

*** Your school or college**

Cabin crew performance management appraisal
evaluation

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Introduction

Performance appraisal is the process of defining expectations for employee performance; measuring, evaluating, and recording employee performance relative to those expectations and providing feedback to the employee, as defined by Bartol and Martin (1991). The appraisal forms to be estimated here are designed as downward assessment of cabin crew performance, with elements of peer assessment. They are divided into six sections, analyzing the following aspects of the employees' performance: performing basic tasks, interacting with colleagues, interacting with customers, professional image created and professional awareness.

The appraisals cover a good portion of relevant information to be gathered and performance to be assessed, and refer to behavior as seen by a manager/supervisor as well as co-workers, but lack a form of self-evaluation. Self-appraisal, gives the employee a chance to consider and record their own performance for the period in question. Each person is in possession of the others' assessment for some period before the interview, and can plan for the interview in the light of this information. Self-appraisal is a very useful mechanism for encouraging employees to consider their own performance and to monitor and record the results¹. Downward appraisal can seem too aggressive to employees and make them take a defensive attitude instead of inducing an enthusiastic reaction, with the motivation to improve the performance in the future.

What first can be noticed in all of the appraisal forms is the lack of scale-based questions. All questions are given in such a form that allows only a positive or a negative answer. However, the situation in practice suggests that it often cannot be said definitely whether someone has performed a certain behavior or not, since it depends on many factors and circumstances. This sort of forms prompt a rounding technique, meaning that if someone has performed a level of behavior in question slightly less than average, it will be rounded down to zero, and if it is slightly more than average, it will be noted as full accomplishment, whereas there is an apparently wide range of performance qualities in between. For instance, in GR2 form, the question "Participated in safety/first aid discussion at the briefing" offers only options met, not met and not applicable. A better way of assessing this behavior would be introducing grades from 1 to 5, or a graphic scale showing roughly how much the employee was taking part in the safety discussions at the briefing. This system would also make it easier to come to a final grade as a quantitative representative of the general assessment of an employee.

From a psychological point of view, the flaw is that some assessment lines were written in negating forms, i.e., "Did not carry out thorough quality and quantity checks of food and beverage", "Did not clearly communicate with colleagues", etc. If these issues are to be discussed with the employee, they may have a depressing effect on them, rather than prompt them to improve their work. If the assessment was written in a positive tone, but scored negative, it would still have a better effect on the employee, and even a better one if was not given in an absolute negation, but rather as a grade or position on a graphic scale.

As for the choice of properties to assess, the appraisals were generally well made. They comprise the effectiveness of the employees' work, their interaction with customers, as well as interaction with colleagues.

¹ University of Leicester lectures, Page 2-75

1.1 SFS

Let us consider the following assessment aspects in this appraisal form:

- Considered the impact on the customer as a key factor in any changes.
- Took a personal interest in ensuring that customer needs were met.
- Actively sought feedback from customers rather than waiting for complaints.
- Empathized with and pacified customers having problems
- Dealt with difficult customers skilfully and appropriately.
- Explained reasons behind decisions to customers and/or crew and offered alternate solutions.
- Built a rapport with customers by initiating conversations.
- Investigated and corrected customer problems promptly and offered alternate solutions where appropriate. Applied company procedures rigidly, even when not appropriate.
- Waited for the customer to complain rather than anticipating and investigating customer dissatisfaction.
- Did not consider all options when dealing with a difficult customer.
- Offered a solution without establishing the customer expectation.
- Corrected problems without investigating.
- Missed opportunities to canvass customers.
- Avoided dealing with customer complaints.

They are all relevant to the employee's position and describe the core of the employee's relation to customers. The customer's needs should be the driving steam of the business and this form makes sure that they are met. The employee is obliged to seek feedback from the customers in order to know what it is that they need, and what should be changed or improved. It is well known that this is often not easy, considering the variety of human characters, many of which are often difficult to deal with, too demanding or vague in expressing themselves, or sometimes even plain rude. It is essential for the employee who has frequent contact with customers, to be capable of dealing with this group of customers in particular, to stay calm and try to resolve the situation in the best way possible.

