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Performance Appraisal During Pandemic Covid-19: How to Evaluate Remote Worker Productivity

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted how organizations are operating. Globally, a majority of the population is still working from home due to the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19. In this current scenario, many businesses have had to take significant steps to adapt to COVID-19 and it has become a necessity for organizations and managers to keep their workforce productive and engaged. However, it was found that most organizations are curtailing or even abandoning performance management because of difficulties measuring performance and disruptions in performance due to the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, this article, will discuss on how the organization and management can conduct performance appraisals on employees who work remotely effectively and take into account some justifications and due consideration especially in situations where the whole country is facing health and safety risks.

Keywords: Covid-19, remote worker, performance appraisal

1. Introduction

Performance appraisal research has been exploring novel fields to advance its traditional content fields. In the past, performance appraisal had been used as a formal worker monitoring process. In the early 1990s, performance appraisal has developed into an inclusive and broader-reaching process rather than an onerous bureaucratized practice (Ikramullah, Van Prooijen, Iqbal, & Ul-Hassan, 2016). Nowadays, performance appraisal can be defined as the activities that the organizations seek to evaluate workers as well as allocate rewards, improve their performance and develop their capabilities (Bayo-Moriones, Galdon-Sanchez, & Martinez-de-Morentin, 2020). This definition indicates that performance appraisal should not be limited to mere review sessions and performance planning. Instead, it should include many interrelated factors that involved in communication, management and implementation of appraisal-related activities. For example, evaluating the developmental needs of workers, setting the performance targets of workers, providing feedback and carrying out appraisals (Ikramullah et al., 2016). If employers want their workers to perform in high standards, employers must set high standards of performance for workers. The workers must understand exactly what makes them perform well and what is they expected.

Besides that, performance appraisal also has different definitions, such as the evaluation of a worker's job performance to achieve objective worker decisions, the formal rating and evaluation of workers by their employers as well as is a process in the entire performance management process (Islami, Mulolli, & Mustafa, 2018). Performance appraisal sometimes becomes a part of a broader method to integrate human resource management strategies and can be called performance management. Performance appraisal involves multiple functions, such as the evaluation of hiring and training strategies, cite monitoring, the validation of human resource management practices and the communication of company values and goals (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2020). Performance appraisals tend to enhance communication expectations, work performance, assisting worker counseling and determining the potential of workers (Islami et al., 2018).

With the development of technology, remote work becomes more popular and common. Companies are increasingly applying IT-based solutions in order to monitor worker outputs and inputs (Bernstein, 2017). Hence, many workers work remotely for most of the entire working week but they will work in their company office when necessary. These workers can be called remote workers. Remote workers are the knowledge management workers who work for the organization and perform most of their work outside the central office (Dery & Hafermalz, 2016). Knowledge management can be defined as the process of creating, verifying, presenting, distributing and applying the information for certain business objectives. Knowledge workers have been applying networking, communications and computing technology to replace face-to-face work interaction as the main source of assignments, performance measures, work information and results delivery (Williams, 2020).

Remote workers may work at their home, in a cafe, in a park or anywhere that suitable for the current task while meeting their connectivity needs (Dery & Hafermalz, 2016). Due to remote workers are remote from their top managers and leaders, they are assessed and controlled by managers in a different method rather than the traditional workers. Remote workers face fewer institutional controls than ordinary workers. For example, remote workers are flexible in terms of place and time to response duties and assume responsibility. The place includes mobile form, remote sites or home while the time includes full-time or part-time (Elshaiekh, Hassan, & Abdallah, 2018).

Productivity is the relationship between the volume of output and input. However, this definition can vary according to sectors and perspectives. The sectors include transport, industry as well as building while the perspectives include labor relations, management, finance, measurement, training and development as well as budget. Therefore, it is important to define productivity before evaluating productivity. Productivity is also one of the most critical indicators of economic development and growth (Chatterjee & Urge-Vorsatz, 2017). However, the outbreak of coronavirus disease has forced the economy to conduct large-scale experiments and brought tragedy and uncertainty around the world. For example, about half of all workers have participated in the remote work trial. The positive outcomes of the experiment can contribute to accelerate the remote work trend even more quickly. With the change of working methods, remote workers will have the advantages of enhanced productivity, fewer meetings and no commutes (Ozimek, 2020). Hence, the methods of evaluating remote workers' productivity are very important to organizations. The objective of this study is to determine the methods for evaluating the productivity of remote workers

