



MELROSE



THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

course guide

TECHNICAL ADVISER

Pat Mitchell

PRODUCED BY

Melrose Film Productions, 16 Bromells Road, London SW4 OBL
Telephone: 0171 627 8404 Fax: 0171 622 0421

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USING THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

There are three main elements to this pack

↳ **The trainer's pack**

This contains all the materials and help you need to run a one day course for a group of between eight and twelve people. It consists of.

- A copy of The **Appraisal Interview** video which includes summaries by both the appraiser, Paul, and the appraisee, Tony.
- This course guide.

↳ **The quick guide**

This is designed to be used with the video when time for preparation and training is limited. The programme it outlines can be run by someone with little or no training experience or used as the basis for discussion by a group of colleagues working together.

↳ **The appraisee's self study pack**

This is designed for use by individuals who are preparing to be interviewed by their manager. It consists of:

- A copy of The Appraisal Interview video which contains a brief introduction to the main film to focus the viewer's attention on the questions it raises for appraisees. This version of the video also includes the summary by Tony, the appraisee.
- A short self study booklet.

If you are a line manager and you wish to give the self study pack to those you will be appraising to help them prepare more effectively, read Handout 5 in this guide. It will tell you how to introduce the pack to your people.

APPRAISAL - THE CONTEXT

Introduction

The Appraisal Interview is a training resource pack which examines the skills we all need to discuss performance effectively with one another. If we don't have these skills then, no matter what kind of organisation we are in or what type of system we use, appraisal won't work for us. So skills are fundamental. But skillful appraisers alone will not necessarily make appraisal work. To set this training programme in context, let us take a brief look at what else is needed to get real benefits from appraisal systems.

Purpose

Like everything else in management, appraisal needs a clear aim. So, first of all, we must decide what these systems are for.

Broadly speaking, there are two choices: a system which is about assessment, comparisons between individuals, ratings and direct links to reward, and one which is about improvement, development and motivation.

Each purpose can be achieved in certain circumstances, but appraisal systems cannot deliver both at once. Discussing improvements means being open with one another. It is unrealistic (and unfair) to expect individuals to be open about their weaknesses, or to tell the boss that he is failing to give them the support they need, when they know that next year's pay rise will depend on the rating he gives them at the end of the interview.

Ownership

Then there is the familiar question of ownership. If bosses and job holders think that appraisal is valuable it will work. If they don't, it won't. So sensible organisations get as much involvement as they can in the design of their systems from those who will have to put them into action.

Once an appraisal system is running, it needs support. People need to be trained. Practical difficulties have to be spotted and sorted out. Appraisers need protection, so that they can devote the time to appraisal needed to get it right. Perhaps most of all, the organisation must be seen to deliver on the conclusions that people reach at appraisal interviews. To take a common example, there are few things more demoralising than agreeing training or development with one of your people and then finding that you cannot get the support required to provide it.

Adapting to change

Finally, as thoughtful organisations adapt to change, so they adapt their appraisal systems accordingly.

The pressures on organisations - public as well as private - to become more focused about what they do is causing many of them to tie their appraisal systems much more tightly into their broad strategy. No longer is appraisal being treated as something which the Personnel Department dreams up and imposes on managers. Instead, it is increasingly seen as part of a much wider approach to Performance Management - linked into effective business planning, a clear organisational vision, appropriate reward systems, a communication strategy and so on. This is really good news because the more those who have to make appraisal work see it as being in the mainstream of their jobs, the more seriously they will take it and the more benefits it will deliver to them. Change is also forcing organisations to look at their

structures and how they use the talents of those they employ. The ranks of management are thinning. Layers teaching staff and hospital consultants. It may, in future, have a part to play within empowered, self-managing teams

- Shared appraisal - getting views about performance from more than one source.

Above all, expect change to create variety in how we appraise. One system will not fit everybody and the days of trying to feed people through the same sausage machine are fast coming to an end. Universal systems are dead, even if some of them seem reluctant to lie down. There is a very important message in that word 'variety' for those organisations, in education and healthcare for example, which are new to appraisal. Find your own solutions. Those who adopt other organisations' approaches uncritically run the risk of dressing themselves in clothes which others are trying to take off.

Let us go back to where we started. Of course we have to get the context right; have clear objectives; design and support appraisal properly; understand the implications of change and adapt appraisal to fit; create the right sort of variety in the systems we adopt.