If the standard procedures do not cover such situations, the employee should be able to find an alternative solution, but only after determining what it is that the customer really needs. Customer complaints are not a pleasant part of the job but dealing with them should by no means be avoided, and all options should be attentively looked into before reaching a mutual agreement. This may require bending the company's procedures. However this should be not assessed unless it was suggested to the employee beforehand, so that he would know it is an option in rare cases. Expecting the employee to act beyond the company's rules without telling him he may do so, would be unreasonable.

Now let us look at the questions at the beginning of the appraisal:

- Present at the door to welcome customers using names
- Present at the door to bid farewell during disembarkation

How relevant are these? Is this something that should be evaluated through a formal form? If the desired behavior is not met, it can be corrected by a simple one-time advice in the beginning, instead of waiting for a formal appraisal after a period of time.

The following aspects of work are a good representation of a manager/trainer's tasks and responsibilities:

- Arrived at decisions with consensus of crew members where appropriate.
- Encouraged crew members to solve their own problems.
- Ensured crew complied with company policies and procedures.
- Took a professional interest in crew welfare on board and/or outstation.
- Set goals for the flight and followed through to ensure they were met.
- Shared all relevant information and ideas with the Purser.
- Acknowledged and assisted others in valuing their ability/skills.
- Monitored and corrected crew grooming where necessary.
- Recognized and praised individual performance where appropriate.

Apart from the lack of precision in answering them, these questions are well designed. The manager's task is not to solve other people's problems, but to guide them effectively so that they are able to solve the problems themselves. It is also important to help the subordinates see and understand their errors (if they are present) and make a self-assessment with as little bias as possible. The manager's responsibility is to be supportive and positive, spreading a healthy and motivated atmosphere among other employees, setting goals, advising and constructive criticizing when necessary and praising when appropriate.

However the next question is slightly vague: "Did not spend enough time monitoring crew performance". How is the time required for monitoring determined? Is it preset or does it refer to effectiveness of monitoring during the work hours or avoiding responsibility. How is the difference between not dedicating enough time to monitoring on the one hand and monitoring but failing to see the relevant factors on the other hand determined?

1.2 FG1

The question "Took responsibility in making colleagues aware of consequences of their actions." seems a little arbitrarily chosen. Is this in the description of the job position? "Acted as mentor to junior/new crew" is a little difficult request for someone not trained to transfer knowledge. If the employee is able to perform this task it should indeed be considered a plus, but should not be scorned should he fail to perform, since it is not officially part of his job. The following are well chosen:

- Freely shared information, ideas and experience
- Sought assistance from colleagues to overcome own limitations.
- Was aware when conflict began to occur and dealt with it to contain it.

Keeping information selfishly for oneself is normally frowned upon, and so is refusal to admit one's own mistakes and seek advice on correcting them. Recognizing conflict and dealing with it is a difficult task, but needed for functional operating of the business group and should therefore be given sufficient attention. Employees should be prompted to resolve conflict in a peaceful and constructive manner rather than fight or ignoring of the problem.

The division into Advance, Effective and Developing subsections is not very clear. On what ground is freely sharing information on a higher scale than being culturally sensitive? If the questionnaire is meant to point out each individual's strong sides and weaknesses, the intention is once again not clear. The appraiser should still have clear and systematically arranged hints and fields of work to be examined, rather than observing different performance

aspects for each employee, since that would be rather time consuming. Here we meet the problem of compromising between the required degree of standardization and individual differences between each employee. The absence of standardization leads to confusion and disorder as well as above mentioned unnecessary time consumption, while the lack of understanding for different personalities and deploying different approaches for individuals may lead to inefficiency and rejection from the employer, especially in the western countries where individualism is rather notable, in contrast to the community oriented eastern countries.

