
Employee performance appraisal in health clubs and sport organizations: a review

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Abstract: Human Resources evaluation constitutes a useful management tool which can help prosperity, rivalry and the achievements of organizational goals. The company's ability to evaluate executive performance, using valid, reliable and objective processes to identify actual employee's performance discrepancies to the ones desired contributes to long-term success, growth, profitability and organizational improvement. Especially, in the highly competitive health and fitness club industry, which are recorded as 133.000 fitness centers worldwide with profits of 72.7 billion dollars, an organization in order to be viable requires from the employees maximum work performance. Job performance is overall a complex meaning, from which its definition and measurement depends on various factors that should be encoded through a scientific documented effort, rather than arbitrary, spasmodic or informally. This review highlights the importance of a valid and reliable human resources assessment where as organizations prosperity competitiveness and effectiveness is increased as well as a strategic planning is developed.

Keywords: Performance Evaluation, Fitness Trainer, Health Clubs, Sport Organizations

1. Introduction

In today's era of intense and tough competition, and in a rapidly changing environment, human resources are recognized as an important source and competitive advantage to companies and organizations. (Barney, 1995; Newstrom & Davis, 2002; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Storey, 1989; Thomas, 1997). An organization's prosperity, effectiveness and rivalry relies mostly on the knowledge, talents, ideas and abilities of people who staff these organizations. (Chelladurai, 2006; Collins & Porras, 2001). Especially, in places that provide services, such as gymnasiums and sport organizations, where the quality of services is considered a prerequisite for their success, if not for their survival, the organizations recognize that apart from the facilities, programs and their reliability, the human factor is pivotal.

Additionally, according to the International Health Racquet & Sports Club Association's (IHRSA, 2012) report, the health and fitness club industry recorded dramatic growth globally; in 2011, over 133.000 gymnasiums worldwide provided services to 129.000.000 members and their revenues reached up to 72.7 billion dollars. In Europe,

despite that many countries face a difficult economic climate, there are 48.000 gymnasiums recorded with 43.500.000 members and their revenues surpass 31 billion dollars. In Greece, there are 975 gymnasiums active with 385.000 members and their revenues reach up to 257.000.000 dollars (IHRSA, 2012). These facts prove that fitness industry is highly competitive and therefore, in order to survive, an organization needs the maximum efficiency from its staff. The management of staff performance, the assessment process of how well an employee executes his duties against a constant standard, contributes to this and offers companies a competitive advantage (Mathis & Jackson, 2000; Strebler, Robinson & Heron, 1997).

Despite the apparent usefulness of the staff appraisals, European studies (Papalexandris, 1997; Papalexandris, Chalikias, Panagyotopoulou, 2001) shows that in countries such as Greece, Spain, Germany, Norway and Finland only half of the companies adopt an evaluation system. This is in contrast to France, Great Britain, Sweden and Holland where the organizations have implemented appraisal methods for their employees.

Aim of this study was to review the published literature on the concept and philosophy of human resource evaluation.

Furthermore, to briefly record the evaluation systems objectives and targets and lastly to imprint the performance assessment criteria's the fitness instructors' assessments and the evaluation system design and process. This review highlights the importance of a valid and reliable human resources assessment where as organizations prosperity competitiveness and effectiveness is increased as well as a strategic planning is developed.

Method section of narrative literature: This present study, aims to a critical review of the research conducted during the last three decades (1983-2013, concerning the human resources evaluation performance and in particular fitness trainers and aerobics instructors evaluation performance. Some articles from earlier specified periods, with significant importance were accepted. Firstly, the research question was formulated; the criteria were identified and were recorded into an electronic base. For example, articles referring to employee's evaluation working in the sports industry were accepted, as well as the articles referring generally to service sectors since in this category sports organizations and gymnasiums are included. The main terms that were searched were: "personnel assessment", "fitness trainer performance appraisal", "aerobics instructor", "performance evaluation", "performance appraisal criteria for fitness instructors". From this study "grey literature" (e.g. Ph.D Thesis, Master Thesis, etc.) was excluded. As the numbers of publications were too large, the methodology that was used was "preview, question, read, summarize" (PQRS). Following, research classification into a Leader board was held, based on the work content of the evaluated (fitness trainers, personal trainers, sports coaches, PE teachers and out of the sports industry employees). Concerning the theoretical approach of the evaluation performance, secondary sources were sought (handbooks, journals, etc.) aiming to provide to the reader a comprehensive background in order to fully understand this particular study.

2. Evaluation History

Although employee performance appraisal is a distinct management process, it has become the subject of scientific research only in the past century; whereas the concept of evaluation in its broader sense is encountered for millennia. Information which establishes the existence of procedures and assessment tools can be found as far back as at least the third millennium BC (Dubois, 1970; Guba & Linkoln, 1983). According to Dulewicz (1989) there is a human tendency for everyone to judge themselves and the people with whom they work. Usually though, these approaches are informal, unofficial, erratic and mostly arbitrary. The first official attempt to evaluate was found during the 16th century at the Dublin Evening Post, in which attempts were made to define criteria's for employees evaluation based on their individual characteristics. (Huber & Fuller, 1998)

In Europe, the first staff evaluations were implemented, in

the early 1800s, in the northern industrial countries. At the cotton factories in New Lanark of Scotland, Robert Owens, classified the employee's profitability levels by placing different colored cubes on their workstation, therefore indicating their value based on their contribution to the company. The evaluation attempts that were used in industry, where mostly used as a method of establishing salaries based on merit rating logic and performance pay philosophy.

