

## **SURVEYING PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL ABSTRACT:**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In 1976 the Danish Armed Forces set forth a performance appraisal system (FORPUBS) which combined assessment and personnel development, underlining the individual development of personnel as a central element. The system soon became an inspiration for other Danish organizations and business appraisal systems, Now, 25 years later, the Danish Defence Center for Leadership has carried out a survey, trying to establish whether **FORPUBS** meets the standards of the 21th century. Results show an overall positive attitude towards the basic intentions in FORPUBS from the appraiser as well as the appraised. Secondly, the survey shows a tendency in assessment towards inflation, giving better and better ratings. And third, regarding individual development, the results indicates a need to update the tools and guidelines for administering the interviews. The conclusion of the survey is that there is a need for a completely new system containing elements and tools for integrating competencies and personal development in the appraisal system, to optimize the value of appraisals for the organization.*

In 1976 the Danish Armed Forces set forth a new system for performance appraisal – called FORPUBS. It was an integration of performance appraisal and a development dialogue to be used in interviews with the entire personnel. For the first time there was a joint system for the army, navy and air force. The goal was to boost the personnel's development and job satisfaction and increase the efficiency of personnel administration.

Regarding the appraisal element the personnel is appraised on 23 different areas, such as judgement, responsibility, cooperation and abilities as a leader. On each area the personnel is evaluated on a triple scale, as being "above norm", "norm" or "under norm".

**Fig. 1. Example of item in appraisal**

<b>Ability to lead:</b> Norm: Can by selfconfidence and personal authority inspire personnel to purposefully and appropriately solve the assignment	No basis for evaluation	Under norm	Norm	Above norm

In addition to this the personnel is evaluated on his or her suitability to the next level of function, in case of a promotion. The suitability evaluation is also done on a tripartition scale between "not suitable", "suitable" and "very suitable".

Embedded in the system is also a development dialogue. At least once a year the personnel is formally invited to a dialogue with his (or her) closest superior. They discuss the daily work, the individuals contribution and developmental needs. The dialogue can contain issues of the utilization of resources in the organization in general and the resources of the individual specifically, possible career opportunities, underlining the individuals' future and wishes for education and other developmental issues brought forth by the personnel or superior. The dialogue is loosely structured to give room for mutual discussion.

The integration of appraisal and development dialogue together makes the Danish Armed Forces' FORPUBS-system. Now the system is 25 years old, and the Danish Armed Forces wish to investigate whether the system meets the standards of the 21st century or need a brush up.

The survey was carried out in 1999/2000 by Psychological Branch, Danish Defence Center for Leadership as a pilot survey. 19 comprehensive qualitative interviews were performed with superiors and personnel administrators regarding their experiences with the system. 112 officers were asked of their experiences being appraised and "developed" through a questionnaire, with a reply rate of 80 %.

### Results

In general appraisals and development dialogue seems to be an element, which is emotionally laden in the organization, as well for the appraiser and appraisee. The interviewed superiors and administrators were characterized by being very talkative and the officers who filled out the questionnaire often filled out more than was asked for.

Almost all respondents seem to agree, that the system – in its original thought - is performing, but that there is a need for changing the administration of it. In the past 25 years there has been a displacement in the system, laying more and more weight on the appraisal element and less into the development dialogue.

**Table 1**

**Appraised officers about FORPUBS (N=71)**

	Agreement on statement					Total
	++	+	-	--	?	
It was a good dialogue	28	32	7	3	1	71
My superior listened	26	32	8	3	2	71
Better idea of career	9	30	23	8	1	71
I agree with appraisal	23	39	4	4	1	71
My selfperception has changed	0	6	40	24	1	71

A common experience among the appraisors was of a rising workload of officers to be appraised, and a concern about being able to solve this without lowering the quality. Nevertheless, the survey (table 1) indicates that 89% of the evaluated officers experienced the appraisal to be carried out in a positive and attentive atmosphere. 87% of the officers agreed on the appraisal they were given.

According to the officers only 44% of the interviews contained a development dialogue. Only 8 % of the personnel had – throughout a year – been to a interview reserved only to development as prescribed.

**Table 2**

**Appraised officers about development dialogue (N=49)**

	Agreement on statement				Total
	++	+	-	--	
Superior was well prepared	9	37	3	0	49
Influence on my possibilities for development	3	15	26	5	49
Speak my mind about my superior	14	25	8	2	49
Better acquaintance with superior	4	17	24	4	49
Rewarding discussion	10	28	10	1	49

77% of officers who had had a development dialogue experienced, that they had only little influence on the review, but of those who experienced little influence only, 9% were disagreeing on the review. The developmental dialogue is often done *ad hoc*, often held informally and in between other issues of daily work. 18 % of the personnel said, that the development dialogue gave them greater influence on their possibilities for development, which is a rather low number. But by 78% of the officers the dialogue is seen as a rewarding discussion, where the superior was prepared, and the dialogue was carried out in a way, where 80 % of the officers felt they were able to speak their opinion concerning the superior.

The displacement between appraisal and development seems to be founded in a number of circumstances. In general there seems to be an insecurity in dealing with the developmental element as a concept and the tools connected to it. A high structure in the appraisal element makes this part of the tool more easy to use in daily life, compared to the rather low structured development dialogue. Many of the appraisors and appraisees experienced a tendency to avoid potential conflict. This too can make the superiors prefer to give good reviews above norm and avoid issues in the dialogue, which can provoke conflict, for the benefit of a good daily working relationship. At last the system – as it works today – has an organizational link to appraisals but no link between the organization and the development dialogue. The personnel administrators needs the appraisals concerning officers to secure the proper promotions, but does not in the same way need the results from the development dialogue.

The survey concludes that there is a need for a completely new system. In designing this new system, it seems essential to closely integrate appraisal and development dialogue by letting the one depend on the other. It seems important to embrace the new concept of strategic development of competencies, and thereby reach a balance between the values and needs of the organization and the wishes for and needs of development from the personnel. By doing this, an appraisal and development dialogue tool will be an element of the struggle to attract and retain valuable personnel in the future. In June 2000 the Defence Command Denmark approved of the surveys conclusions and has initiated the development of a new system.