Training and Competency

Evolution of the Human Resource Function in a TQ Organization:

The role of people in the workplace has changed dramatically over time. Prior to the industrial revolution skilled craftspeople had a great deal of interest in the quality of their product because their families’ livelihood depended upon the success of the business. With the introduction of the Scientific Management concepts of Frederick Taylor (in which the execution of work was separated from planning and quotas and time in motion studies prevailed), a dramatic increase in productivity was achieved. However this increase in productivity came at the expense of quality as the responsibility for quality shifted from workers to inspectors, and at the expense of employee relations as relations became adversarial and unions thrived. Perhaps the most significant drawback of the introduction of the Scientific Management concept was that it failed to make use of an organization’s most important asset; the knowledge and creativity of its workforce. The scientific management concept assumes that people are simply part of the process, that processes need to be controlled externally to be productive and that management needed to control carefully the work done by people.

In a TQ organization this thinking has been replaced by a more progressive model in which people are involved in the design and improvement of processes, workers themselves control the process and management must obtain employee commitment in the management of the processes. The focus on client satisfaction and the need for responsiveness has brought about changes to the ways in which work is designed and employees deployed.

One of the key roles of the Human Resources Management function within the TQ environment is the design and management of a high performance workforce. This has resulted in a change to the scope of their functions, especially with regards to their increased role in strategic planning. Human Resources are no longer considered a support function but should be actively involved in the strategic planning process. When an organization is considering changes to its core functions, it is essential that the organization examine the impacts which this change will have on the existing and future workforce.

- Will employees have the essential skills to perform the tasks?
- How will jobs need to be changed to provide employees with the opportunity to develop to their full potential; to the benefit of the organization as well as the employee?
- How will the organization attract, develop, challenge and retain employees to ensure an adequate work force?
- How will employees be encouraged to participate in process improvement and decision making to enable the organization to take advantage of their talents?
- How will the organization recognize and reward those behaviours which support the organization?

Whether the Human Resources activities are carried out by a Human Resources department or a Manager of a department, you must deal with the same decisions related to planning, staffing, appraising, compensating and training and development. The choices made are critical to the success of the organizations overall vision for the future.
Training and Competency

Job Descriptions:

The Importance of Job Descriptions

Designing an effective job description is the cornerstone of so much of what we do within a QMS. A job description is a list of the duties, responsibilities, reporting relationships and working conditions of a job. The job description serves many purposes in an organization:

- Aids in Human Resources planning: Knowing the requirements of a job is essential to planning future staffing needs.
- Recruitment and Selection: The requirements identified will be used during recruitment and selection to ensure that appropriate candidates are hired.
- Compensation: The responsibilities and duties spelled out in the job description may be used to determine appropriate compensation and ensure pay equity.
- Performance Appraisal: The criteria used to assess employees’ competency and performance should be directly related to the duties, responsibilities and core competencies identified in the job description.
- Labour Relations: Approved job descriptions become the basis for job classifications, wage bargaining, etc. in a unionized environment.
- Training, Development and Career Management: By comparing the skills required in a potential position against those present in an employee, the manager may develop training plans and career development recommendations.

Writing Job Descriptions

Labour laws do not specify the format or what must appear in a job description. Most job descriptions will include the following:

- Job Identification – Job Title, Job status, Job Code, Date prepared, Prepared by, Approved by, Title of Immediate Supervisor, Job location (division, facility, department), Salary/Pay information (grade/level, pay range)
- Job Summary – Describes the general nature of the job listing only the major function or activities.
- Relationships – The internal and external relationships (Report To, Supervises, Works with, External Interactions)
- Responsibilities, and duties – Presents a detailed list of the job’s actual responsibilities and duties including those related to the QMS. Should be in sufficient detail so that training requirements and performance appraisal criteria can be defined and the qualifications required can be justified.
- Authority – Defines the limits of the jobholder’s authority to make decisions, supervise others and spend money.
- Standards of Performance – Stating the standards expected in each of the job’s responsibilities and duties. Define for each duty what constitutes acceptable performance.
- Working Conditions and Environment – General working conditions including noise levels, temperature, lighting, degree of privacy, frequency of interruptions, hours of work, amount of travel, hazards present in the workplace.
- Job Specifications: Skill factors (Educational Requirements, Professional qualifications, registration/licensing by regulatory bodies, Experience Requirements, Communication skills required) and Effort factors (Physical and Mental demands of the position).