The first official organized workforce assessment in the USA, began in 1813 in the US armies ranks (Randell, 1994; Wiese & Buckley, 1998). In the written reports of General Lewis Cass, the soldier's evaluations were conducted under the terms of « Good Character» or « Contemptible». Later in the First World War, when the need for the proper allocation of millions of men in the armed forces arose, Carnegie – Mellon University developed the first structured evaluation method based on physiological characteristics, known as «*Officer with Officer Comparison*» (Peters & Pierre, 2011). The encouraging results of the army's evaluation methods, primarily based on psychometric criteria adaptation, led to the dissemination of the evaluation methods into the world of business.

The Industrial Revolution (1815-1870) gave an enormous impetus to management thinking and practice. Pioneering studies by Frederic Taylor (1911) in the USA and Henry Fayol (1976) in France helped develop the «Classical Theory» in management thinking in which specific factors were highlighted as critical, i.e. careful employee selection, specialization, analysis and job description and productive results evaluation (Warr & Wall, 1975). Later, new classical approaches, which complemented the conclusions of the classical theorists, turned their interest towards the employees' behaviors and their motives as organizational growth factors. However, McGregor considers that developing the employees without perfecting working methods to be the cause of low productivity in organizations. (Bennis, 1966)

After the Second World War, modern approaches prevailed in human resource management; the performance appraisal is differentiated from staff behaviors. The work of Drucker (1954) focused predominantly on the organization's productivity in relation to employees' performance assessed against objective targets (Management by Objectives). Later on, the researchers' attention becomes focused on customer's satisfaction and quality services that are meet the customer's needs and desires. So, the Total Quality Management model is introduced. Today, as Campbell and Garfinkel (1996) support, large companies in Europe and in the United States aim to evaluate employees as objectively as possible. As such, they simultaneously use multiple personnel evaluator sources (superiors, peers and subordinates), applying a cyclic evaluation model (*360 Degree Feedback*). Huber and Fuller (1998) support that today 80%-90% of the organizations in the United States use a personnel performance evaluation method.

3. Personnel Performance Evaluation Concept

The Performance evaluation is a formal, scientifically structured process for measuring and assessing performance against the relevant job description, the behavior and the results of the employee, aiming at the measurement and the valuing of his productivity, in order to determine if the employee engages effectively or can improve his productivity in the near future. (Kanobear 2002; Field & Holley, 1982). It is a process that provides relevant and valid information regarding the overall capabilities and abilities of the individual (Bratton & Gold, 2003), an assessment process of how well an employee perform his job tasks in relation to his/her job description. (Mathis & Jackson, 2000). The evaluation is an administrative function that contributes to the exercise of effective management. (Papalexandris & Mpourantas, 2003).

Through the procurement of reliable information about an individual, the process of evaluation enables a team, a company or an organization manage to proceed to valid and updated decisions in order to solve any issues they are experiencing (Randell, 1994; Guion, 1998). Through this advanced process of decision making, the organization is empowered to place the most appropriate employees in the right job post at the right time (Golec & Kahya, 2007). The evaluative ordinances do not only concern the organization's prosperity, rivalry and effectiveness, but also constitute an employee's feedback process which helps him/her to realize and fully exploit his/her skills. Result of this feedback is the stimulation, evolution and improvement of the employee (Cascio, 1998).

According to Moulder (2001) and Maddux (1987), the appraisal of work produced offers a communication opportunity between the organization and the employee to discuss what is expected from each other and to find out whether each other's expectations are fulfilled. In medium and large organizations, the personnel performance evaluation constitutes distinct, demarcated and separated Human Resources Management functions, which assesses the extent to which an employee completes his job tasks efficiently. (Judge T. & Ilies R, 2002).

Nowadays, most researchers (Mescon, Bovee & Thill, 1999; Cascio, 1995; French, 1994) support that evaluation constitutes a new prominent scientific area related to the management, employee selection, education and development. It also focuses on the strategic processes and practices in business and to the changes and improvement of the organizations people.

4. Aims and Objectives of an Employee's Performance Evaluation

Osborne & Gaebler (1992) stress that if outputs results are not evaluated and if the outcome of a project is not appraised, then it is not possible to distinguish between success and

failure. MacLean (2001) supports that it is important and necessary to evaluate the human resources of a sport organization for three mainly reasons: a) an organization's success relies on the quality of the human resource performance, b) it is impossible to manage efficiently without reliable information on employees' performance, c) so as to determine the customers' orientation and satisfaction.