But never forget the need for basic skills. When you come down to it, appraisal is about two adults sitting down to discuss performance at work. Do that right and the benefits are immense.

CONTENTS OF THE PACK

Video

The Appraisal Interview (30 mins)

The story of an appraisal interview which goes wrong the first time around and then, after a bit of help from the appraiser's boss, is put right at the second attempt. The video is divided into three parts, each ten minutes long.

Summary (7 mins)

Appraiser and appraisee in turn summarise what they have learned from the two interviews.

Course guide

About the pack

This gives an overview of the contents of the pack and guidance on how to run a one day course. It consists of:

- An introduction which outlines the purpose of the pack, the intended audience and the objectives of the training course it contains
- A synopsis of the video

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- Key messages from the video
 - A timetable and session by session outline of a one day training course
 - Guidance on how to prepare and follow up the one day course
 - A list of other Melrose titles relevant to appraisal.

↳ **Course session plan**

Detailed instructions for the one day course.

↳ **Resources**

Handouts and ready-made OHP transparencies.

PURPOSE OF THE PACK

Introduction

The purpose of this training pack is to help you equip those involved in appraisal with the skills necessary to conduct and take part in effective appraisal interviews.

Audience

The target group for the training outlined in the pack consists of all those who take part in appraisal interviews. Though there is more emphasis in the video on the role of the appraiser, the skills covered are just as applicable to those on the receiving end of appraisal. An appraisal interview is much more likely to be a genuine, helpful exchange of information and ideas if both parties understand how to prepare, structure and follow up their discussion and know how to behave during it.

The course is designed for a group of between six and twelve participants. Below six you will tend to lose much of the interaction which brings a course like this to life. Above twelve the numbers become too large for one trainer to handle, particularly when it comes to running exercises and role plays and providing feedback.

It is often an advantage to involve people from different levels in the organisation's hierarchy in training courses on appraisal, since this reinforces the messages from the video about the two-way nature of good appraisal interviews and the dangers which can arise from the different perceptions of appraiser and appraisee.

Although you can certainly mix participants from different functions on these courses, try to avoid having lone individuals. The programme will be much more effective if you have at least two or three from each function represented.

The one day course has been designed and written on the assumption that you have some experience of running skills based training events involving exercises and role plays. The quick guide provides a simpler, shorter session which can be run by managers with little or no training experience.

Objectives

Those taking part in the one day course will:

- Learn how to prepare for an effective appraisal interview
- Recognise and be able to create the right structure for their appraisal discussions
- Learn how to use appropriate behaviours at appraisal interviews, particularly those of listening, questioning and influencing, and improve their ability to put these skills to work by taking part in exercises and role plays
- Understand how to get the content of appraisal interviews right
- Recognise the importance of following up appraisal interviews.

COURSE TIME TABLE

Here is the timetable for the one day event. Please read the comments in the section on *Preparation and follow up* on page 12 about the role playing session, since the type and number of role plays you choose to do will affect the overall timescale significantly.

Introduction	15 mins
Preparation	60 mins
The interview I: Structure	45 mins
The interview II: Listening, questioning and body language	75 mins
The interview III: Influencing skills	40 mins
The interview IV: Content and follow up	40 mins
Role plays	120 mins
Course review	25 mins
TOTAL	7 hours

SYNOPSIS OF THE VIDEO

The principal characters

Tony

Tony is the organisation's premises manager. His responsibilities include cleaning, security, maintenance and safety. He is not particularly outgoing and, when we first meet him, he is depressed about his job and the lack of support from his boss, Paul.

Paul

Paul is a keen, busy manager, energetic but not always organised. He has little experience of appraisal and isn't very good at it. He and Tony are very different personalities and, because of these differences, Paul finds Tony frustrating to deal with.

Angela

Angela is Paul's manager. She has the experience, knowledge and detachment to understand why Paul and Tony are having trouble with one another. She also has the skills to help them recognise how to build a better working relationship. Given their personalities, this does not prove to be easy.

The story

Part One

We see Tony's appraisal interview with Paul. Much of this is shown in flashback, during separate conversations which the two men have with Angela.

Tony is so fed up with the way Paul has behaved at the interview that he goes over Paul's head to complain to Angela. Her careful questioning and encouragement get him to reveal what has gone wrong - the lack of preparation, on his part as well as on Paul's, the interruptions, the impression that all Paul wants to do is recite a list of failures and much more.