Job descriptions should be clearly written and accurately portray the work done. Responsibilities should include scope of authority where appropriate (i.e. supervises within a department vs. supervises the entire lab). Be specific. Be brief. Ensure that the descriptions leave no ambiguity in the minds of the jobholder.
The Hiring Process:

Meeting and exceeding customer requirements begins with hiring the right people whose skills and attitudes will support and enhance the organization’s objectives. Hiring an individual consists of two key functions: **Recruitment and Selection**

Because quality is so closely linked to the quality of the organization's human resources, recruitment is a key HR function. **Recruitment** may be performed internally or externally. The purposes of recruitment are to:

- To ensure that an adequate pool of candidates is generated at a minimum possible cost
- Help ensure the success rate of the selection process by minimizing unqualified applicants
- Help to achieve the organization’s legal and social obligations regarding the demographic composition of the workforce
- Attract candidates who meet the job requirements and are suitable to the organization's unique environment and culture

A process for recruitment is depicted below:

Job openings are identified through Human Resources planning or through specific needs identified by Managers and a human resources requisition form is created. The job requirements are determined by reviewing the job description and job specifications, and the manager's comments regarding culture and fit within the department. Appropriate recruiting sources and methods are selected (external posting in papers, internet, internal posting, head hunter, etc), to generate a pool of qualified candidates. This is all done within the constraints placed on recruitment.

Constraints may include:

- Organizational policies and plans – Policies such as promote-from-within, compensation policies, employment status policies. Organizational plans which may place constraints on the recruitment process include the HR plan, the Employment Equity plan and the recruitment budget.
- The job requirements – The more highly skilled the position is the more time will be required to fill the position, the greater the search area, the greater the compensation required and the greater the chances that an external search may be required.
- Recruiter habits – The recruitment habits of the individual (where and how they've recruited in the past)
- Inducements of competitors – May change what you choose to promote in the position or how you are prepared to compensate.
- Environmental conditions – Changes in the marketplace, unemployment rate, economy and legislation, labour shortages
Selection is the second phase of the hiring process. Selection is the process of choosing individuals with the relevant qualifications to fill job openings. The process of selection is depicted in the diagram below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Reception of Applicants</th>
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**Step 1: Preliminary Reception of Applicants** – In these days of shortages it is important to note that selection of employees is a two-way street. Not only do organizations select employees, but employees also select organizations. Initial contact with potential employees may be in person or in writing through the HR function or departmental managers within an organization. The job application form, a well crafted resume and cover letter, or an internet posting is frequently the first step in the contact.

**Step 2: Initial Applicant Screening** – Depending on the size of your organization this initial screening may be performed by either your HR department or a department manager. Applicant screening consists of a review of all application forms and resumes to determine if potential candidates meet the “must have” selection criteria. Those candidates most clearly meeting the selection criteria will be granted further consideration.

**Step 3: Selection Testing** – This is a common screening tool used in many organizations such as laboratories where highly skilled individuals are sought. Tests assess specific job-related skills (such as slide reviews), general intelligence, personality characteristics, mental abilities, and interests. Testing techniques may involve a demonstration of skills, a simulation, or a written exercise.