A Human Resource's evaluation system firstly aims to identify the gaps between the real employees performance to the one desired, to identify the weaknesses and take corrective measures to continuously improve employees performance and to increase the organization's efficiency (Boone & Kurtz, 2005; Wilson & Western, 2000). The evaluative procedures aim to identify whether a person responds effectively in work, according to certain predefined criteria standards (Byars & Rue, 2003). However, an organization's and company's primary importance is finding and highlighting employees' strong side and exploiting their strengths without being occupied with their weaknesses (Mondy & Noe, 2005; Drucker, 1954). Jackson & Schuler (2003) report that main objectives of evaluation are employees' motivation, productivity enhancements and the facilitation of strategic planning. Therefore, for organizations, the evaluation performance is mainly directed towards the future as they encourage employees' development whilst contributing positively to the entire organization. (Soltani, Gernnard, Van der Meer & Williams, 2005). The traditional approach of Human Resources Management, where evaluation is characterized by the orientation in control based on past performance, is considered obsolete. The most important has a formative character and aims at identifying actions for improvement. The actions concern the identification of educational needs, staff training needs, targeted training activities programs to support the individual to achieve maximum efficiency. (Werther & Davis, 1996; Levin, 1986; Campell, Dunnette, Lawler & Weick, 1970).

One of the most cited evaluation goals are wage management and the determination of the remuneration system. The valuation of work produced by each employee provides the basis for reward efficiency (bonus) and determines the new wage levels. (Cole, 2004; Werther & Davis, 1996; Levin, 1986). Gomez-Mejia & Welbourne (1991) support that connection between wage and efficiency has a positive impact in effectiveness and in human resources efficiency, assuming that promotions and salary increases affect positively employees' motivation. Of course, some researchers support that it is wrong to connect wages with efficiency. They stress that high efficiency has to remain stable and permanent, while wage increases cannot be given continuously by the organization. They consider that evaluation has to be disconnected from salary increase, bonus provision, and to be associated with education and lifelong learning. (Papanis & Rontos, 2007; Van Yperen & Hagedoorn, 2003). However, evaluation is also concerned with the non-official benefits distribution (Sashkin, 1986),

the decision making for promotions, internal movements and redundancies.

The evaluation performance is mostly useful in providing information for the employees profile, especially when he is a newcomer to the organization. So through this evaluation system the candidate selection can be validated -a general assessment of the operation system for attracting and selecting new staff and determination if through these procedure's suitable partners are chosen for the staffing of the organization. (Deadrick & Gardener, 1999). Furthermore, potential deficiencies of shortage in human resources or processes related to staff are identified (Werther & Davis, 1996).

Many researchers (Baruch, 1996; Bratton & Gold 2003; Campell, 1993; Cole 2004; Rendero, 1980) conclude that perhaps the most sufficient assessment role concerns the employee's performance feedback, which in return helps the stimulation, activation and maintenance of a high performance level. The purpose of feedback is the provision of encouragement, strengthening and correction. Furthermore, according to Moulder (2001), evaluations are useful because they help employees to set goals, and performance goals and directly regulate their effort and action.

Researchers (Babakus, Cravens, Johnston & Moncrief, 1996; Cotton & Tuttle 1986; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993) show that an important assessment objective relates to doubt reduction both from the side of the employee and from the side of the organization. This means that the employee has the chance to be informed any time about the quality of his performance. His comparative performance against that of his colleagues enables him to feel stability, justice and meritocracy within the organization and also re-enforces his professional and evolutionary development. From the organizations perspective the verification for the suitability of an employee to a job certifies its expectations, for the proper use of employee's talents and skills for maximum efficiency. The evaluation system can also help exploit hidden resources.

Especially in the area of fitness centers, where physical education instructors have to fulfill various roles, including those of a teacher, an instructor, a nutrition advisor and an active lifestyle councilor (Chen, 2006), it is important for an organization to design an efficient appraisal performance system for instructors in order to ensure that they provide the best possible services. (Penman & Adams, 1980). Additionally the quality of fitness trainers' services may significantly affect the fitness centers reputation. (Tai & Chiu, 2007). Quality fitness instructors are the cornerstone of an established and profitable exercise program. Their classes are innovative that motivate trainees and promote them to an active lifestyle; they are safe, effective and popular amongst gymnasiums' members. Through organized efficiency assessments, recognition, reward and professional development opportunities, fitness center managers can ensure that physical educators continue to bring quality, prestige and energy to a fitness center (Chiu, Lee & Lin, 2010).

5. Evaluation System Design and Process

The evaluation process according to Hansen (2002) consists of a systematic and scientific substantiated effort, which includes a definition of a clear and commonly accepted framework on how performance is estimated, the ongoing assessment of the employee's performance and progress, formal discussions and interactive communication regarding efficiency. The structural elements that constitute a well-designed evaluation system, according to many researchers (Cascio, 1998; Hansen, 2002; Werther & Davis, 1996) are:

- Defining criteria performance, on which the evaluation will be performed

- Defining the performance standings.

- Designing (Method) of the Evaluation System.

- Feedback of the assessed.

DeNisi & Griffin (2001); Longenecker & Fink (1999) suggest that after completing the evaluation process, the criteria performance definition and performance standards, communication with the employee should be followed up, in order to clarify the performance standards, advice and training.

