

Evaluation of job performance is a very difficult and complex task. Each bureaucratic level has to come up with a scheme to accomplish that over various groups with vastly different job assignments and skill levels as though there was a common basis for comparison. Sophisticated measurement philosophy attempts to fit everyone to a normalized scale. As an example, in school, we had to deal with this curve where “normal” or “average” was a C grade. Perhaps this would be true for the full population of the world, but not for those actually capable of attending school.

I have worked for over forty years with many management organizations and have never seen a methodology that truly reflected a worker’s worth. The evaluation scheme is generally manipulated to produce a generally suitable answer, and the employees are usually disappointed and lack faith in the idea that their raise is truly related to their performance. The steps are taken and boxes checked, no matter what the true worth is.

I married a great teacher, who was constantly frustrated by the evaluation process. It never truly represented her performance and value as a teacher of children. It was always agonizing and de-motivating for her, and a major reason for her leaving her job. I always counseled her to ignore the process, as it never really meant anything. But that was easy advice to give, but extremely hard to take.

In my opinion, an evaluation is only “valuable” or meaningful if the one making it has a deep personal knowledge of what the worker has done. This is best performed in an informal basis (paperwork gets in the way). That is, of course, why it is never accomplished – there are too many employees per supervisor to do the job well. And thus an arbitrary structure is created to hang the evaluation on.

Somehow, in my over-evaluated brain, I thought of a parallel to an old Bible story. The production of a faux evaluation seems like the time that the Israelite people became restless when they felt isolation from their leader, Moses, who had ascended the mountain to receive the ten commandments. Aaron threw gold jewelry into the fire and then claimed “out came this calf” when he made up an idol that he thought would hold the people together until Moses came back. When the calf was created, the people worshipped it at first because they thought that it was good, but then disaster struck when its falseness became clear. It might have been a thing of beauty, even worthy of worship (in a way), until its meaningless and powerlessness was revealed. Then the people ended up having to eat the dust that had been ground from the destroyed image. Thus, they ended up being punished instead of rewarded.

So, our management (doing the best they can with all the issues), tries to formalize our evaluation with an equation that ranks us compared to our fellows and doles out reward so that the sum total is what they were authorized to give. The best thing to do is to work as if you are working for the Lord [scrip], and just be grateful that you can feed your family and provide them what they need.