**Step 4: The Selection Interview** – The selection interview involves a process of two-way communication between the applicant and the interviewer, and serves to predict future job performance on the basis of the applicants’ oral responses. Interviews enable the employer to fill in any gaps in information on resumes and applications and supplement the information gleaned from selection testing. They also reveal additional information not available from any of the previous sources. The objectives of the interview are to:

- Assess the applicant’s qualifications
- Observe applicant behaviours
- Ascertain how applicants have acted in the past as a predictor for their future abilities
- Provide the applicant with information about the position
- Promote the organization as an attractive option
- Assessing the applicants ability to mesh within your organizational culture
Interviewing techniques which work well to obtain this type of information include situational interviews (projection of what their behaviour would be in a given situation), and behavioural interviews (revealing how they have behaved in the past in similar situations as a predictor of future behaviour). Depending on the level of the position, interviews may be one-on-one, panel interviews or even computer selection interviews and more than one interview may be conducted.

**Step 5: Background Investigation and Reference Checking** - Most organizations perform reference checks on all applicants seriously being considered for a position. Something as simple as a telephone call may serve to verify references. In an environment such as ours it is also critical to ensure that the credentials of all professionals being considered are verified. Credentials may be verified by requesting copies of the appropriate degrees or registrations, contacting the professional college representing the individual or a foreign credentialing agency. Permission should be obtained in writing from the applicant (on job application) to perform reference checks.

**Step 6: The Supervisory Interview** – If the initial interview is conducted by a Human Resources department the narrowed list of applicants should also be interviewed by the technical department head. This is essential since the supervisor tends to know the technical aspects of the job best and is therefore better qualified to assess their job knowledge and skills. They are also the best person to answer the applicants questions regarding the job. This also provides the supervisor with the opportunity to assess the applicants fit within their department and to approve the applicant recommended.

**Step 7: Realistic Job Previews** – Usually performed as part of the supervisory interview, this is the supervisor’s opportunity to present realistic information regarding the job, the organizations expectations and the workplace environment. By being up front with the applicants regarding the position, the company and the work environment the organization will increase the odds of the employee remaining with the organization.

**Step 8: Making the Hiring Decision** – All the data obtained is compiled and reviewed to determine the best candidate for the position.

**Step 9: Candidate Notification** – A job offer is extended to the successful applicant. This may be done by phone if required and followed up by a formal written job offer letter. The job offer letter should spell out the terms of employment and duplicates should be signed by the employer and employee. Once the successful candidate has accepted the offer extended all other candidates should be notified.

**Training and Orientation Programs:**

Under an ISO style QMS the organization has a requirement to ensure that “personnel performing work affecting product quality shall be competent on the basis of appropriate education, training, skills and experience”. In order to accomplish this, the organization must:

- Determine the necessary competence for personnel performing any work affecting quality,
- Provide training or take other actions to satisfy these needs,
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken,
- Ensure that its personnel are aware of the relevance and importance of their activities and how they contribute to the achievement of the quality objectives, and
- Maintain appropriate records of education, training, skills and experience.

Employee training is required to take place during or immediately after the completion of orientation programs, at regular or periodic intervals thereafter and whenever the organization or department implements changes to policies, processes or tasks.
Training and Competency

The first step in meeting training requirements is the preparation of effective job descriptions. Job descriptions are normally prepared after an analysis of the job and will include the key responsibilities and competencies within the position. The job description is then used throughout the hiring process to ensure that candidates selected have the necessary competencies. Secondly effective procedures are required to ensure that consistent training is provided to produce more consistent, predictable and reliable outcomes. Once an employee has been hired, one of the key factors in their success will be ensuring that they are provided with the needed information and skills to adequately fulfill their duties. Such skills are provided through:

- Organizational Orientation Programs
- Job Specific Training Programs
- The provision or encouragement of Continuing Education, and
- Ongoing Competency Assessment and Remediation

**Employee Orientation** is a procedure for providing new employees with basic background information about the organization and the job they are to perform. Orientation programs serve to instil in all employees the prevailing attitudes, standards, values and behaviours which are expected by the organization and to ease the employee gradually into the workplace. Programs can range from brief and informal to lengthy formal programs. All orientation occurring should be documented as part of the employees’ training record. Items which may be included in orientation programs include:

