managerial experience are leading teams in individual capacity have been selected.

### III LITERATURE RESEARCH

Performance management as a human resources process is mostly disliked by employees and managers alike (Ledford, Benson, and Lawler 2016a). Historically, research and practice on performance management involves in the search for new techniques and ways to improve most disliked HR process to make it effective so as to improve managerial and organisational performance thereby reduce dissatisfaction. The ratingless evaluation is of recent origin, that offers the employee feedback on performance and/or development but do not award any grade. Ratingless appraisals have received tremendous attention recently in the media that well-known companies such as Accenture, Cargill, Gap, Eli Lilly, IBM, Microsoft, New York Life and Zappos, Deloitte, Adobe have adopted Ratingless appraisals (RLAs). A survey of 430 organizations by Human Capital Institute [HCI] in 2015 revealed

that about 12% of them had abandoned performance ratings and 25% were considering to do so. In a survey of 296 organizations by CEB Corporate Leadership Council (2016) it follows that only 6% had abandoned ratings and another 15% planned to do so. It is clear that a number of organizations have adopted ratingless appraisals are less but a trend has been set in this direction.

However, there is relatively little research conducted on the effects and effectiveness of the ratingless approach, it confirmed. Adler et al. (2016) advocated rater's training while conducting RLAs. However, this does not confirm that ratingless appraisals are effective.

### IV RATINGLESS APPRAISALS - ANALYSIS OF FEW CASE REPORTS

Very little academic research exist on ratingless appraisals but more on traditional appraisal systems may be because RLAs were never considered by the organisations. Two major aspects emerge: What are the effects of ratingless appraisals on employees and the organization and what causes those effects? There is more data about why organizations adopt ratingless appraisals and what kind of effects they hope to obtain than about the effects of ratingless appraisals. Survey by Ledford, Benson, and Lawler 2016b; Ledford, Benson and Lawler 2016c Center for Effective Organizations (CEO) confirmed that seven out of 244 had adopted ratingless appraisals, ongoing feedback and use of social media to collect feedback from peers and others to collect performance data was reported but the firms expressed difficulty in adoption of continuous ongoing feedback.

The HCI research confirmed that companies adopt ratingless appraisals to: a) Improve process effectiveness b) Increase performance c) Reduce the time and resources devoted to ratings d) Help make the process more agile. Rock and Jones (2015a, 2015b) verified the reasons for adoption of RLAs in 30 companies and stated that APEs do not gel with the changing nature of work, need better collaboration for competitive advantage, greater need to attract and retain talent - to foster more frequent and developmentally oriented performance conversations and faster employee development. It is notable that most of these aspects could potentially be achieved without implementing ratingless appraisals or by

implementing ongoing feedback alone.

Another research by CEB (2016) reported favourably relating to RLAs and hoped that employees will become more engaged and managers will spend more time coaching, conduct quality performance discussions and would ensure equitable pay. Surprisingly, survey of 10000 employees on RLAs appear to be slightly less fair than the employees who received ratings still more performance discussions were suggested. Notably, the CEB research is the only one that indicated negative effects at the time of research and later it might have yielded better results. It was observed that innovative practices like CPM, forward looking appraisals and peer input methods were also prevailing while RLAs were implemented. Jaffe et al. (2015) analysed various case reports including researches at Adobe Systems (Morris 2016); Cardinal Health (George and Holbein 2016); Microsoft (Ritchie 2016); Sears Holdings Corp. (Engler and Mason 2016); and DIRECTV reported that similar reasons hold adopting RLAs as to have a less painful and more effective performance management process, a desire to increase feedback and coaching from managers and a desire to reinforce the organization's business strategy and enhance performance culture. All the cases reported positive effects and no negative effects from the adoption of ratingless appraisals. The most sophisticated of these researches they claimed is of DIRECTV as their results indicated that there was higher employee satisfaction with performance management system, employees feel that RLAs ensure a more equitable pay distribution and the trends appear to be positive. Managers felt more empowered to make pay decisions and differentiate pay and they coached more in the new RLA system. Researches have established that performance management effectiveness and employee satisfaction are strongly correlated when quality of feedback, the frequency of feedback and to the degree to which feedback is oriented toward employee