After she has spoken to Tony, we see Angela beginning the difficult job of showing Paul the mistakes he made in the appraisal interview and getting him to understand and accept ways of doing it better.

Seen through Paul's eyes, the flashbacks seem to show the interview as much sharper and more positive than Tony's recollection of it. One of Angela's most important tasks is to persuade Paul that Tony's perception is more important than his own.

In this part of the video she concentrates on the issues of preparing for and setting up the interview.

Part Two

Angela and Paul continue to discuss the very real difficulties of appraising Tony. Angela uses the key appraisal interviewing skills of listening, questioning and influencing to get Paul to see how he should improve. As she does so, she lists a number of key points about preparation, the structure and content of the interview and the way good appraisers behave.

Part Three

Paul, who has now accepted the error of his ways and wants to put things right, sets up another meeting with Tony. Not surprisingly, Tony is suspicious of Paul's motives and not inclined to co-operate, so Paul has to work hard to put Angela's advice into practice.

KEY MESSAGES

Learning points from the video

Do prepare

Both the appraiser and the appraisee should devote time to thinking about how work has gone during the appraisal period and deciding what they each want to get from the interview.

Don't impose your ideas

Too many appraisal interviews consist of managers reciting a list of information and instructions. Ideas have to be discussed and agreed, not imposed.

Do be specific about successes and failures

Appraisers have to be honest with those they are appraising. But they must not concentrate exclusively on failures. Successes need to be celebrated.

Don't be destructive

Appraisal should be about learning. People don't learn from managers who hammer them into the ground. Do concentrate on performance not personality Appraisers are not amateur psychiatrists.

Do listen and ask questions

When two people don't listen to one another, their's is a dialogue of the deaf.

Do agree objectives

The critical word is 'agree'. If objectives are not agreed, there is no ownership or commitment to them.

PREPARATION AND FOLLOW UP

Preparation

The participants

The more you know about the participants before the course, the better able you will be to focus the principles of appraisal interviewing on their particular circumstances and problems. Find out about:

- Their jobs

How many people do they have to appraise? Who appraises them? Do they work closely with the people they are responsible for (for example, in the same open plan office) or is contact much more infrequent (as with a sales team covering a large geographical area)? How well do they know those they will have to appraise?

- Their objectives

Have a look at some typical objectives. Do some individuals have objectives which are hard to measure?

- Their appraisers' views

If you can, talk to those who appraise the course participants. What do they think are their strengths and weaknesses as appraisers and appraisees?

The appraisal system

Though the emphasis in this course is very much on skills, you should be familiar with the documentation used by participants and also any particular views of senior managers and personnel specialists about the benefits and drawbacks of the system.

Read the section entitled *Appraisal - the context* on page 5 and think about how to relate the training to the specific circumstances of the participants' organisation.

The video

Watch the video and note the main points raised in each of the three parts. Make a note of any subsidiary points (for example, body language) that you will want to refer to during the course.

Note that in the sessions which deal with listening, questioning, body language and influencing (Interview II and Interview III), we suggest that you may like to use examples from the video. Note the counter numbers of the examples you require.

Role plays

The programme includes a two hour session in which participants have the opportunity to put the skills you ‘ have discussed with them into practice by role playing with one another and receiving feedback.

The way you choose to run this session will affect both the preparation you have to do and the amount of time that the session will take. Role playing is a time consuming activity and it is particularly important that you do not restrict opportunities for feedback and reflection.

Here are three options for running the role playing session:

- Use standard role play briefs

You will find a set of fictional role play briefs in the resources section of this guide.

Although this is only one role play, you will see that it describes three different objectives for the ‘appraisee’ and ‘appraiser’ to discuss. You therefore have the option of changing the role players after each of these has been discussed. Although standard role plays can work well, they have two disadvantages. First, it is often difficult for role players to relate them to their own jobs. Secondly, participants need more time to prepare them, since the briefs have to contain quite a lot of information about the context of the role the ‘appraisee’ is asked to play.

- Write your own role plays

You can eliminate most of the drawbacks of standard role plays by writing ones which relate directly to the jobs of those taking part. You don’t have to include very much detail, since the role players will supply that from their own backgrounds.

Make sure that what you write is sufficiently anonymous. People who recognise their own objectives in a training role play rightly become very annoyed!