- Organizational Overview including Mission, Vision & Values
- Organizational structure and key personnel
- Organizational Human Resources Policies and Procedures
- Payroll & benefits administration procedures
- Facilities Information and Tour
- Organizational Health and Safety Policies and Procedures
- Occupational Health and Safety Training
- Workplace Hazardous Materials Training
- Fire Safety Training
- Quality Management System Training
- Customer Service Training
- Departmental & Job Specific Orientation by Supervisor

**Development of Training Programs**

The development of an effective training program to administer job specific training consists of a five step process:

**Step 1: Needs Analysis** – During a needs analysis the specific job performance skills required are identified (from a job description and/or work instructions) and each potential trainee is then assessed against the needs identified. Another essential part of this step is the development of specific, measurable knowledge and performance standards against which success of training may be verified. Performance standards may be determined based upon the standards obtained by existing employees. For each employee a training plan should detail the training needs identified and dates for when the training is provided.

**Step 2: Instructional Design** – Compilation and production of the actual training program, including learning materials, exercises and activities.

**Step 3: Validation** – Administration of the program to a representative audience with remedial actions implemented to hone the sessions.
Step 4: Implementation – Administration of the training using the selected techniques

Step 5: Evaluation of Training – To review and improve on the training programs effectiveness.

Job Training

Training is provided to give the new employee or an existing employee the skills/competencies they need to perform their actual duties. Even when a candidate is chosen who possesses the educational background and qualifications to fill the position it is seldom that their past experience will be a perfect match to their new duties. They also will need training to ensure that they follow the policies and protocols specific to your organization. Under an ISO Style QMS, the organization is required to assess the employees’ educational background and job experience to determine any gaps between their abilities and the job requirements and core competencies which have been defined. Once gaps have been identified, the organization must plan to provide the necessary training to close the gaps.

While being trained the employee should read the appropriate related procedures, observe a demonstration of the procedure by a qualified trainer, practice the procedure under supervision and then successfully complete an exercise which demonstrates comprehension and application of what has been learned.

Various techniques may be used to administer training. Such techniques include:

- On-the-Job-Training – involves having a person learn a job by actually performing it under the study of an experienced supervisor. The most common type of On-the-Job Training is the standard coaching and understudy method. In order for On-the-Job training to be successful, trainers themselves should be provided instructional training.
- Job Instruction Training – involves using a listing of each job’s basic tasks, along with the key points, in order to provide step-by-step training for employees. Training checklists are an example of job instruction training.
- Lecturing – May serve as an effective means of delivering information
- Audiovisual Techniques – Demonstration of techniques etc. using films, videotapes etc.
- Videoconferencing – May work well within multi-site operations

Within a medical laboratory there are normally hundreds or even thousands of procedures which the employee must be familiar with. A well written procedure must therefore be the cornerstone of an effective training program. One of the easiest ways to make this happen is to create a training program which is procedural based. For each bench or task performed within the organization a training checklist should be created which lists the specific items required to demonstrate that the employee is capable of performing the required tasks. For each item on the checklist the procedure which describes the tasks that the employee needs to know is identified. Dates training is conducted, the duration of the training and the nature of the activities used to verify training success should be indicated on the checklist. The checklist should be signed and dated by both the trainer(s) and the employee.
Training and Competency

**Verification of Training Success**

It is not enough to simply administer training and assume that the employee "got it". As part of the process of training the trainer needs to verify and document that the employee "got it" and can apply it. It is good practice to document the method of verification used on the checklist. General methods for verification of training success include:

- Simulation tests (such as blind specimens, EQA specimens or repeat specimens)
- Written or Oral tests
- Observation of procedure being performed with successful outcome
- Use of Case studies, problem and troubleshooting scenarios or other situations related to the procedure
- Documentation of all critical activities related to the procedure (ie. was the employee capable of recognizing and reacting to error codes on the analyser, did they respond to out of control QC results, etc.)
- Assessment against actionable objectives established for the training (can they demonstrate the actions sought such as pipeting, explaining a method theory, calculating a result, etc.)