Furthermore, according to Joinson (2001) an evaluation system in order to be sustainable and effective it must be valid, reliable, unbiased, easily implemented and accepted by all. Critical factor in the validity and reliability are the assessment criteria.

6. Performance Assessment Criteria's

Job Performance is a multidimensional concept, the definition and measurement of which depends on a variety of factors (Bates & Holton, 1995). Therefore, performance assessment cannot be carried out using a single criterion, but a set of criteria need to be established, a multidimensional tool. Today, multilevel and multiform assessment systems have been designed. Commonest assessment criteria, without these being contradictory and mutually exclusive are the features of traits, behavior, competencies, achievement of objectives and opportunities for improvement (Latham & Latham, 2000; Mondy & Noe, 2005). Mathis and Jackson (2000) add to the above work, quantity and quality, time management, work time completion, constant work presence and required performance skills. Jenks (1996) supports that in an objective assessment system, criteria must focus on efficiency and not on an employee's character, and neither on their past performance, but criteria should be oriented to employee's stimulation and improvement.

Smith (1976) suggests that skills, abilities, knowledge, behaviors and motivation, are a general evaluation field for human resources. MacLean (2001) supports that a fitness instructor's evaluation field should include knowledge of the subject, teaching efficiency, classroom management,

trainee's activity levels, use of voice, a variety of activities and exercise, communication and administrative skills. Penman & Adams (1980) counted the essential professional possibilities and assessment fields of a fitness trainer as follows: a) Financial management regarding budgets, equipment and employees b) communication skills c) public relations d) knowledge e) quality service f) personality g) organizational management skills h) activities management i) equipment management j) knowledge and corporate culture management. According to Stiff (1993) the important skills that a physical education instructor must hold are: high module level, professionalism, excellent customer management, communications skills, first aid basic skills, computer knowledge skills, marketing skills, skills of setting personal targets and appropriate dress code. Chen (1989) specifies the area of expertise of a successful physical education teacher as: principle knowledge and sport diagnostics technique, teaching results, principles of a suitable sports environment, leadership skills, personality and understanding of corporate philosophy. According to Eickhoff- Shemek (2004) assessment criteria may include: a) quality indicators regarding the warming up of the trainee, the gradual increase of intensity, adaptability at the trainee level b) Instructions, feedback, interest for the trainee and c) issues, such as selecting and adjusting exercises, charisma, energy, a variety of intensity control, security, use of music, etc. Campell, (1993) and Chelladurai, (2006) add the following to the above: written and oral communication, leadership, effective trainee management, customer management and administrative skills.

Literature reviews have produced a wide range of criteria, which make the assessment process vague and difficult. Chiu, Lee & Lin (2010) tried to explore the assessment criteria for a physical education instructor through the Analytic Hierarchy Process [AHP] model of Saaty (1980). The AHP method has been widely used in different diagnostic areas and scientific fields in order to examine the problems that occur from numerous evaluation criteria where the researcher can select the most relevant criteria. The assessment in the study of Chiu, Lee & Lin, (2010) include a total of three dimensions and fifteen factors. The three dimensions are: *teaching*, *achievement* and *service*. The teaching dimension includes the quality of lessons, their innovation, the training and interaction with the client, etc. The dimension of achievement refers to lesson sales, customer attraction, communication skills, marketing, etc. The service dimension includes administration management, image improvement of fitness center, interaction with others, participation in relevant activities, customer information provision. The results of the research showed that priority to assessment efficiency of a personal physical instructor are the achievements (0,637), teaching (0,258) and services (0,105). Within these dimensions the most important factors were: in the «training» section appropriate criterion is considered *quality of lessons*, in the «achievement» sector the factor that dominates is the *course sale*, while in the «services» section the factor that emerges is the

administration management. However, researchers underline that, despite the emergence of the «achievement» sector as the main evaluation index, gymnasiums cannot ignore service quality and are required to adjust appropriately to meet the needs of trainees and generally develop a customer-oriented strategy (Chiu, Lee & Lin, 2010).

On the coaching field MacLean & Chelladurai (1995) created a multidimensional assessment model, *the Scale of Coaching Performance (SCP)*. The assessment criteria are classified into two categories, those that refer to the product / results (behavioral product factors) and those that refer to the process (behavioral process factors). The two categories are structured into six factors. The factors that refer to the product are described as example win-loss record, number of blue-ship athletes, improvement from season to season, etc. The factors that refer to the process are analyzed as effecting teaching methodology; communicate effectively with athletes, understanding of appropriate age-group skills, motivation of athletes, etc. The following figure analyzes the evaluation criteria's per factor.

But whatever is chosen as evaluation criteria in an organization, according to many researcher's (Chelladurai, 2006; MacLean, 2001; Campbell, 1993) these have to be specific to the job, relevant, valid, comprehensive and measurable. In order for these criteria identified a job analysis must be undertaken (Noe et al., 2007; Jackson & Schuler, 2003; Mathis & Jackson, 2000; Murphy & Cleveland, 1991; Ilene & Barnes – Farrell, 1984; Sashkin, 1981). According to research by Eickhoff – Shemek (2004) while the 88% of the fitness center managers implemented an evaluation system, few explicitly declared the significant criteria or the performance standards. As such, while many of them provided written feedback to the assessed, significant errors occurred in the evaluation system.