- Use feedback exercises

This is a much simpler approach which does not require participants to spend a lot of time assimilating information before they can role play. All you need is an activity which someone else can appraise. So you might ask one person to interview another about a hobby, a holiday or an aspect of their work. Alternatively, you could get one participant to make a short presentation or show a colleague how to perform a simple task, such as tying a bow tie.

The next step is to ask one of the observers to appraise the performance of the interviewer, instructor or presenter. You can then ask someone else to appraise the appraiser and so on until that particular example runs out of steam, at which point you start another one going until everyone has had a turn at appraising and being appraised.

Decide whether you want to use video recording. While this is a very helpful method of enriching the feedback discussions, it does require more time.

Prepared flipcharts

Although we have provided a number of OHPs for you to use, it is often a good idea to ring the changes by using the occasional prepared flipchart, particularly if you have too much information on a subject to put on one OHP. The prepared flipcharts which we suggest are:

- In the introduction: the outline course programme
- In Interview II: the questioning skills exercise
- The appraisee's self study pack.

Some participants may want those they will be appraising to work through the self study pack. If you find that this is the case, be ready to give the relevant participants copies of Handout 5 which advises them on how to introduce the pack to their people.

Follow up

One of the reasons that managers find appraisal difficult is that they don't do it every day. However good your training course, its messages may be hazy by the time participants have to carry out a real appraisal. Because of this:

- Send participants a copy of either Handout 1: *Preparation Checklist - for the appraiser* or Handout 2: *Preparation Checklist - for the appraisee* and Handout 3: *Key learning points* when you know that they ought to be preparing to appraise or be appraised.
- Talk to a sample of participants after they have been through the appraisal process to find out what lessons from the course they were able to apply and whether they ran into any problems you had not dealt with. This will allow you to improve the course as you go along.

Other training resources

In addition to The Appraisal Interview, you will find the following Melrose titles useful in helping to improve managers' appraisal skills:

- Conflict!
- Targeting for Performance
- Say What You Want
- Body Language at Work
- Body Language - What the Window Cleaner Saw
- First in Line
- Complete Communication
- The Counselling Interview
- Listen!

COURSE SESSION PLAN

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INTRODUCTION 15 mins

Objectives

To outline the course objectives and programme.

To identify participants' involvement in and experience of appraisal.

Resources

↳ **OHP 1: Course objectives**

↳ **Prepared flipchart: Course programme**

Session outline

↳ **Welcome participants**

Ask participants to introduce themselves and to share with the rest of the group:

- The number of people they have to appraise
- Their previous experience of appraisal, both as appraisers and appraisees.

↳ **Introduce the workshop objectives using OHP 1**

Those taking part in the one day course will:

- Learn how to prepare for an effective appraisal interview
- Recognise and be able to create the right structure for their appraisal discussions
- Learn how to use appropriate behaviours at appraisal interviews, particularly those of listening, questioning and influencing, and improve their ability to put these skills to work by taking part in exercises and roleplays
- Understand how to get the content of appraisal interviews right
- Recognise the importance of following up appraisal interviews.

↳ **Outline the course programme**

Go through the programme, using your prepared flipchart.

PREPARATION 60 mins

Objectives

To identify common mistakes made in the preparation, arrangements for and early stages of an appraisal interview.

To show participants how to prepare effectively for appraisal.

Resources

- ↳ **The Appraisal Interview - Part One**
- ↳ **OHP 2: The Appraisal Interview - Who's who**
- ↳ **OHP 3: Administrative arrangements**
- ↳ **Handout 1: Preparation Checklist**

Session outline

↳ **Introduce the video**

Explain that you are about to show the first part of a 30 minute video called The Appraisal Interview. The video is divided into three parts, each of ten minutes' duration.

↳ **Use OHP 2 to introduce the three main characters, Angela, Paul and Tony**

In this first part, participants will see Paul appraising Tony. Tony then complains about the experience to Angela. She then talks to Paul about his impressions of what happened. Ask the group to make a note of all the learning points, whether positive or negative, of these conversations.

↳ **Show the video**

Play Part One of The Appraisal Interview.

↳ **Divide the group into pairs or threes**

Give them five to ten minutes to share their conclusions.

↳ **Record on a flipchart**

List all the points they have noted and put these up on the wall so that you can refer to them during the course. Reassure the group that they will have an opportunity to discuss them in more detail later.