A particularly relevant feature is Hofstede's distinction between individualist and collectivist characteristics between the eastern and western countries in leadership matters. In individualist cultures (such as the world-wide Anglo nations and Northern Europe) leaders tend to operate much more on a transactional basis, with one-to-one dealings and a need for great flexibility. This would normally be task-related and participative. By contrast, in collectivist countries (such as the East and most of the developing world) notions of harmony and group interaction favor more fixed styles of leadership. With less likelihood of conflict, a balance between the parties may be possible to sustain without the need for adaptation due to particular circumstances². The following section is well chosen:

- Displayed warmth and care at all times.
- Sought to understand customers as individuals.
- Welcomed and personally escorted customer to seat and made them comfortable.
- Asked questions to establish customer expectation.
- Conversed with customers in all areas of the cabin.

Particularly interesting is the last question, since performing of this task may not always rely on conscious reasoning. The employee may avoid a specific part of the cabin without even being aware of it, or without knowing the real causes that lie in the base of this behaviour. It is thus important for the employee to keep in mind that these situations happen, and seek to correct them if found present. If the employee is not able to recognize it, this is where the supervisor comes in handy, being assigned to monitor the actions of the subordinates and give advice on how to correct the problematic actions.

Here we meet the same question as seen in the previous appraisal form: "Did not use customer names." As much as this may have a reassuring effect it may also have a contra effect and sound too imposing. Ideally, the employee should be able to evaluate which customers prefer which approach, but this is, clearly a difficult task. The following aspects are well chosen:

- Was able to calm others in difficult situations.
- Was on best behavior that reflected well on Emirates.
- Followed grooming standard.
- Remained calm under pressure.
- Was diplomatic and avoided conflict.
- Was positive and enthusiastic.

Remaining calm is a difficult but very important task, and should always be demanded of the employee to fulfill. If he has problems with remaining calm under pressure, it may be wise to invest into a course for pressure management, as these courses are reported to have relatively

² University of Leicester lectures, Page 2-66

high percentage of success. Staff development costs money and can easily swallow a significant percentage of profit or budgets, but it is essential that the effectiveness of any training intervention is monitored to ensure that the intended benefits are achieved and that its cost is justifiable in relation to the potential cost of not training or in relation to alternative strategies³.

The aspect:

- Was elegant and courteous

is indeed valued by both customers and employees, but is practically useless in terms of improvement, since elegance is not something one can easily learn and is a skill not related to the specific job but rather a generic skill, that is applied in a variety of situations, business or personal.

The following questions were formulated in a good manner:

- Prepared for service in time.
- Ensure that all A/C equipment met the quality and quantity requirements.
- Was aware of the latest procedures.
- Maintained a clean and hygienic work environment.
- Promoted safety and first aid standard.
- Worked in a organized manner, creating an environment where the crew did not get in each others' way.
- Knew where to look up information when in doubt.

Being punctual and preparing in time is important, just as meeting deadlines. Maintaining a clean and hygienic work environment is not the responsibility of only the cleaning staff but of everyone employed. Acting in accordance with the hygiene standards is considered civilized and is always appreciated.

Being organized is not a quality that everyone possesses but it should at all cost be imposed. Those with higher organizational skills should be prompted to help others prioritize and arrange their tasks in a most functional manner possible. Lack of organization creates confusion, lowers the work enthusiasm and eventually leads to decrease in overall performance.

The employee should be knowledgeable and should know where to look up information when needed. The employee should also be comfortable with admitting inability to respond without consulting other sources, rather than insisting on a solution of whose functionality he himself is not sure.

³ University of Leicester lectures, Page 4-7

1.3 GR 1

There are only minor differences between GR1 and FG1 forms. One of the differences is FG1 containing the aspect

- Did not show respect to colleagues (including cleaners and caterers),

which, apart from the negative formulation, is a good aspect to observe, making it a slight advantage of the FG1 form over GR1. Showing respect to all colleagues is an important aspect of work, and failing to perform according to it causes dissatisfaction and grows tension between colleagues, eventually leading to decrease in functionality and customer satisfaction.