7. Evaluation Systems Errors

Verma, DeNisi & Peters (1996) stress that evaluators inevitably judge based on their values, ideas, knowledge and prejudice, but also the emotional attachment they might have with the assessed and all these factors positively or negatively affect their judgment. As such, the evaluator's suitability and a wrong choice of an evaluation method are included in lists of frequent errors in relation to evaluating staff. Avoiding evaluation mistakes is not easy, for this reason Mathis & Jackson (2000) support that educating evaluators is essential for the objectivity and reliability of the evaluation system. From the bibliography (Byars & Rue, 2003; Mathis & Jackson, 2000; Mondy et al. 1999) the common error types are:

7.1. Halo and Horn Effect

This error type occurs when the evaluator marks low (horn) or high (halo) in all factors, focusing on an intense characteristic of the individual. The halo effect is the

evaluator's natural tendency to have the whole evaluation based on the general picture he has for the assessed (Kanellopoulos, 1991). This specific mistake type is usually found in the grading of the employee's personality, where the evaluator expresses in a subjective way his sympathy or antipathy towards the assessed Nathan & Tippins (1992). For the limitation of the halo effect, employees should be evaluated in only one factor or characteristic each time before the evaluator proceeds to the next factor Mathis & Jackson (2000).

7.2. Leniency Errors

This error type is observed when personal preferences are located in the highest points of the grading scale. According to Hitiris (2001) this occurs from a conscious error where the evaluator biases and grades his employee higher than his real value. This happens because the evaluator may want to avoid tension and friction from the employees side. As such, they tend to evaluate them with leniency and not according to what they really deserve (Mathis & Jackson, 2000). The leniency errors are mainly found when the evaluation criteria are vague, indefinite and when they are not quantified (Kane, Bernardin, Villanova & Peyrefitte, 1995).

7.3. Strictness Errors

This specific error type is observed when the value judgments are identified in the lower points of the grading scale. And, here, biased and stereotypical evaluators attitudes are intervening. Lenient or austerity phenomena are found in organizations where vague and indefinite optimum performance levels are found. (Kantas, 1998). According to Kanellopoulos (1991) the evaluator's education helps the limitation of this specific error.

7.4. Central Tendency

The evaluator commits central tendency errors when he does not wish to consider the assessed as ineffective neither wants to estimate them as excellent employees, so he evaluates them within a limited range, which is consisted in the same context of the grading scale (Mathis & Jackson, 2000). This error is committed from the evaluator in order to avoid the justification of higher or lower grading. (Hitiris, 2001). For the limitation of central tendency error, a detail recording of each criteria is required and a clarification of the differences in work performance, so the evaluator has a clear knowledge of the grade he submits. (Byars & Rue, 2003).

7.5. Regency Effect

This error is committed when the evaluator is influenced from recent incidents and strongly emphasizes the events and behaviors during the last years (Byars & Rue, 2003). The evaluator commits this error especially when the evaluation period has a long time gap (e.g. yearly) and it is possible for him not to remember the previous employee's

contribution (Hitiris, 2001). The most recent method for eliminating this error is the constant behavior recording, all year round (Mathis & Jackson, 2000).

7.6. Stereotyping and Prejudice

The evaluators grading, often deviates from objectivity due to prejudices such as employees' gender, age, nationality or religion. (Byars & Rue, 2003). For example, it has been found that men receive better assessments than woman, even if the evaluator is a woman (Kanellopoulos, 1991). A way of eliminating this type of error is the evaluation should be carried out from more than one evaluator (Byars & Rue, 2003).

7.7. Similar to Me Effect

Common characteristics between the evaluator and the assessed (e.g. origin, education, political beliefs, etc.) create sympathies that lead to an error of similarity or intimacy, as a result of the favorable evaluation rating of the evaluator towards the assessed. (Papanis & Rontos, 2007; Hitiris, 2001).

7.8. Mathew Effect

One of the main errors in the evaluation procedure according to Gabris & Mitchell (1989) occurs when the employee receives the same evaluation results every year regardless of the efforts he makes. According to the Mathew effect, previous evaluations prejudge any future attempt.

Many researchers have studied the evaluation errors, in an effort to identify and clarify them so as to reduce or eliminate them, referring to the type and the frequency of their occurrence. Lefkowitz (2000) observes an employee's leniency grading from the evaluators, which is due to the low desire they have for low performance punishment or due to good interpersonal relations. Heneman, Greenberger & Anonyou (1989) support that evaluators frequently classify their employees into teams "in" or "out" categories. The first ones are rated in favor and are consistent to reap fees and promotions, and the second ones often stagnate in their development. The existence of social relationships between evaluators and the assessed constitutes, according to Stredwick (2005) an objective difficulty in negative rating. Antonioni (1994) states that when the evaluator knows in advance that the evaluation results will be notified to the employee, an attitude of lenient and favorable rating is observed. Longenecker, Sims & Gioia (1987) consider that the reasons that one evaluator may discriminate and view favorable towards an employee, is to avoid a possible confrontation and conflict, to avoid a written justification for low efficiency, to submit a bonus to someone he likes, while negative evaluation is given to employees in order to render wise, the evaluator to validate power trends or to present written data upon employees dismissal.

