

(c) **Recency Vs. Primacy Effect.** Recency refers to the proximity or closeness to appraisal period. Generally an employee takes it easy for the whole year and does little to get the punishment. However, come appraisal time, he becomes very active. Suddenly there is an aura of efficiency, files move faster, tasks are taken seriously and the bosses are constantly appraised of the progress and problems. All this creates an illusion of high efficiency and plays a significant role in the appraisal decisions. The supervisor gets railroaded into believing that the employee is alert and hence, rates him high. In reality though it refers only to his two to three months' performance.

The opposite of recency is primacy effect. Here the initial impression influences the decision on year end appraisal irrespective of whether the employee has been able to keep up the initial impression or not. First impression is the last impression is perhaps the most befitting description of this error.

In both cases the supervisors get influenced by a sample of on the job behaviour. However, if appraisal is periodic and continuous such errors can be controlled to some extent.

Problems of Criteria

Appraisal has to be against certain criteria. If a discrepancy between expected and actual performance is pointed out, the question is whether the expected was fully defined and communicated to the employee. In the absence of such an attempt the appraisal reports can be questioned. The issue basically refers to the job description. It is true that jobs can be clearly defined at the lower levels in the organisational hierarchy. However, as one goes up in the hierarchy, it becomes more and more difficult to clearly specify the tasks one is supposed to perform. This is a difficult issue. Hence, in many cases, the focus for higher position shifts from tasks to abilities or job related attributes and overall responsibility of the department/unit etc.

To some extent the problem of criteria is not so acute in engineering, production or process industries as compared to service industry. In the former the output is tangible and can easily be accounted for. While in the service industry the satisfaction of recipients is more important. Satisfaction is purely a subjective feeling and hence, it is hard to find a common solution that will satisfy all. In one study Rao, Saiyadain and Sreenivas Rao (1982) noted that while Doordarshan and Radio did mount a series of programmes for people, the satisfaction of the masses with a number of programmes was very low. If one goes by sheer number in any given year the output is high, but on the other hand people's satisfaction being low would militate against the large number. Should we thus, evaluate the performance of the programme or the quality of those programmes?

Similarly, it is difficult to identify clear-cut criteria for the white collar employees as compared to the blue collar ones. A blue collar employees has a fixed task to perform against which his outputs would have to be evaluated. A white collar employee (i.e., a clerk) may find it difficult to say what actually he did on a given day.