Another difference between these two forms is the order in which questions are sorted suggesting greater importance of the ones on top, in which respect FG1 is better in the subsection of Professional Knowledge, since

- Product and service knowledge was not up to the required standard seems to carry more weight than other aspects of the employee's performance, including:
- Relied on others for procedures/knowledge.
- Did not maintain a tidy cabin.

However, the question order in GR1 in the Service Flair subsection seems more appropriate than the one in FG1.

GR1:

- Conducted the service to suit individual customer needs.
- Made an effort to enhance the visual appeal of food and beverages.
- Paid attention to detail.
- Service was carried out in a smooth and elegant manner.
- Suggested and recommended food and wine as appropriate.

FG1:

- Made an effort to enhance the visual appeal of food and beverages.
- Service was carried out in a smooth and elegant manner.
- Suggested and recommended food and wine as appropriate.
- Conducted the service to suit individual customer needs.
- Paid attention to detail.

But the advantage in the Developing subsection is not so clear,

GR1:

- Fumbled and fiddled when offering service.
- Had a loud/noisy working style.
- Handled crockery and cutlery in an inappropriate manner.
- Was rushed/disorganized when offering service.
- Was sloppy with the trolley and wine baskets.

Versus FG1:

- Was rushed/disorganized when offering service.
- Was sloppy with the trolley and wine baskets.

- Fumbled and fiddled when offering service.
- Handled crockery and cutlery in an inappropriate manner.
- Had a loud/noisy working style.

Having a loud and noisy working style is not of crucial importance but is certainly annoying. Being sloppy, even though objectively less important than being disorganized, it leaves a more apparent impression on the customer.

1.4 GR2

The GR2 form is again similar to the GR1 and FG1 forms with some differences. In the section Interacting with colleagues, the GR1 appraisal contains the following additional options:

- Understood the need of the colleagues and volunteers to help.
- Took a lead in breaking the ice and getting to know the team better.

This adds information to the estimation of the employee concerning his relation with coworkers, and is therefore an advantage. The following aspects are also new:

- Used common language.
- Assisted colleagues whenever required.
- Made an effort to get to know colleagues better.

They refer to the employee's ability to communicate well with co-workers, learn from them and get to know them in order to cooperate better, rather than being the one giving advice and leading the rest. There is a subtle but notable difference between

- Was not considerate of others when defending own views and opinions.

in GR1 and

Was not considerate of colleagues.

in GR2, the first one suggesting that the employee will often be stating his own views and opinions and the second one, considering the surrounding questions, suggests that the employee will be required to listen to others stating views and opinions.

GR2 contains the additional question

- Did not take on fair share of the work load,

which also promotes community and collaboration.

The customer related section has a more individual and imposing tone:

- Built rapport with the customers on boarding.
- Double checked to ensure that all customers have been served.
- Showed confidence when dealing with customers.
- Was not selective when dealing with customers.

in contrast to those of FG1 in this section:

- Displayed warmth and care at all times.
- Sought to understand customers as individuals.
- Welcomed and personally escorted customer to seat and made them comfortable.

- Asked questions to establish customer expectation.
- Conversed with customers in all areas of the cabin.

These two approaches may both have good results, but work best when combined. It also defers per person which approach should be taken, and ideally, the employee should be able to make a snap judgment and act on it accordingly. Here we have a better formulation of the question concerning time spent in the cabin:

- Avoided spending time in the cabin.

Rather than using the vague definition “did not spend enough time in the cabin”, here we see the lack of will of the employee to stay in the cabin. The reasons for this should be examined and a solution found, either through conversation within the company or with the help of an outsider. External consultants can be expensive. They can however be more influential simply because they are an outsider⁴.

GR2 contains the question:

- Was selective when dealing with customers.

instead of FG1’s

- Did not use customer names

as clearly more important. Selectivity is a severe “crime” and should by no means be allowed, whereas not using the customers’ names can be overlooked and/or easily corrected.