**Continuing Education Programs:**

We live in a world of rapid change. New laboratory technologies emerge daily and our employees must scramble to keep up with the pace of this change. To continue to function adequately and to develop the individuals within our organization, we must create learning organizations. Many organizations have implemented continuing education programs wherein portions or all of the employee’s expenses for CE are paid for by the organization. This practice enables individuals to remain viable employees, which is win-win situation for the employee and the organization.

Continuing education programs may seek to ensure that:

- an individuals skills and knowledge remain current for the position they are in
- an individuals skills and knowledge are refreshed
- an individual acquires new skills and knowledge for a position they are being put into
- an individual acquires new skills and knowledge for potential professional development

Continuing education programs may include:

- In house seminars and rounds
- In house training on new instrumentation, technology
- External courses, seminars and conventions
- On-line courses
- Computer courses
- Subscriptions to periodicals
- Memberships in professional organizations
- Industry newsletters
- Reference libraries
- Open learning centers
QMS System Training:

It is a requirement under an ISO style accreditation to ensure that all employees receive training in the operation of the QMS. This training should be administered initially during the implementation of the QMS to all employees. The program may then become part of your organization’s orientation program with additional training being conducted across the organization should changes be implemented to the QMS. Records of QMS training should be maintained.

QMS Training should include:

- History of Quality and Evolution of QMS
- QMS requirements (may be based on NCCLS QSE’s or ISO system requirements)
  - Management Responsibilities
  - Resource Management
  - Service Realization
  - Monitoring, Measurement and Analysis
- Documentation Structure
- Your Organizations Quality Policy Statement and Objectives
  - Their role in assisting the organization meet objectives
  - Your commitment to quality, customer focus, employee involvement
  - Endorsement of Senior Management
- Your Organizations Quality Policies
- Client Focus and Customer Service

Competency Assessment:

According to ISO competency is defined as a “demonstrated capability to apply knowledge and skills”. As a laboratory we have an obligation to ensure that those individuals entrusted to perform work which impacts upon the quality of our services are competent to perform the tasks they have been given. A few myths to dispel:

1. Maintaining a professional designation is evidence of competency.

   - Not necessarily. Having a professional designation indicates that you have met the knowledge requirements and have served sufficient hours within the field to theoretically discharge the responsibilities. It does not assess how “capable” you are to apply the knowledge and skills you have obtained. In situations where a professional body goes into the work place to assess how you have applied the skills, this would represent a more realistic assessment of competency.
   - While competency can not fully be established by the maintenance of a professional designation, it may be one of the components of your competency assessment program (but it shouldn’t be the only component). Verification of a persons right to work within the field is also an essential practice within a laboratory.
Training and Competency

2. Competency need only be assessed upon hiring.

- Assessment of competency upon hiring is absolutely essential to ensure that the quality of work performed will meet with the standards of your laboratory. Initial orientation and task specific training programs serve to provide the individual with the workplace specific skills for your organization. When followed by verification of training success, this training becomes the employees first competency assessment. However, establishing that an individual is competent today does not necessarily mean that competency will be maintained throughout their term of employment. Competency may lapse due to:
  - Extended leaves from the profession
  - Introduction of newer technology
  - Changes in theoretical knowledge requirements
  - Changes in the mental or physical health of the individual
  - Changes in the job requirements

- Competency assessment must therefore become an ongoing activity during the term of employment. As a minimum competency should be assessed at a frequency defined by your organization. Competency should also be assessed when any of the above situations occur and whenever questions are raised regarding the competency of the individual.