development is far above the ground (Aguinis 2014; DeNisi and Smith 2014; Schleicher et al. 2018). Rock 2008; Rock and Jones 2015a argued that ratingless appraisals promote lowering of defensiveness, and when more frequent performance discussions are held. This enhances a sense of fairness among various stakeholders. However, do the effects of ratingless appraisals add significant incremental power to ongoing feedback and other interventions that are designed to promote effective performance and development conversations? And it requires more research they tested the following questions: 1. Do managers provide more frequent feedback to employees in a ratingless system than in a ratings-based system? 2. Do managers encourage more employee development in a ratingless system than in a rating-based system, as indicated by higher levels of coaching, more developmental feedback and more developmental goals? 3. Do managers provide higher quality feedback in a ratingless system? 4. Are employees more satisfied with a ratingless process than one with ratings? 5. Is a ratingless process associated with more favorable outcomes for employees, namely thriving and organizational commitment? 6. Does a ratingless process lead to more favorable outcomes for the organization or lead to Agile Performance Management (APM). Comprehensive research by CEO on ratingless approach also supported the utilisation of RLAs. Thus understanding RLAs in the select steel units could be explored.

Coens & Jenkins (2000) also suggested adoption of a new approach abolishing performance appraisals for the harm they have done than good. Meenakshi (2012), performance appraisal (PA) impacts highly on decisions such as promotion, allocation of financial rewards, employee development and identification of training needs. Rao (2004) suggested, apart from using joint performance discussions, ratingless appraisals be used along with 360 degree feedback. Kumari (2013) opined that there is a strong and positive relationship between perceived

fairness of performance appraisal and employee performance. Omusebe et al. (2013) investigated the effects of performance appraisal on employee productivity. Results showed a positive and significant effect between performance appraisal and employee efficiency. Phin (2015), suggested adoption of modern performance appraisal approach, a structured formal interaction between appraisers and appraisees which usually takes the form of a regular discussion using a feedback process to help strengthen the relationship between appraisers and appraisees and improved communication throughout the organization. On the whole, the case report results above demonstrate that the ability of appraisers is essential to necessary feedback and their treatment will strongly invoke appraisees' feelings of procedural justice and this may lead to an enhanced job satisfaction in the organization. LeVan (2017) suggested to adopt timely, frequent performance feedback and said that it is of higher value that leaders are charged while evaluating employee performance. He suggested that managers should provide meaningful feedback more often to the employees.

*Aon Research:* Bhattacharya (2018) revealed that Performance management systems are in a state of flux, with 67% of companies in India they have brought about major changes in their performance evaluation systems. While most companies are planning further changes in system and technology, governance, and process. About 28% are looking to make changes in managerial capability practices and that could be a potential problem. The study titled Performance Pulse of India Inc, reveals that while four out of every 10 companies surveyed said the bell curve did not help in differentiating performance, 58% of those surveyed followed the bell curve based system of performance management. About 19% of the companies had bell curve which they gave up. Firms that removed bell curve, registered positive revenue growth rate highlighted managerial accountability and managerial capability. This

success was attributed to managerial performance discussions as top enablers in achieving business objectives was reported.

Barry, Friedman and Robert (1981), Bank and Murphy (1985) focussed mainly on employees perceptions of the appraisal climate, impact of managers' attitude on performance. They concluded that these factors fairly help in understanding the usefulness of the system. Ahmed (2002) observed that Job performance factors, Managerial ability factors and situational factors also constitute important aspects of employee performance evaluation. Some other researchers' observation conclude that "a system, no matter how well designed, is doomed to fail if it is not supported by the people who use it" (Burke and Wilcox, 1969; Lazer and Wikstrom(1979).

### *Purpose*

Above case evidences in recent years helped employers to rethink about their APEs. Employers have decided to do away with the traditional methods of performance appraisal and seemed to have understood that new methods like continuous feedback and development or CPM hasve a lot of potential to increase overall organizational productivity and would help gain competitive edge. Hence, they feel abolishing outdated, traditional methods of performance appraisal practices and taking up new ways of evaluating employees would help gain greater advantage. Increasing dissatisfaction with APEs by employees and managers necessitated many employers globally including Adobe introduced a new system and named it 'Check in', Cisco rejected bell curve, and Delloitte based on Bersin's research (2018) adopted sophisticated approach of continuous feedback and development Gautam (2016), Alan C (2017) Allen, Smith J D (2017) to rethink and replace traditional methods of rating with new feedback mechanism. Josh Bersin estimated that about 70% of multinational companies are moving away from



annual appraisals that is critical to groom talent for the future and advocated the shift towards regular performance discussions covering employee development as per Harvard Business Research. Hence, need was felt by the researcher to probe into the extent of readiness, factors influencing and other aspects impacting managerial performance in the steel sector as well.