2. Methods of Evaluating Remote Workers' Productivity

In the past two decades, coronaviruses are constantly evolving across the globe and COVID-19 is the third novel coronavirus outbreak in humans. As the cases of COVID-19 increases, most of the people are in a state of tension because the vaccine of COVID-19 has not yet been produced. COVID-19 spread from people to people among intimate contact through the respiratory droplets generated when the infected person sneezes or coughs. Therefore, many experts recommend and encourage people to wear masks, use gloves, use hand sanitizer and keep social distance when they go out to reduce the probability of people getting coronavirus disease. These experts also strongly encourage people to stay at home and do not attend any outdoor activities or gatherings. The outbreak of COVID-19 has caused many workers to work remotely and these workers can be called remote workers. Hence, the methods of evaluating remote workers' productivity are very important for the organization because the organization can understand the productivity of each remote worker by using these methods. The methods of evaluating remote workers' productivity can be clustered into eight categories, such as use quantifiable metrics, evaluate results, schedule performance reviews, ask for internal feedback, invest in the right tools, assess work quality, accountability and motivation as well as trust. Fig. 1 shows the methods of evaluating remote workers' productivity
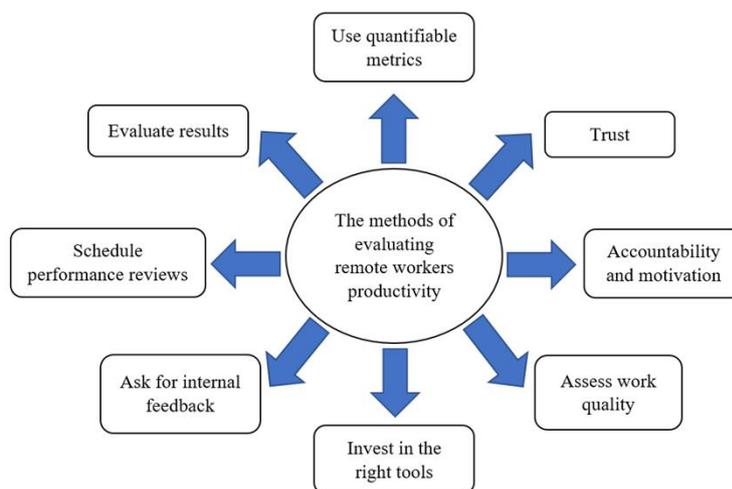

Fig. 1 - The methods of evaluating remote workers' productivity

2.1 Use Quantifiable Metrics

It is very hard to assess worker performance without specific and clear expectations. The online calendar that used by employers can help employers to plan out strategies and objectives. Every worker needs to communicate regularly with their employer in order to make sure that the expectations are clear. If each worker has quantifiable metrics and the team plans to complete and check tasks in a timely way, then managers can understand the goals of productivity are being achieved. This can make sure that the entire team has participated in the leadership of the company and everyone is on the same page. TrackTime24 is one of the applications that allow employers and remote workers to work on any browser or device and establish an ideal schedule for remote workers. Employers can monitor break times, overtime as well as clock-in and clock-out. TrackTime24 is a very useful application for employers and remote workers to track team planning vacations, overtime hours and work hours. TrackTime24 integrates seamlessly with the most famous payroll application.

2.2 Evaluate Results

Performance is usually assessed by results. The results of sales representatives are easy to assess because they require to meet particular quotas. However, performance for other departments may be based on being able to produce results and meet deadlines. For a customer-care business, the main measures of productivity may be enhanced customer satisfaction. However, this is more difficult to assess than working hours. Hence, companies can evaluate customer satisfaction by using multiple methods. The efforts of the remote workers should be rewarded and recognized when they passionately advocate for customer needs and manage to create deeper relationships with their customers. Some software can help workers to log the time that they spend with customers. The customers can also log in and view tasks completed on their account. This helps to solve any problems related to productivity, creates trust and provides transparency.

2.3 Schedule Performance Reviews

The regular performance reviews that conducted by employers can contribute to eliminate the annoyance of annual reviews. The regular performance reviews are a great method to do any adjustments before a lot of time passed and keep track of the remote workers' performance. Some companies carry out work audits every week. In any situation that significantly affects quality or productivity, the companies will hold consultations to solve this issue. Evaluating remote workers' productivity is very important to see if the goals of the remote workers are met and so they can see how their work aligns with accomplishing the goals. This can help remote workers to continuously enhance their performance and see the big picture no matter where they work.