In order to avoid error assessments, above all, education of the managers who conduct the evaluations is required. Keeping a logbook of each employee's performance and

conducting an evaluation based on data from many sources also assists in error avoidance (Mathis & Jackson, 2000).

8. Human Resources Assessors

One of the basic, but controversial, issues of the evaluation process is assigning the appropriate evaluator, i.e. who will conduct the performance evaluation. In the traditional approach this task is undertaken from the direct supervisor. In the last few years, however, a turn to new sources is observed, which include self-appraisal, evaluation from external consultants, evaluation from colleagues, employees, customers or evaluation from many other sources simultaneously (Byars & Rue, 2003; Jackson & Schuler, 2003; Latham & Wexley, 1981; Mathis & Jackson, 2000; Mondy et al. 1999). In large organizations, the function designing and development of the evaluation system is executed by the Human Resources department (Mondy et al. 1999). Below, the various people responsible for conducting the evaluation process are presented:

8.1. Direct supervisor

Although the supervisor was the main source of information for the majority of organizations until the late '70s (Lazer & Wilkstrom, 1977), in many organizations, the supervisor, still remains the key evaluation personnel (Soltani, 2003). Theoretically he might be the most appropriate, as he has a clear picture for each employee, he is aware of behavior aspects, abilities and potentials of the assessed, and his opinion should be significant (Ghorpade & Chen, 1995). Additionally, he is the person who will recommend for the employees changes (promotion, training, relocation, benefits, etc) and therefore his judgment is significant. In order to avoid partiality errors, favorable or unfavorable treatment, his judgment is usually subjected to approval by the Senior Manager.

8.2. Self-Appraisal

In this process, each employee is asked to evaluate their own efficiency. In this way the employee has the opportunity to identify by himself his abilities and weaknesses. As a process, it usually encounters a positive response and acceptance from the employees, and it is a unique technique to increase the employees' simulation and improvement. It increases the employees' commitment towards the objective target (Mathis & Jackson, 2000). However, several researchers (Byars & Rue, 2003; Jackson & Shuler, 2003; Fox et al. 1994) support that the self-appraisal method often subjects to lenient errors, to discriminatory ordinances and is not always objective, therefore, self-appraisal should be combined with other assessment sources. Research from Eichener & Lombardo (2003) supports that employees self-appraisal rarely has similarities with the opinions of the direct supervisors, and therefore they suggest having combined models from evaluators.

8.3. Evaluation Performed by Colleagues

It is an essential source of valuable information because employees spend the whole of their working time with their colleagues, and are aware of the assessed weaknesses and strengths, which makes their opinion particularly significant (Atwater, Roush & Fichthal, 1995). Additionally, several researchers (Maurer, Raju, & Collins 1998; Zingheim & Schuster, 1995) support that colleagues evaluations can offer reliable information to identify the assessed educational needs. However, friendly and hostile interpersonal relationships may threaten the objectivity of this specific technique (Mathis & Jackson, 2000), in contrast with groups that have basic features cooperation, mutual respect and understanding, the results may be particularly significant (Scott & Einstein, 2001).

8.4. Evaluation Performed by Subordinates

It is also named as Reverse or Upward Appraisal. It is a technique that gives the chance to subordinates to express their opinion and judgments concerning their superiors' performance. It is an essential information source for the employee's evolution and development rather than their provision of rewards or incentives (Taylor & Morgan, 1995). Several researchers (Antonioni, 1994; Fox, Caspy & Reiser, 1994) support that anonymity is essential for the technique's objectivity because subordinates usually are afraid to express their opinion freely, for fear of dismissal. The subordinate's assessment according to Shaw et al. (1995), encounters great acceptance in government agencies in the USA (State Patrol) and in large private companies (IBM, Syntex). One of the positives of this specific assessment source, is that the information concerning an employee's positive or negative behavior is transferred to the higher administrative levels and effectively employees' relationships improve.

8.5. Evaluation from Customers

Chellandurai, (2006) supports that services organizations, such as gymnasiums, customers are a particularly interesting source of evaluation data regarding employees efficiency and behavior. It is particularly important for organizations to know what customers believe concerning the service level they are offered. Customer satisfaction ratings provide a reliable indicator for quality and services (MacLean, 2001; Milliman, Zawacki, Schulz, Wiggins, & Norman, 1995; Yakovac, 1996).