### *Research Gap*

Though some researchers examined the effectiveness of ratingless appraisals, discussed the effect RLAs generate on the employee's performance; and benefit derived by the adoption of the same. In spite of this none of the researchers have analyzed the perceptions of managers especially in the steel sector and researches have not taken place to explore this aspect in this regard. This is yet to be explored in the Indian Steel Sector. This research primarily focuses to fill this gap as a fillip.

### *Objectives*

1. To examine the factors influencing managers' of Indian select steel units on their performance evaluation system.
2. To elicit responses of managers in the select steel units about their performance evaluation system.
3. To analyse the impact of appraisal ratings and other aspects on managerial performance in select steel units

### *Hypothesis*

#### *Hypothesis 1:*

H<sub>0</sub>: Appraisal ratings do not impact the performance of managers in the select steel units.

H<sub>1</sub>: Appraisal ratings highly impact the performance of managers in the select steel units.

#### *Hypothesis 2:*

H<sub>0</sub>: Aspects like Rewards and Recognition, Interpersonal factors and managerial attitude,

Training and development, Process of evaluation, Rater accuracy, Communication and feedback are not positively related/ impacting managerial performance.

H<sub>1</sub>: Aspects like Rewards and Recognition, Interpersonal factors and managerial attitude, Training and development, Process of evaluation, Rater accuracy, Communication and feedback are positively related/ impacting managerial performance.

## V METHODOLOGY

The present research investigates the nature of ratings prevalent and its impact on managerial performance. Also, identify factors that managers feel are influencing their performance and of the firm.

Primary data was collected through a survey covering 612 managers of select Indian steel units using structured questionnaire and interviews were conducted for 90 percent of them. The secondary data was collected using electronic and physical sources. Totally 670 questionnaires were distributed and about 58 were not usable. Hence the exact sample size is 612. The random sampling technique was adopted. Likert's 5 point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) through Strongly Agree (5) was used.

### *Data Analysis*

The primary data collected are analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Cronbach's Alpha Criterion was applied to test the reliability and values ranging from 0.929 and 0.951 were obtained. On the basis of nature of data both parametric and non parametric statistical tests like Pearson's correlation, Factor analysis and Multiple Regression technique are administered on the data to understand the nature of existing performance evaluations. Managers were approached randomly to elicit their views about their performance evaluations and comments to improve APEs were also collected and analysed. Results are presented

in the end.

### VI Results

This research also found that employees were well educated, working for over two decades. Equal employment opportunity for females have been found out by the researcher. Managers in the younger age groups (25 to 45 years in the steel sector) were found to be highly concerned about

their APEs who strongly feel that the APE system of evaluation is ineffective and does not fairly measure their performance and not much useful to receive the benefits out of their performance evaluations. They insisted on the greater need to adopt modern methods like 360 degree feedback, performance discussions, balanced score card etc [1-19].

## DATA ANALYSIS USING WEIGHTED MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Table 1.0

Perception of managers on various aspects of APEs

S. No	Dimensions	Group A		Group B	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Rewards and Recognition for managers					
1	Rewards for professional excellence	4.71	0.565	4.35	0.796
2	Recognition of talent	4.40	0.568	4.14	0.790
3	Encourage and support creativity and innovation	4.38	0.821	3.74	0.917
4	Reward revision helps to increase executive manpower productivity	4.09	0.928	4.11	0.952
5	Research and development/ organisation sponsored training opportunities at work	4.01	0.996	3.94	0.978
Interpersonal factors and managerial attitude					
1	Self ownership for expected output	3.74	1.3	3.46	1.394
2	Positive attitude towards achieving goals	3.65	1.286	3.42	1.348
3	Initiation to take work responsibilities	3.59	1.33	3.39	1.335
4	Flexibility at work place	3.56	1.376	3.38	1.25
5	Peer support and Personal space	3.48	1.333	3.37	1.283
Training and development					
1	Providing continual training and development	3.32	1.428	3.13	1.405
2	To train raters on the use of appraisal system, conduct performance discussions	3.29	1.43	3.12	1.47
3	Opportunities for learning	3.13	1.385	3.11	1.43
4	Off-shore training and planning	3.13	1.424	3.1	1.471
5	Specialization and managerial skill development for second line leadership	3.13	1.42	3.0	1.438