GR2 contains the following additional aspect in the advanced subsection

- Was able to calm others in difficult situations

which once more is a great bonus if fulfilled but is a skill that cannot be easily taught and is the main description of the work position, and should therefore be omitted since it brings no or very little potential improvement. But since it is here put in the advanced section instead of efficient, it is better placed and may serve as merely a passive bonus. GR1 has a better explanation of the grooming aspect:

- Personal items worn or carried did not meet the uniform standard i.e. jewellery, watches, tights...

compared to that of FG1:

- Personal items worn or carried did not meet the company standard.

More attention has been paid to the formulation of the loudness problem:

- Spoke loudly and /or was not careful of customers of conversation when in uniform

in comparison to that of FG1:

- Was loud and noisy.

It contains an additional question in the Professional Knowledge section:

⁴ University of Leicester lectures, Page 4-5

- Ensured safety checks are properly completed and information passed

which puts a stress on the information part, recognizing communication as an important part of the company's operation.

Generally seen, GR1 offers most elaborate estimation questions of the appraisals analyzed and pays most attention to the relation with the customers. It also has a healthy set of priorities, reflected in the order and distribution of the required aspects of employees' work.

2 Conclusion

Adequate performance appraisal system is a prerequisite for evaluating work and performance of all employees, including top management and toilers. Basically, major goal of performance measuring is income justification and recognition of highly performing employees. Performance appraisal system can be successful only if planned and designed according to organizational strategy. On the other side, employees need to recognize their role in process of achieving company goals and plans.

Generally viewed, all appraisal forms were well made in respect to questions chosen, with the difference with GR1 promoting individual work and leadership and GR2 promoting mutual work, cooperation and sharing opinions and views, which probably fits better to the eastern setting chosen, the Emirates. The questions depict the purpose of the employee as well as his relations with the customers and colleagues, his sense of organization, order and respect for others, which are all rather important.

The downside of the forms is the lack of graphical or numerical grading, which would leave space for more subtle defining of the level one performs a desired action, rather than the present yes-no system.

The appraisals are slightly confusing, since they are not made for a single profession but for several at the same time. For instance, the person in charge of monitoring others, advising them and guiding will not be serving drinks, so instead of having "not applicable" options, separate forms should be made for different work profiles.

An objection has also been made to the statements having a form of a negation, as demotivating for the employees. Some of the questions have no perspective for improvement, but these are rare. Most of the questions are useful and appropriate.

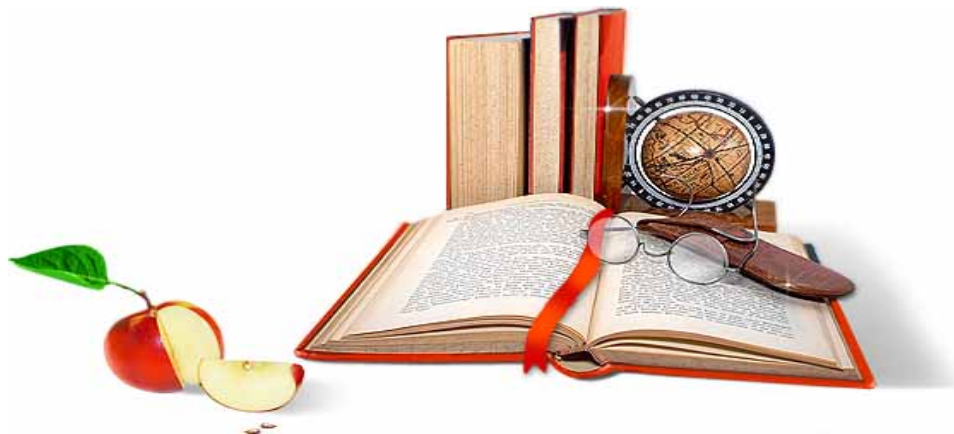
The forms are variations on the same subject, and the best form is to be determined empirically, showing which group reacts best and which form has most potential to change the behavior of the employees for the best. Theoretically, GR2 promotes the best cooperation between co-workers and has the best priority choice of aspects to be estimated.

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