Points should include:

- Tony's hidden agenda (from the conversation with Barry at the beginning of the video)

-
- The strong impression that Paul isn't ready for Tony and may, in fact, have forgotten about the appraisal interview
 - Angela's deliberate failure to react to Tony's criticisms of Paul
 - The need for preparation by both appraiser and appraisee
 - Paul's failure to listen to Tony
 - Paul's failure to agree a clear agenda and process with Tony
 - Interruptions
 - Paul introducing new criteria for judging Tony's performance. Tony says:
'I was on target - you said'

Paul says:

'Yes, but you've got to admit - the way it's turned out - it was a mess'

- Angela's excellent questioning technique
- Paul and Tony's different perceptions of the interview
- The importance of getting the setting right.

↓ **Show OHP 3**

Use this to help you briefly discuss the importance of getting the administrative arrangements right. In particular:

- Paperwork

It is the appraiser's responsibility to make sure that the appraisee has an up-to-date copy of the objectives, standards, competences and so forth on which the discussion will be based, plus a preparation checklist if one is available.

- Notice

Appraisees need adequate time to prepare.

- Location

The appraiser's office may not be the best place, particularly if other people have a habit of dropping in without warning.

- Physical setting

Avoid barriers, such as desks. Make sure the eye lines are level, so that one person is not

looking down on the other.

↳ **Divide the group into pairs or threes**

Ask half of these small groups to list the issues which they think that appraisers should consider when preparing to appraise and the other half to do the same for the appraisee.

↳ **Compare and contrast the results**

The two sets of lists will almost certainly be very similar.

↳ **Conclude this session by distributing Handouts 1 and 2**

These are both Preparation Checklists, one for appraisers and the other for appraisees. Discuss any points from these that the group have not thought of. (You may want to delay discussion of the order in which objectives should be dealt with until the next session, which covers the structure of the interview.)

THE INTERVIEW 1: Structure 45 mins

Objectives

To outline the appropriate structure for an appraisal interview.

To identify the key messages from the video.

Resources

↳ **The Appraisal Interview - Part Two**

↳ **OHP 4: The Appraisal Interview - Key messages**

↳ **Handout 2: The Appraisal Interview - Key messages**

Session outline

↳ **Explain the session objectives**

↳ **Show Part Two of The Appraisal Interview**

↳ **Ask participants what should happen at the beginning of an appraisal interview**

Stress the importance of:

- Not rushing. Appraisees are often a little nervous (rightly so, this is an important occasion). Appraisers should try to put them at ease.
- Agreeing the purpose of the discussion and how it will be conducted, as well as what it will cover. Appraisers should stress that they want to hear what the appraisees have to say and ask for co-operation in making the interview a two-way exchange of information and ideas. Agreeing an agenda - with the emphasis on agreement. Warn participants not to

allow the order in which aspects of performance are discussed to be dictated by the previous year's appraisal form. It may, for example, be sensible for an appraiser to get off to a positive start by congratulating the appraisee on how well Objective 3 went, before discussing the problems with Objective 1. The appraiser should also check to see whether there are other issues the appraisee wishes to discuss.

- Asking a general open question to get the discussion going. For example, Paul says:

'So how do you feel it's all been going?'

↳ **Remind the group that appraisal interviews are complex affairs**

There may be eight or ten objectives to cover. Conclusions have to be drawn from these. Training and development has to be discussed. The appraisee may want to talk about his career.

It is all too easy to get into a muddle and a clear, agreed structure will help prevent this, particularly if the appraiser refers to it as the interview progresses.

Reinforce this point by stressing the importance of summarising. For example, appraisers should be saying things along the lines of:

'OK. That's Objectives 3, 4 and 5 dealt with. These have all been achieved or exceeded. Well done. The conclusions we have drawn so far are that your interpersonal skills are excellent, but we need to work together on your knowledge of the new IT system. Now, as we agreed, let's look at Objective 1.'

↳ **Summarise the points you have made on structure**

- Agree purpose and process
- Agree agenda
- Summarise as you go.

↳ **Recall the key messages from the video**

Once you have finished the discussion about structure, ask participants to recall the main messages about appraisal which Angela wrote down for Paul.

