

MANAGING PEOPLE

Student name: Veronica-Daniela Floria

Student Id: 2115140

Module code: LCBB5004

Lecture name: Mushfiqur Rahman

The role of technology in appraising the remote workers' performance, remote worker's performance measurement technique, and performance appraisal tools for remote workers

The wake of the COVID-19 pandemic revolutionised the contemporary working of business organisations. This resulted in a lockdown that required no physical presence in the offices, prompting organisation to devise strategies that could oversee their success in the market despite the surge in the pandemic. This led to them embracing remote working, enabling them to continue working, enhance their organisational performance and achieve goals. However, this brought some challenges to employers as performance management became challenging, thus a need for organisations to adopt digital technology tools. Therefore, this essay provides insights into the role of technology in appraising remote workers' performance, evaluating four distinct performance measurement techniques for remote workers, and four performance appraisals for remote workers.

The role of technology in appraising the remote workers' performance

Performance appraisal entails the employees' regular performance review and overall organisational contribution (Bernardin and Wiatrowski, 2013). On the other hand, remote working is a situation whereby employees do their jobs from a location other than a central office

operated by the employer (Wang et al., 2021). For instance, working from employees' homes, co-working, a private office, or any place other than the traditional organisational office building. The performance appraisal of remote workers has been made achievable by adopting technology; thus, technology plays a critical role in remote workers' performance appraisal. One of these roles is that technology enables the collection of feedback. Regular virtual performance assessment and staff satisfaction surveys, such as 1-on-1 virtual meeting with an employee, helps in collecting remote employees' feedback. These surveys enable employees to answer thoughtful questions about management, training, compensation, and recognition. Afterwards, the organisational management uses this result to gain insights into their operations and create a place where people want to work (Niles, 2021). Additionally, technology fosters communication that enhances the performance appraisal of remote workers. Organisations have adopted digital platforms to conduct performance reviews without physical interactions. For instance, the adoption of video conferencing platforms like Zoom and Google Meets provides a face-to-face interaction level that allows for the picking up body language cues, which are integral in performance assessment (Kulsum et al., 2023). Furthermore, technology roles in performance appraisal have provided measurement tools for productivity and engagement.

These tools have been integral in tracking employees' performance of their key job responsibilities and making necessary adjustments. For instance, HR technologies are used by organisations to attract, train, and retain the best staff. However, despite the positive role of technology in remote workers' performance appraisal, it still provides some drawbacks. Technology dependence in appraising remote workers' performance may lead to biases of employees working remotely as the management cannot directly monitor their work every day (Amor, 2023)). Thus, performance managers must consider such biases and ensure that they do not influence assessments, decisions, and how goals are set. Additionally, communication may be disrupted during performance appraisal meetings, leading to incorrect performance insights. This could lead to chances of recoding a biased outcome of the employees' performance.

Evaluating four different performance measurement techniques for remote workers

Performance measurement entails regular outcomes and result measurement, which generates reliable data on a program's effectiveness and efficiency (Pradhan and Jena, 2017). Organisations can embrace different performance measurement techniques in measuring their remote worker's performance.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are one of the techniques organisations use to measure their remote worker's performance. KPIs in

performance measurement entail measurable and quantifiable metrics organisations use to evaluate and assess their activities' performance. They provide a clear and quantifiable measure of how well staff is doing its jobs (Parmenter, 2015). For instance, the sales department uses it to measure revenues per sales agent, consumer satisfaction score, and churn rate. In HR, it is used in metrics such as expenses per employee and annual staff turnover rate. Adopting KPIs in measuring remote worker's performance provides various benefits to an organisation. For instance, using KPIs provides precise, quantifiable performance measurement. This provides a more manageable task in comparing performance across different workers and teams working remotely. Additionally, it ensures that performance measurement aligns with business objectives, thus ensuring that the remote workers' task contributes to these objectives. Therefore, an organisation succeeds in their work. It also provides transparency and accountability in performance measurement. When an organisation sets clear KPIs for remote workers, they can hold remote workers accountable for their performance, which fosters a culture of transparency and accountability. However, KPIs also have drawbacks when measuring remote workers' performance. For instance, there is a risk of misinterpretation, which may lead to unrealistic expectations or a focus on the wrong performance aspect. For instance, a KIP measuring the email numbers sent might encourage remote workers to send more emails rather than focusing on their work quality.

Communication metrics are another performance measurement technique used in measuring remote workers' performance. It entails measures to assess workplace communication effectiveness (Galanti et al., 2021). Managers embrace communication metrics in measuring employees' response times to calls and emails. Additionally, communication metrics help evaluate how well remote workers communicate with their teams, supervisors, and other stakeholders—for instance, measuring the number of messages sent or received, communication clarity, and timelines. Communication metrics also is beneficial in measuring remote workers' performance. They provide real-time communication effectiveness tracking, allowing immediate adjustments if necessary (Narayanamurthy and Tortorella, 2021). This helps identify bottlenecks and improvement areas, leading to better overall performance of the remote workers. Furthermore, communication metrics focus on quality. It focuses on communication quality, such as clarity and timeline, which are essential to effectiveness. They also provide quantifiable measurements vital for measuring remote workers' communication effectiveness. This helps in comparing the distinct remote team's communication effectiveness. However, using communication metrics as a performance measurement for remote workers may be rigid and, thus, may lack flexibility in some circumstances (Hartner-Tiefenthaler et al., 2022). For instance, using communication metrics on the number of messages sent may not suit workers with flexible working

hours. This may lead to biasness in some cases. Additionally, there is a risk of overemphasis on quantifiable metrics.