8.6. Evaluation from External Consultants

Many organizations use the services of external consultants to perform the assessment process with the assistance of the supervisors. The consultant, in co-operation with the supervisor, initially uses the interview method to collect job data and information concerning the employee's efficiency. Following that, another interview is performed with the employee discussing, about the outcomes of the

first interview. (Byars & Rue, 2003; Mathis & Jackson, 2000)

8.7. 360 Degree Feedback – Cyclic Evaluation

The main characteristic of 360 degree feedback is the combination of all the above assessment sources. Supervisors, equivalent grade colleagues, subordinates, customers and the assessed themselves express their appreciation and judgments concerning an employee's efficiency (Carson, 2006; Mondy et al. 1999; Vinson, 1996). The multiple information sources offer quality, reliable and valid results (Bratton & Gold, 1999). Engaging a group of people, instead of an individual, reduces the evaluation errors and the biased judgments (Jackson & Shuler, 2003). Additionally it tends to supplement the total quality management principles as emphasis is given to the customer (Sherman, Bohlandern & Snell, 1998). The cyclical evaluation method enjoys great acceptance and tends to replace traditional evaluation methods in modern organizations (Toegel & Conger, 2003). For many though, it constitutes an expensive, time-consuming process and a bureaucratic method (Newstrom & Davis, 2002; Mathis & Jackson, 2000). It requires the managing of complexity since all answers have to be combined, and many of them are often conflicting (Sherman et al. 1998). However, because it is a multifaceted creative process, which encounters the employees' consent and acceptance (Huet, Nielsen, Sundsrton, 1999), a large number of companies (General Electric, Mobil Oil, Disney, Nabisco, Lockheed, Warner, Lambert, etc.) use the cyclical evaluation method widely.

In conclusion, someone could support that all assessment sources have advantages and disadvantages. A combination of sources, according to Ghorpade & Chen (1995),

throughout the assessment process, lends credibility, validity and objectivity.

9. Human Resources Evaluation Frequency

An important decision that an organization has to make is how often an assessment process should take place. A formal and organized procedure takes place in regular and specific periods. Mondy and Noe (2005), support that in a modern and constantly changing environment it is desired that organizations should often perform assessment systems. The majority of organizations perform the *Focal – Point system*, evaluating their employees on a yearly or even on an every six months basis. Possibly yet, the yearly evaluation might be considered insufficient (Mondy & Noe, 2005). Additionally Cascio (1998) considers the yearly based evaluations, have fundamental disadvantages, due to the workload in a short period of time, and the evaluator's influence from recent events and employees behaviors. Schuler & Jackson (2000) consider that an assessment process should be performed only when the evaluator has full knowledge of the employees' job performance level,

without being influenced from time restrictions and commitments. This philosophy has been imprinted by the term *Natural Time Span of the Job*. Several organizations adopt evaluation processes every time that a project finishes. So, on the firsthand, they expect to convert the operational targets into employee's personal targets, and on the other hand to ensure objective and impartial judgments (Mondy & Noe, 2005). In cases of a new recruited employee evaluation, the first assessment takes place in the first 30-90 days, following the employee is assessed again in six months, and the last phase takes place after the completion of the first year (Mathis & Jackson, 2000).

What has a particular importance is that organizations should understand that the evaluation performance is not a static process that is performed every year, they should realize that it is a dynamic, substantial and sustained process to achieve human resource development, consequently improving the organization's rivalry and prosperity.

10. Relations between Evaluators and Assessed

The performance evaluation process is according to Bratton and Gold (2003) the most controversial and less popular operation of Human Resources Management. Spence & Keeping (2010) support that evaluation procedures are often a painful experience for the assessed and for the assessors. For employees there is distrust, a dissatisfaction and even fear (MacLean, 2001). Evaluation processes amongst employees, are recorded as low trust and acceptance, sense of efficiency and often lead to rivalries and conflicts between evaluators – employees (Smither, 1998).

According to several researchers (Hitiris, 2001; Deming, 1998, Longenecker & Goof, 1992; Sherman, 1998) evaluation processes have received overwhelming critics and arguments from those who are negatively disposed to the evaluation philosophy, and refer that the evaluation function creates fear to the employees, it makes the employees feel that their personality is being reduced, it creates injustices and inequalities, it promotes competition between colleagues and it does not develop the team spirit. Additionally they stress that efforts have temporary short-term results and most importantly that employees are being discouraged instead of being motivated. Deming (1986), considers the evaluation function as one of the "seven deadly diseases" and that it is opposed to the Total Quality Management principles. According to Ghorpade and Chen (1995), supporters of the Total Quality Management, evaluation systems are considered unfair, as that they promote behaviors which endanger quality, and quality is sacrificed for the sake of the numbers. Lastly, evaluation systems discourage employees considering them responsible for issues that the organization is to blame. However, the problem is not exactly the evaluation itself, but the way it is performed. The strongest reason of employees'

dissatisfaction is due to management's inability to cultivate a supportive culture for the human resources evaluation system. The modern understanding of a performance evaluation system is that it cannot have a punitive character, but it has to focus on improving and developing employees' skills and consolidating performance with the organizations strategic targets (Longenecker & Goof, 1992).

Perquisite for the success of a performance evaluation system, according to Terzidis (2004) is the acceptance of the assessed. Incomplete acceptance of the system, from the side of the assessed, leads to negativism, resistance and hostility towards the evaluation system. However, acceptance is not easily achieved. Employees need to be persuaded and possibly involved/consulted during the development of such a system, especially during the selection of performance criteria in order to ensure acceptable of an evaluation system. It is particularly important for employees to understand that even when they receive a negative assessment, if it is accompanied by constructive and creative intention; it helps them overcome their present difficulties and improve their performance. (Fedor, Eder & Buckley, 1989).