2.4 Ask for Internal Feedback

Internal feedback is a technique that used by companies to evaluate remote workers' productivity. For example, employers should mandate their workers to fill out quick surveys in which they will give back honest opinions on the work attitude and work performance of their colleagues. Quick surveys about colleagues, managers and leaders are easy to accomplish and offer insight into where employees might need more training, how they feel about those leading them and how they are interacting.

2.5 Invest in The Right Tools

The right tools that used by employers are very important to an organization because the right tools can help the organization to evaluate remote workers' productivity. There are many tools already meet the different organizational needs, such as project management, scheduling, prototyping and collaboration, chat, video and web conferencing as well as workflow automation. These tools can also give deeper insights into how work gets done in the organization. Many mature collaboration tools contribute to measure manifold insights, such as Microsoft Office 365. My Analytics offers insights on personal productivity, such as how one can improve focus time, collaboration within the organization, networking, well-being and time spent on deep work. For managers, the analytics offer insights into how teams employ collective actions to enhance performance and improve team norms. Workplace Analytics can help employers to obtain unprecedented information across the enterprise which can help in solving the challenges of the complex business. The unprecedented information across the enterprise includes time and networking trends, what contacts may be missing as well as whether the existing collaboration models are helping the organization achieve goals.

2.6 Assess Work Quality

The work quality generated is another method of evaluating productivity. Employers must know that the workers will do their best when conducting a project. The results quality that obtained by the workers can become the best indication of how much they have invested in a project. For instance, the code quality that produced by the developers is critical when evaluating the developer's productivity.

2.7 Accountability and Motivation

For remote workers, interactions can identify their level of engagement, which in turn often affects performance. In the context of a sudden shift to remote work, employers need to empathize with the struggles of the remote workers, listen to their concerns and anxieties as well as acknowledge the pressure. The productivity of remote workers will increase when remote workers are engaged with personal and organizational goals. When the remote workers can realize how their individual efforts affect the organization's success where they work, their responsibility sense for achieving goals will increase. The virtual places that used by employers for socializing can provide workers the opportunity to chat with their colleagues in meaningful methods and break the isolation sense. Socializing involves connect sessions and one-on-one feedback.

2.8 Trust

Trust in the organization is essential for remote employees to unlock their performance potential. It is important to know how to create relationships with remote workers, personalize the methods of the employers to manage remote workers and help the remote workers to achieve their good performance every day. The necessary element to achieve any of these is to build trust first. Trust between people in the workplace, whether it is virtual or physical can increase performance, efficiency and speed. The remote workers require to trust that their employers know them and are searching for their best interests. The employers must be transparent and fully aware of remote workers' talents to allocate roles accordingly. Some employers choose to participate in one-on-one discussions and video calls for meetings, which can contribute to create trust between both parties and create a strong relationship with remote teams.

3. Conclusion

Based on the discussion, we are more understanding about how to evaluate remote worker productivity and the methods that used to evaluate remote workers' productivity. The methods of evaluating remote workers' productivity are use quantifiable metrics, evaluate results, schedule performance reviews, ask for internal feedback, invest in the right tools, assess work quality, accountability and motivation as well as trust. The outbreak of COVID-19 has caused many workers to work remotely. Hence, these methods are very important for employers because the employers can understand the productivity of each remote worker by using these methods.

Evaluating remote workers' productivity is essential to ensure the right practices, processes and tools are in place. This measurement must be done in a method that is meaningful to the business as well as helpful to the workers who work remotely but do not want to feel isolated and disconnected. Besides that, employers must remember that everyone works differently. Hence, employers should tailor methods of evaluating remote workers' productivity based on existing technology and the projects undertaken. This allows employers to periodically adapt and revise the systems of the organization in order to ensure that the right outputs are measured fairly. Employers can also provide more information to the workers to reduce the burden that caused by disruption. In conclusion, productivity appraisal is a continuous process that ensures remote workers in check. Productivity appraisal also allows remote workers to conduct self-assessments and work hard to increase their productivity. Therefore, productivity appraisal is very important for organizations because productivity appraisal can help to increase the productivity of the organization and bring more profits to the organization.

Acknowledgement

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