During the covid 19 and after the pandemic, organisations have embraced remote working, and to measure employee performance, **peer feedback** has been integral. It is based on asking the remote workers to provide an anonymous evaluation of their performance (Gong et al., 2017), which is critical in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and providing a more comprehensive performance view. Embracing peer feedback in organisations with remote workers provides a holistic view of performance as it entails others' perceptions of the team (Kowalski and Ślebarska, 2022). This leads to a more comprehensive understanding of a worker's performance. Additionally, it promotes open communication, which is transparent, improving overall team performance. However, peer feedback is subjective and may be unreliable to some extent. This may result in conflict or misunderstanding when not handled appropriately. It is also prone to biases, especially when it is anonymous feedback. Remote peers may likely give positive feedback to their peers, which may lead to a skewed result.

Smart Goals and Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) technique. SMART is an acronym for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. These techniques help set clear expectations and track progress towards the goal achievements (Weintraub et al., 2017). OKRs also ensure a firm sets ambitious objectives and measures progress against specific core

results. These techniques provide a structured approach to setting goals and tracking performance goals. This helps align employees and organisational goals, thus encouraging continuous improvement. They also focus on specific tasks; for instance, SMART goals are task-oriented, meaning they track employees' performance towards archiving particular tasks. This helps the remote workers to focus and ensure they are working on the right task. However, they are challenging to implement as remote workers lack direct supervisor. This may lead to a focus on quantifiable metrics at the expense of qualitative performance.

Evaluating four different performance appraisal tools for remote workers

Organisations use different tools to measure their remote worker's performance. One of these tools has been behaviourally anchored rating scales (BARS). These tools rate employees' specific behaviour traits relating to performance (Aggarwal and Thakur, 2013). There are questions or statements with additional statements describing an employee's extent displayed to a particular behaviour. It also distinguishes and maps a staff's intangible traits to a rating scale. It has five parts that create an effective BARS appraisal system: identifying critical incidents, a behaviour set or essential incidents that influence the specified job role. Creating and reallocating performance dimensions impacts a particular part of the staff role. Quantifiable scaling understands the behaviour's effectiveness and puts it against a scaling system. The

final BARS instrument compares the collated data to vertical scales (Klieger et al., 2018). They are used to compare areas where staff has scored adequately and where they need enhancement. Its benefit is that it is efficient both qualitatively and numerically. Biases are also unlikely to occur as the BARS is effectively constructed, and mistakes are unlikely to be made in the appraisal. However, it is a highly personalised method and hence time-consuming. It is thus costly concerning the time needed for effective performance appraisals.

360 degrees tool is another performance appraisal tool for remote workers. It entails collecting specified parameters and feedback regarding an employee from peers, subordinates, managers, and those interacting with them personally. This tool also requires employees to complete their self-evaluation. Afterwards, a report is generated using respondents' average ratings, compared with the staff's self-evaluation. Beheshti (2019) opines that 89% of HR managers agree that peer feedback and check-ins are vital for successful results. This tool has been opted for by various organisations as it helps teams to recognise their personal and team positives and negatives. Thus, knowledge is gained and driven to make meaningful changes. Additionally, employees who receive such feedback can receive more regular inputs from various sources, thus enhancing their performance. However, using 360 -degrees as a performance appraisal tool may cause tension among staff by taking others' evaluations personally, leading to biases.

Time tracking tools such as Toggl or Time Doctor are also used in performance appraisal for remote workers. They allow remote workers to track their time spent on different tasks. This helps managers understand how their juniors spend their time and identify potential issues like procrastination or inefficiencies. Using these tools is also beneficial to a company. For instance, an organisation like them will achieve transparency in their performance appraisal, as they provide a clear picture of how the remote workers spend their time, leading to more efficient resource uses (Mone et al., 2018). These tools also enable a detailed productivity analysis of the remote workers, which helps identify areas they need to improve. They are also cost-effective compared to manual systems, thus effectively measuring performance. However, they may lead to accuracy issues, as results may be questionable since employees may only sometimes record the time spent accurately.

Performance management software such as BambooHR or Workday tools provides a comprehensive employee performance appraisal platform. They aid an organisation to set goals, track progress, and conduct performance reviews. These tools are vital as they track employee performance in a content and measurable way. They rely on a combination of technologies and methodologies to ensure that remote workers are aligned with and contribute to a business strategic objective. They are beneficial because they provide data-driven decision-making (Mone et al., 2018). For instance, organisations use their data to make informed

decisions regarding employees' performance and development, thus effective when appraising an employee's performance. However, they are complex and challenging to navigate. This is a barrier for some employees, leading to blurred performance appraisal.

In summary, this work has provided insights into the role of technology in performance appraisal for remote workers. Remote working has become the new norm as various organisations have embraced it. However, managing the performance of remote workers has become a challenging task for employers, and there is a need to adopt effective technology in performance management. For instance, performance appraisal tools discussed in the essay included performance management tools like BambooHR and Workday, 360-degree feedback, Time tracking tools such as Toggl, and behaviourally anchored rating scales (BARS). These tools have been at the forefront of ensuring an effective performance appraisal for remote workers.

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