

A Differentiating Measure for Appraisals 2021 and Beyond

This year is a time to measure certain behavioural clusters/competency areas, to find a true picture of how people think, feel and act under such pressure and as their true selves. If you realize, this year would have taken away most, if not all the masks, people usually wear in the workplace.



Sai Kumar Chandran
Founder- OrbitShift

Sai Kumar Chandran is the founder of OrbitShift, a coaching & consulting practice and an entrepreneur at heart. He is a strategy & performance partner, a business & executive coach and a board member to several SMEs. Sai currently helps senior leaders in organizational transformation through strategy, people, cultural, AI & tech solutions. He has been a business and HR leader with many large organizations/groups and is recognized for the impact that he brings through thought leadership, strategy, and execution excellence. Sai believes in simplification and intelligent use of technology to enhance productivity & impact.

2020 was a year of discovery, adjustments, and ambiguity. Is the ambiguity over? The answer is not signed and sealed yet. In many senses the future of work and workplaces, both are still getting rewritten in most industries. In some industries, much more than the others.

One part of the economy saw lay-offs, rollbacks, role rationalizations, and make-do with the least workforce approach. Aviation, hotels, retails and even manufacturing had these challenges. The other industries/businesses had a different challenge. Some businesses were struggling with delivering on-the-fly. Insurance, telecom, unorganized & organized

retail are a few of these. Others were in the middle of the pandemic and working in the hazard zone. Medical, waste disposal, delivery services, transportation, logistics, and more to name a few. Yet others had to manage stable demands with work from home as the mainstay. Healthcare, several services companies, essential services, and manufacturing or logistics units had such challenges. Much of this pandemic, affected business processes from strategy & financial planning to pay-outs and debt servicing. Leaders and business owners are still searching for the right responses to the changes. In this context, the yearly appraisals and goal-setting exercises too are at the receiving end and am sure none of us will have a perfect answer here



too. Traditionally, assessment cycles have relied on yearly goals, goal cascade, periodic checks, and year-end appraisals. Much depended on these cycles – promotions, merit increases, bonus pay-outs, and even talent refresh. But in 2020, truncated timeline, and well-planned goals laid to waste, could have been very well your organization’s story, like most. Additionally, as the restrictions opened-up, serving the new patterns of customer demand could also have been your reality.

While every organization will have to define what the assessment period and objectives would be assessed, this assessment cycle presents a unique opportunity. Now, put this into perspective. People had to adjust to new realities and find the resources within themselves to deliver and do their best. This would have been a significantly different performance landscape from the earlier years. In this attempt, some would have flourished, others would have struggled, and yet others nearly perished. In this conundrum, behaviours and response systems of teams, individuals and departments wouldn’t have gone unnoticed.

Hence, this year is a time to measure certain behavioural clusters/competency areas, to find a true picture of how people think, feel and act under such pressure and as their true selves. If you realize, this year would have taken away most, if not all the masks, people usually wear in the workplace. Hence, such measures are not just to gather data for appraisals, but feed-in for talent mapping and continuous development & feedback through the coming year. If, this makes sense to you, here is a cluster of 4 key approaches you could study for individual contributors, as well as teams, managers, and leaders.

Resilience

- Did the person/team learn and adjust on the fly?
- How well were they able to take the pressures of managing the work-life dilemma?

Responsiveness

- What was the quality of responses individuals/teams demonstrated through the year?
- How well were people using time and resources?

Relatedness

- What did individuals do to stay in touch with each other?
- What was the quality of responses people gave to each other?

Result orientation

- How well did people respond to the current and emerging business needs?
- Were people able to identify relevant opportunities to serve the existing or new customers?
- Were people sensitive to the outcomes required by various customer groups?

Using a few behavioural indicators, plus a 5-point or 10-point rating scales and/or a qualitative feedback gathering setup, the opportunity space is open to get and categorize such responses. And how would they help? Well, here are three good ways:

- Usually, every year the emphasis is on financial rewards and other related exercises of performance management. Can this year be about other things, like finding and rewarding role models and steady

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- hands? These could be champions who excelled in the 4 areas.
- Usually, we reward ‘individuals’ based on the performance assessments. Can we find clusters of success and jointly reward cross-functional teams or departments that came through for others? This would be a real differentiator.
- Every year, PM is a post-mortem approach? Can we use the lessons learnt from the 4R measurements to shape the coming year? This is possible by ringfencing individuals or teams that need to cover significant ground on the 4R frame. This will be a good feed-forward.

This year has taught us that the approach is far more important than the ends alone. Possibly this learning is a nudge for us to reshape the ailing performance management system most of our organizations have. Amongst other things, let’s correct the system that calls for collaboration and ownership, but does not reward collective effort or risk / initiative-taking and related failure.

Let’s correct the system that wants to establish a fair view of the organizational performance but is really found wanting in creating a clean measurement system. Failing miserably in creating a system that considers means as well as end.

Let’s correct the system, that rewards hero-playing and aggressive go-getting but does little to foster trust and inclusion as lasting principles.

Let’s correct a system that in most cases is the poster story for building culture but creates anxiety and ends each cycle with corroding trust in the organizational machinery, every single year. And the list of ailments could go on...

Can such latent and emergent needs receive a fair share of attention? Especially, in this unique appraisal cycle.

The choice is in your hands. This year you have a pressing issue asking for such realignments. If you do not bite the bullet now, when will you!