- They can if they are worded carefully. If you have a performance appraisal scheme which assesses performance on such attributes as ability to show up at work on time, ability to process work volume, ability to coexist with fellow workers etc., it really does not assess the individuals competency to apply the knowledge and skills they have. It assesses whether or not they represent the model of a “good worker”.
- If your performance appraisals is specific to the individuals ability to do the work (applying the knowledge and skills they have) or if your performance appraisal includes such a component, then it may be used as a part of competency assessment

**Why Should we Perform Competency Assessment?**

The laboratory has a legal obligation to ensure that its employees are competent to assume their responsibilities. As an organization concerned with ensuring the best possible outcomes for patients, it is a dereliction of duty to wait until a healthcare provider, patient or regulatory agency tells you that one of your employees is not competent to perform the duties they have been assigned. Competency assessment is therefore the organizations means to ensure the safety of patients and to ensure they are protected from liability in the event of an occurrence.
Developing a Competency Assessment Model

The diagrams below depict the steps to take in designing and implementing a competency assessment program:

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<th>Steps</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Program Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ensure core competencies for each position are defined within job descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Determine the critical to quality activities performed for each key task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Establish objective standards to assess ability to meet key core competencies identified and to perform critical to quality tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Assess the current practices in place in your laboratory to determine if current practices may constitute an acceptable form of assessment. For example if you are monitoring Cytotechnology QA Data or data entry error rates, performing slide reviews for educational purposes or as part of EQA programs, performing in-house training which includes a step for verification of training, etc. Wherever possible take advantage of what is already in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If current practices do not quite adequately assess competency determine any additional appropriate assessment options (see list of potential options below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Determine the routine frequency of assessment and define situations where frequency may be increased (based upon poor performance, during probationary periods, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Document competency assessment policy, process and procedures. Create a standardised form for use in preparing an annual summary of C/A activities and actions taken for each employee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Define within protocols what appropriate remedial actions may consist of in the event that gaps are identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Conduct training for all managers and staff and Implement Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Training and Competency

The flow chart below defines the basic steps involved in administering a competency assessment program:

1. **New person hired**
   - Company Orientation and departmental training conducted & verified
   - Initial competency assessed against competency criteria

2. **Gaps in competency identified?**
   - Yes: Implement remedial action plan for gaps identified and reassess
   - No: Gaps in competency remediated?

3. **Gaps in competency remediated?**
   - Yes: Individual cleared for unsupervised work. File records of assessment in personnel file
   - No: Assess options for work assignment/employment

4. **Existing Employee**
   - Restrict Work functions (if required) during remediation

5. **Competency confirmed?**
   - Yes: File records of assessment in personnel file
   - No: Reassess competency at defined interval
What Activities Constitute Acceptable Means of Assessing Competency?

There are many activities already being performed in the laboratory which may be used as part of a competency assessment program. Some of these programs include:

- Professional Registration
- Performance Appraisals – with a component which assesses competency to perform assigned tasks.
- Training and Retraining Verification Results
- Records of Continuing Education
- Quality Indicator Data – some indicators such as Cytotechnologist error rates, data entry error rates, etc. may assess individual competence
- Occurrence Management records
- Slide reviews
- External Quality Assessment Performance if related to the individuals performance
- Driving abstracts for courier positions
- Oral or written quizzes
- Observation During Performance of Work
- Web based training and competency assessment programs
- Employee Presentations of theory

A good competency assessment program should be focused on verifying the core requirements identified in the job description for each position. Records of competency assessment must be maintained. A good way to meet this requirement is to prepare, on an ongoing basis, an annual summary of each person’s competency assessment activities. This summary should be filed in the employee’s secured confidential training file.

The Performance Appraisal:

The need of the laboratory to develop and retain high quality individuals is critical to the provision of high quality service. Effective performance appraisal schemes are critical to aiding in this development of employees. Records of appraisals must be maintained.

Performance appraisals are an essential process as they:

- Provide information upon which promotion and salary decisions can be made
- Provide an opportunity for managers and employees to review work related behaviours
- Enable the Manager and employee to work together to develop a plan to correct identified deficiencies
- Allows the Manager to reinforce those behaviours that the employee is doing well.