Rater accuracy					
1	Measuring executive's contribution on the job	<b>4.15</b>	0.949	<b>3.42</b>	1.407
2	Based on rater evaluations	<b>3.66</b>	1.254	<b>3.33</b>	1.292
3	Influence by Personal factors and prejudices	<b>3.54</b>	1.381	<b>3.33</b>	1.366
4	Influenced by errors based on age, gender or caste	<b>3.47</b>	1.409	<b>3.31</b>	1.394
5	Multi-rater systems can be used	<b>3.46</b>	1.428	3.46	1.428
Factors influencing executive performance appraisal practices					
1	Implementation process of the system	<b>3.53</b>	1.438	3.45	1.443
2	Interpersonal relationships	3.39	1.386	3.46	1.413
3	Rater accuracy	<b>3.51</b>	1.353	3.27	1.413
4	Informational factors	3.12	1.423	3.31	1.365
5	Executive attitudes	3.43	1.376	<b>3.52</b>	<b>1.312</b>
6	Rewards and Recognition	<b>3.55</b>	<b>1.337</b>	3.30	1.423
7	Training and development	<b>3.57</b>	1.427	3.45	1.405

Source: Primary data/ Questionnaire

It is noted from the Table 1.0 above managers felt that rewards for the professional excellence and recognition of talents would motivate and encourage them to achieve higher levels of productivity that it needs to be ensured. Best performers need to be encouraged. Interpersonal factors and managerial attitude is more important to bring out the full potential in them and to improve their performance. Training and development is another variable influencing their performance. They expressed that there is an urgent need to strengthen the L&D machinery, train appraisers on performance discussions and the existing efforts on training need to be geared up further. Further, they feel appraisal system should provide relevant inputs and the same needs to be translated into training initiatives in both the organizations and APEs need to be modified. They felt that the present system should give way for fair rating mechanisms, rating be made as per the methodical inputs from 360 degree feedback and assessment centres etc that need to be adopted and bell curve and present rating method needs to

be replaced with a fair method that ensures justice to the appraisee and appraiser has the satisfaction of utilizing the system for fair and just evaluation. They urged for bringing a change in the policies and procedures that ensures complete explanation about the organisation's expectation and ensure performance improvement.

It is noted from the table above, that the prime factors Rewards and Recognition (3.55), executive attitudes (3.52) Feedback (3.52), Promotion (3.53), rater accuracy (3.51) Implementation process (3.53) and Training and development (3.57) in the steel units. Respondents stressed on the need to share the clear methodology for decisions on promotions based on actual performance and not on normalized appraisal score alone. Moreover, managers stressed the need for timely feedback and opined that would help improve their performance and the organisation as a whole.

The correlation between the variables on appraisals in select steel units is observed as highly positive and significant at 1% level of significance. The specific positive relationship

between the variables observed between rewards and recognition and Interpersonal factors and executive attitude is ( $r=0.675$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), Training and development ( $r=0.547$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), process of evaluation ( $r=0.497$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), Rater accuracy ( $r=0.504$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and Communication and Feedback ( $r=0.514$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) are found to be highly significant at 1% level of significance [20-40].

Similarly, the correlation between the Interpersonal factors like collaboration, cooperation and executive attitude and Training and development is observed at ( $r=0.639$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), process of evaluation ( $r=0.518$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), Rater accuracy ( $r=0.575$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and Informational factors and Feedback ( $r=0.589$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and found highly significant at 1% level of significance.

The correlation between Training and development and process of the PA system is observed at ( $r=0.529$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), Rater accuracy ( $r=0.597$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and Communication and Feedback ( $r=0.737$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and found highly significant at 1% level of significance.