But managers, who are invited to conduct assessments, often find themselves in an uncomfortable position and experience feelings of guilt because they tend to view assessments as an aggressive act towards their employees (Levinson, 1970). Either because there is no evaluation culture within the organization or there is no experience or training in evaluation systems, or there is a lack of trust in the workplace, assessment remains even nowadays an uncertain and a controversial issue. It is an intense emotional process and without a developmental direction is impossible to succeed (Cascio, 1998).

11. Traditional and Contemporary Approaches to Evaluation Performance

In the traditional approach of management human resources evaluation performance is characterized by the element of control. The appraisal of work that is produced mainly focuses on past performance, while productivity improvement is based on a «reward» and «punishment» system as a result of employee's comparison and ranking. Consequently, the assessed role remains passive, without any involvement in the evaluation process. The aftereffect of the above, is the non – acceptance of such system by the assessed and a defensive and reactive attitude (Papalexandris & Mpourantas, 2003).

Evaluation only makes sense when it is future oriented, with a formative character and aims at identifying actions for improvement. Thus, in the modern conception of human resource evaluation, the assessment systems are characterized by a developmental nature giving emphasis to employees possibilities for future progression and performance. Performance improvement is attempted through education, motivation and the empowering of

human recourses. Improved performance is attempted through targeted, continuous feedback, the analysis strengths and weakness and through guidance. The role of the assessed is substantial as he is participating in the process (Papalexandris & Mpourantas, 2003). In the modern concept of assessment, firstly the assessed has to be convinced about the assessments' necessity and importance. If this is achieved, then employees acquire an enhanced understanding for the needs and requirements of their job, they build up relationships based on trust and maintain positive feelings towards their organization (Fletcher & Williams, 1996). On the contrary, it is observed that organizations that do not the incorporate regular performance assessments suffer reduced performance, increased frustration and withdrawal (Longenecker & Fink, 2001).

12. Discussion

In a challenging business environment, the continuous development of human resources is essential for the company's effectiveness and competitiveness. For this reason, companies seek to develop means for evaluating and further developing their human resources. According to Jackson & Schuler (2000) the function of evaluation aims to activate staff's talents and behaviors of an organization, in ways which will contribute to the creation and completion of the organization's mission, vision and goals.

However, the evaluation function constitutes a controversial issue and with differing opinions being expressed. Supporters of performance measurement, consider that the evaluation process to be a critical aspect of the organizational life (Lawrie, 1990), whereas researchers who are skeptical and do not see the evaluation process as a panacea, believe that it is inherently wrong and impossible to be perfected (Derven, 1990). Indeed, Deming (1986) considers that the evaluation process is one of "the seven deadly diseases" which are opposed to the Total Quality Management-TQM principles.

Although evaluation is used as useful tool for increasing staff's stimulation and improving their efficiency, even more controversial issues and many differing opinions are expressed in relation to how the evaluation processes should be implemented, how often it should take place and who the evaluators should be. Intense concerns are being expressed with regard to whose goals are being served by the evaluation process. There are many researchers who believe in the benefits of performance valuation and evaluation, and as it has the potential to contribute to staff's development and improvement. However, they condemn every effort made to link these assessments to rewards and recognition schemes which results in salary increase, productivity premium or promotions. On the other hand, there are supporters who believe that benefits should be distributed fairly to the most deserving employee's according to their qualifications, to their efforts and their results.

Even critics of evaluation's systems believe that negative

evaluation results usually occur due to the application of the wrong evaluation system/method. As such, they express their skepticism in relation to the inadequacy of methods and usability of systems rather than the philosophy of evaluation. (Hitiris, 2001).

Evaluation contributes to improved administration and the normal operation of an organization as capable, highly trained and skilled personnel constitute a necessity for an organization. The science of human resources management, through the means of evaluation, attempts to identify the best personnel. This study aims to highlight that the evaluation of human resources is not a luxury for an organization, but a necessity which should be incorporated as an integral part of any organization's culture. It should not be treated by companies as a cost to be avoided, but as an opportunity to invest in people with the ultimate goal of an organization's prosperity.

During the last decade, the rapid growth of sports industry and the large profits from sports organizations, created the need for educating the organization leaders – sport managers, aiming to maintain the competitiveness with other industries. In order to meet the needs of the specific profession, according to N.A.S.P.E. – N.A.S.S.M, more than 250 Universities in the United States educate their human resources executives derived from physical studies. Sport Managers, endeavor through the functions of developing human resources, soliciting, managing and evaluating, to fulfill the needs of the trainees and to gain the consumers loyalty. Their target is human resources empowerment improvement. Researches indicate that on average gymnasiums lose 40% of their customers each year (Sawyer & Smith, 1999) and the 50% of the consumers that begin to participate in athletic programs, drop out at the first six months (Gerson, 1999). In conclusion, quality determination as a strategic and human resources evaluation performance are identified as a significant source of a competitive advantage since high-level of customer satisfaction leads to a higher level of loyalty and devotion towards the organization and is linked to the behavioral intention of reusing the specific services (Bloemer, Ko de Ruyter & Wetzels, 1999, Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000, Roest & Verhallen, 1995).

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