The basic steps involved in performance appraisal are setting performance expectations, assessing the employee’s actual performance relative to these standards and providing feedback to the employee.

Setting performance expectations – ensuring the job duties and standards are clear to all. The job description can serve as a starting point to identify the basic responsibilities of the individual. The organization must then agree on an objective measurement of performance. The measurement must become known to the employee.
Assessing the employee’s actual performance relative to these standards – Appraisals are conducted with the aid of a formal method such as:

- Graphic Rating Scales – traits or tasks are listed with a range of performance values to choose from (such as unsatisfactory to outstanding)
- Alternation Ranking Method – Ranking employees from best to worst on a particular trait/task
- Paired comparison Method – Ranking employees by making a chart of all possible pairs of employees for each trait and indicating which is the better employee of the pair
- Forced Distribution Method – Similar to grading on a curve. Predetermined percentages of employees are placed in various performance categories
- Critical Incident Method – Keeping a record of uncommonly good or undesirable examples of an employee’s work-related behaviour and reviewing it with the employee at predetermined times
- Management by Objectives Methods – Involves setting specific measurable goals with each employee and then periodically reviewing the progress made

Providing feedback to the employee - that will motivate them to either improve or to continue to perform well.

The Five Main Problems with Performance Appraisals

1. Unclear Standards – When unclear standards such as quality of work, quantity of work, creativity etc., are used the appraisal will be left too open for interpretation and subjectivity. This may be resolved by establishing objective standards or by including descriptive statements which define what represent performance at a particular level such as unacceptable, outstanding, etc.
2. Halo Effect – The rating of an employee on one trait biases the rating of that employee on other traits (for example an employee who doesn’t “get along with others” may be rated poorly on all other traits. Being aware of the tendency to do this is usually enough to enable a supervisor to avoid it.
3. Central Tendency – Tendency to rate all employees the same way – Average. This can be avoided by ranking employees.
4. Leniency or Strictness – Tendency to rate all employees either high or low.
5. Appraisal bias – Tendency to allow individual differences such as age, race and sex to affect the appraisal ratings these employees receive

Who Should Perform Appraisals?

Various options may be used to determine who performs the employee appraisal:

1. Appraisal by the Immediate Supervisor – Should be in the best position to observe and evaluate their performance.
3. Rating Committees – Composed of immediate supervisor and 3-4 other supervisors
4. Self-Ratings – Often used in conjunction with the Supervisors ratings of their performance
5. Supervisor appraisals by employees
6. 360-Degree Appraisals – Multiple raters used (including peers, employees reporting to the appraisee, supervisors and customers.
When Should Appraisals be Performed?

Employee appraisals should be performed:

- At various phases during their probationary period
- Upon completion of probation
- Annually thereafter
- Following promotion, transfer or change in responsibility

Maintenance of Employee Records:

QMS standards/models all require that certain records be maintained relating to an employee. These records may include:

- Signed Job Descriptions
- Resume
- Orientation records
- Training records
- Training plans
- Performance Appraisals
- Continuing education
- Health Test records (TB skin testing, immunization, color discrimination, etc)
- Safety Incident Reports
- Proof of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, college registrations)
- Confidentiality agreements
- Records of Competency Assessment
- Any other required records

Employee records must be secured (controlled access) to protect the confidentiality of information contained in the files. To ensure security it is a good idea to centralize records, although there is no regulatory requirement to do so. Records required for the QMS should be maintained separate from the employees personnel file. This does not mean that they need to be filed in separate locations or cabinets, however, you should be able to give an inspector/assessor a file, which does not include highly sensitive documents such as payroll information, disciplinary actions, etc. Records should be protected to prevent damage and deterioration and should be easily retrievable.

Many organizations utilize an electronic HRIS to control employee information and to aid in HR functions. Access to employee records must also be secured on these systems.