The correlation between process of evaluation and Rater accuracy is noted at ( $r=0.829$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and Communication and Feedback ( $r=0.544$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and found highly significant at 1% level of significance. Finally the correlation between Rater accuracy and communication and Feedback is observed as ( $r=0.603$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and found highly significant at 1% level of significance. This indicates that a highly positive correlation is observed between the variables of PAS in the select steel units. Null hypothesis based on the above for both Hypothesis 1 and 2 stands rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted at 1% level of significance. [41-45]

The multiple correlation coefficients are 0.775 measures the degree of relationship between the actual values and the predicted values that are obtained as a linear combination found to be quite strongly and positively related. **The Coefficient of Determination R-square** measures

the goodness-of-fit in terms of the proportion of the variation in the dependent variables explained by the fitted regression equation. Thus, the value of **R square** is 0.586, about 58.6 **percent** of the variation is on the dependent variable Y. Independent variables rewards and recognition ( $X_1$ ), Interpersonal factors and executive attitude ( $X_2$ ), Training and development ( $X_3$ ), process of the PA system ( $X_4$ ), Rater accuracy ( $X_5$ ), Informational factors and Feedback ( $X_6$ ) as the independent variables and R square value is significant at 1 % level. The multiple regression equation is:  $Y = 13.848 + 0.323X_1 + 0.233X_2 + 0.355X_3 + 0.037X_4 + 0.115X_5 + 0.254X_6$

Here the coefficients of  $X_3$  **0.355** and  $X_1$  0.323 represents the highly significant effect of training and development, rewards and recognition on the performance of the managers and the firm holding all other measures APEs practices as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that score would increase by 0.323 or 0.355 for every unit increase in performance and this coefficient value is not significant at 5% level. Similarly for Interpersonal factors and executive attitude ( $X_2$ ), Communication and Feedback ( $X_6$ ) has the highly significant effect on the performance and observed with co efficient values are significant at 1% Level. On the other hand, it is noted that, process of the appraisal system ( $X_4$ ), recorded the coefficient at 0.037 represents positive and nominal level of effect on the performance of the managers in steel industry and the co-efficient is not significant at 5% level of significance. Statistically though Rater accuracy ( $X_5$ ) recorded the coefficient of 0.115 represents the average level of impact on the performance of the managers in select steel units and is significant at 1% level. During interviews it was confirmed that the rating method currently used need to be changed to a better system of 360 feedback, assessment centres, and continuous performance discussions was confirmed by a large group of 83 percent of managers during interviews remaining



felt rating method is good and needs no change. Finally, the variables are highly correlated and are influencing appraisals of managers.

## VII CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the managers in the steel units hold contemporary thought processes and are updated, in line with the changes in the work environment. They realised the need to discard stack rating and used a better method for fair and just evaluation so that the deserved benefits pertaining to HR decisions like promotions, pay hikes, equitable pay, rewards and recognition etc could be affected if the managers are trained properly on how to implement the appraisal system. Also, frequency of performance discussions oriented towards their development, their attitude to up skill themselves and their feeling to contribute more towards organisational performance is observed to be very good.

Although the innovative performance management practices assure a major transformation in the performance management process, as concluded by Ledford and Lawler 2015, "The most important predictor of effective performance management has always been, and will always be, whether there is honest, open, two-way conversations between managers and subordinates" Similarly, DeNisi and Murphy (2017) concluded in their research of performance appraisal research "... it has become clear that organisations will not make progress without considering, why appraisals are done in the first place, and how the climate, culture, norms and beliefs in organizations shape the appraisal process and the outcomes of appraisals" . Logically, continuous feedback facilitates productive two-way development conversations, but ratings remain important for administrative purposes. This research in the select steel units also supports this view.

## VIII SUGGESTIONS

Steel sector organisations may initiate the

process of CPM or ratingless evaluations do away with APEs to keep up the trend set by multinational organisations. Learnings from Adobe, Deloitte, Microsoft etc benchmarking with these organisations customise according to the culture and climate setting of the organisation would benefit the employees and managers as a whole and minimize their dissatisfaction about APEs.

## IX AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

CPM effectiveness, ratingless evaluations research, impact on organisational health and satisfaction of employees and other aspects coupled with 360 feedback could be explored. Comparative research before and after implementation would also give lot of insights into the same.

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