Case Analysis: The First Appraisal

1) BJ’s ratings are indicative of a supervisor that is not very attentive and observant of his subordinates. Sandy had said that she only started three months ago and that BJ had stopped coming around to check on her performance. Based on the fact that she is still quite new and that BJ did not regularly check up on her meant that he did not have much to base Sandy’s review on. In addition, his ratings were not very descriptive and did not provide concrete examples of why these ratings were given. The interview was not very conversational and BJ left Sandy to read the form on her own, meaning that he did not have much evidence or input to contribute to her ratings. I think BJ’s ratings are unfair and reflective of a supervisor who is preoccupied with other tasks and does not think that giving reviews should be a top priority in his job. This leads me to believe that since he is not monitoring Sandy’s performance continuously, BJ should not be qualified for the responsibility of evaluating people. BJ’s ratings did not reflect both the positive and negative aspects of Sandy’s performance since the rating was average in every category. It looks like BJ’s ratings are mainly based on only two aspects of the job (a dropped tray of dinners and inability to open bottles of wine). There was no rating for her positive aspects of the job (tips, customer requests to sit at her table, and favorable ratings from her customers), thereby making his ratings very lopsided and slightly biased towards an unfavorable one.

2) Some mistakes that BJ made during the interview were: (1) lack of preparation for the evaluation, (2) use of the central tendency and (3) the halo and horns effect pitfalls, (4) lack of clear standards for the ratings, and (5) not setting mutual goals or measurable objectives effectively by not encouraging discussion.
Preparing for an evaluation takes time, effort, and communication. First, the present job description, fact file, and current objectives must be discussed and reviewed to emphasize what Sandy was doing correctly on the job, which BJ did not do. There was no information provided or new goals set to start off the interview on a positive note. In addition, BJ seemed rushed and pressed for time, which left Sandy without any explanation as to why she was given those ratings. Also, preparing for an evaluation means that the supervisor is familiar with the character, work ethic, and performance of the employee, all of which BJ was not since he was not an observant supervisor.

The majority of BJ’s ratings for Sandy were average, meaning that he used the central tendency pitfall. The central tendency pitfall is committed when a manager consistently rates an employee as average by choosing the middle rating, such as a 3 out of a 1 to 5 scale. “While it is not necessarily wrong to rate a staff member the same in all results or behaviors, most people do some things better than others. When this is true, these differences should be reflected in the rating” (Duke Human Resources, 2010). Since he was not aware of the progress in Sandy’s performance and only focused on her mistakes, he thought that rating her in the middle would please both parties; it would make him not look like “the bad guy” and would please Sandy by rating her performance as satisfactory. This is a mistake on BJ’s part since he is not able to critique her work performance constructively and has no evidence or knowledge of how she is doing to back his ratings up. The overall average rating that Sandy received is not an accurate rating of her performance since BJ was simply not present while she was working.

Another pitfall BJ used was the halo and horns effect. This pitfall occurs when a manager evaluates an employee very high or very low based on one particular performance or incident. “An example would be for a staff member who performed poorly on a particular result or behavior to be rated at about the same low level on all other results or behaviors, regardless of
true performance” (Duke Human Resources, 2010). Instead of focusing on her progression, BJ continued to bring up the time she dropped the dishes and the fact that she couldn’t open bottles by herself, which justified her average ratings in BJ’s mind. This pitfall made BJ rate her on a low scale based on these specific incidents.

In addition, BJ gave an unclear definition of what “average” really meant. Having unclear standards confuses the employee since everyone has a different meaning for “average.” He also didn’t define what made her performance not as well as Ruth’s and Charlie’s and did not provide her with ways to improve.

The last mistake that BJ made was that he did not set mutual goals or measureable objectives for Sandy to work on to improve her work performance. He was very abrupt and cut off Sandy’s comments, which gave the impression that he did not want any follow-up procedures. Sandy left puzzled and in doubt of her review and she wasn’t sure what must be done to change or improve.

3) As BJ’s supervisor, I would think that the first plan of action would be for BJ to redesign the appraisal system entirely since the current one is not very effective. In the redesigned system, both supervisors and subordinates must have a clear idea of what job duties are expected and which ones are of top priority on the job. For example, good customer service would carry more weight than being able to open wine bottles. Critical behaviors should be identified and a behavior rating scale should be utilized so that all meanings of average, good, needs improvement, etc. are understood by the supervisor and subordinate. This new appraisal system would hopefully increase the communication, understanding, and participation of supervisors and subordinates (Eberhardt et al., 1988).

For this new appraisal system to be effective, I would recommend that BJ receive extensive training in a mandatory workshop through a corporate off-site program. Performance
appraisal elements would be taught with workbooks, case studies, and role playing as practice. This training would emphasize that BJ’s reviews need to become less corrective, blaming, critical, and comparative with other employees and more conversational, planning for the future, and problem solving with the subordinate. The importance of observational duties for the supervisor must be heavily emphasized. If BJ continues to procrastinate, put off his duty of doing performance reviews, or he doesn’t start being more vigilant of his employees, I would recommend that another supervisor carry out the reviews.
Bibliography

Journal


Online


Powerpoint


Textbook