

Model review system focuses on future performance

MINNEAPOLIS — Performance evaluations should be eliminated, according to **Christopher Lee**.

"Traditional appraisal systems focus almost exclusively on past performance," said Lee, human resources director at **Bates College**.

Such systems arouse anxiety because pay and recognition are tied to these annual "report cards" and review sessions feature one-way communication from managers about how employees met or failed to meet performance standards, Lee said.

Speaking at the **College and University Professional Association for Human Resources** national convention, Lee said HR executives could eradicate employee-manager friction by focusing on future performance.

You could improve performance, employee relations and achievement of institutional goals if you implement a system free from evaluations.

Bates has operated such a system for the last several years, but Lee said he wants to improve on it and create a new universal model for performance management. After reading around two dozen books on the subject, he says

Evaluation contains many fallacies

Bates College HR director **Christopher Lee's** research on performance evaluation uncovered the following:

Myth: A well-designed PE system always works well.

Truth: It won't work if PEs are not completed.

Myth: One size fits all.

Truth: Different types of professionals have different needs/requirements.

Myth: Supervisors accurately rate performance.

Truth: Supervisors have various motivations and pressures to give good ratings.

Myth: PEs are a necessary evil.

Truth: Many successful organizations don't have PEs.

Myth: Linking pay to past performance will motivate future performance.

Truth: Research does not support pay as a motivator and merit increases do not work in bad economic times.

Myth: Appraising performance is enough.

Truth: Bad behavior undermines good performance.

Myth: Progressive discipline occurs inside the PE process.

Truth: Progressive discipline occurs separately.

Myth: A well-trained supervisor can overcome rater bias

Truth: Everyone is human.

Myth: Supervisors keep detailed records

Truth: Many supervisors start tracking performance just before PE sessions.

Myth: Managers give subordinates enough feedback.

Truth: Research shows there is never enough communication. ■

HR expert provides solutions

Performance evaluation is flawed because it is based on past problems, according to **Christopher Lee**, HR director at **Bates College**. Supervisors should provide feedback without appraisal, he said. His other suggestions for solving traditional performance management problems included:

- **Focus on the work, not the individual.** Tailor PE tools to the work being performed. Align job descriptions with organizational mission and goals.

- **Encourage a dialogue between supervisors and employees.** Employ the coaching model and create an environment where feedback is expected.

- **Focus on the future.** Avoid punishing past efforts and concentrate on improving or sustaining good performance.

- **Manage behavior.** Give examples of good/bad behavior.

- **Hold frequent progress reviews.** Require monthly, short meetings.

- **Create a performance log.** Keep a portfolio of performance events that is reviewed by supervisors and employees. Ban new information at end-of-year interviews.

- **Fix managers.** Hold supervisors accountable for the timeliness, accuracy and thoroughness of performance evaluations. Train and support managers.

- **Make employees responsible.** Have employees identify and eliminate performance challenges.

- **Fix the organizational culture.** Adjust/manage the culture, environment, system, policies and procedures that impact employee performance.

- **Do not link pay with performance.** Use money as a reward, not a motivator. Recognize when possible and seek to support intrinsic rewards.

- **Reward results as they occur.** Create a limited and public merit pool and provide different amounts for large and small accomplishments by individuals and departments. ■

experts note common fallacies of current systems and suggest solutions to problems.

Lee's model includes a daily performance log kept by supervisors and employees and a portfolio of performance indicators and events. It has frequent progress reviews.

The ideal performance management system does not tie pay to performance, Lee said. "You should be honest and tell people that you don't pay what they are worth, but what their job is worth."

Money should be used as a reward, not a motivator, Lee continued. Rewards should be given "on-the-spot" for exemplary behavior and results, he said. HR executives should also create a limited and public merit pay pool to provide rewards to a small percentage of nominated employees. A committee of senior leaders from the institution should select and announce award recipients and amounts. ■