↳ **Show OHP 4**

- Do prepare
- Don't impose your ideas

You will deal with influencing in more detail in a later session, but at this stage it should be clear that too much 'telling' leads to a one sided interview and can easily cause

resentment. As Tony says to Angela: *'That was it - the whole way through - him going down the list telling me what I'd done wrong'*

- Do be specific about successes and failures You have to be honest, but it is all too easy to concentrate on things which have not gone well Don't be destructive

People do not learn from managers who hammer them into the ground

- Do concentrate on performance not personality

Apart from the fact that managers do not have the skills to analyse personality traits, it is much less threatening and easier to act upon for an appraisee to be told 'you didn't explain what you were going to do', than for the boss to say 'you are a lousy communicator'.

Remind the group of Tony's reaction when Paul says:

'When push comes to shove, you're just not tough enough-hard enough.'

- **Do** listen and ask questions
- **Do** agree objectives

The emphasis is on 'agree'; without agreement there is no commitment. Stress also the importance of agreeing the quality criteria or performance standards for each objective. Paul fell into the trap of moving the goal posts when appraising Tony's objectives about reducing staffing levels.

Tony says:

'I was on target - you said'

Paul says:

'Yes, but you've got to admit - the way it's turned out - it was a mess'

- ↓ **Give out Handout 3 which summaries the key message**

THE INTERVIEW II: Listening, questioning and body language

75 mins

Objectives

To help participants improve their listening and questioning skills.

To emphasise the importance of body language in appraisal discussions.

Resources

↳ **OHP 5: Improved listening**

↳ **Excerpts from The Appraisal Interview**

↳ **Appropriate excerpts from The Appraisal Interview (optional)**

↳ **Prepared flipchart: Questioning exercise**

Session outline

↳ Explain to participants that they are going to do an exercise involving listening and body language

Divide the group into pairs. Ask each person to think of a subject about which he or she can talk for two or three minutes. The exercise involves one person acting as a speaker and the other as a listener. It will be run twice so that everyone can play both roles.

At the beginning of the exercise the speakers begin to speak and the listeners concentrate on what is being said and use their body language to actively encourage the speakers by maintaining eye contact, nodding, smiling and so on. After about a minute, the listeners 'switch off' by breaking eye contact, looking bored and consulting their watches. The speakers try to continue for another minute or so, despite the lack of encouragement.

↳ **Review the exercise**

Once each pair has run the exercise twice, ask participants what effect the withdrawal of interest had on their ability to express themselves. You will find that everyone experienced difficulty and some found it impossible to continue.

↳ **Emphasise the lessons from this exercise**

Listening is an active skill. It is not like breathing. You have to work at it.

Body language matters. You have to show that you are listening. Appraisal discussions will work better if appraisees are encouraged to talk and the appraiser's body language plays an essential part in doing so.

↳ Illustrate the use of body language with appropriate examples from The Appraisal Interview

It is often helpful to run short excerpts with the sound turned off so that participants can concentrate on the messages that the characters' body language is delivering.

You may like to use:

- The contrast between Tony and Angela in their discussion. Her body language is open and positive, encouraging Tony to speak. She does not display any negative emotions, even when he gets up and starts to prowling around her office in his frustration.
- The final interview between Paul and Tony. Paul is really trying hard to compensate for his past mistakes and this comes across in his expression, the amount of eye contact he uses and his posture. Tony, on the other hand, is suspicious and hesitant. He avoids eye contact and his posture is guarded.
- During the first interview with Tony, Paul takes a telephone call. Tony's body language during the call clearly demonstrates how cynical and irritated he is about the whole interview.
- The different perceptions which the two men have of their first interview are clearly visible in the body language they use.

↳ Show OHP 5 to outline some ideas for improved listening

- Get the surroundings right

Comfort, freedom from interruptions, level eye lines and the absence of barriers all help to make listening easier.

- Concentrate and persist

As the exercise illustrated, you have to work at listening.

- Judge content, not delivery

Some people who have important things to say are simply not very good at expressing themselves.

- Ask questions to test your understanding

This not only helps you, it also shows that you are listening.

- Take notes

The best time to do so is when you summarise, since that will avoid breaking into the speaker's flow.

- Suspend prejudice

Stress the importance of keeping an open mind when listening to ideas at appraisal time. And remind participants about body language. Expressions of disbelief, scepticism and scorn will stop most appraisees dead in their tracks.

- Practise

People who are conscious of being poor listeners should use their video cassette recorders and programmes like the TV news to polish their skill.

- ↳ **Remind participants about ‘yes, butting’**

This is a classic signal that the person who says it is not listening.

- ↳ **Make sure that participants understand the difference between open and closed questions**

Illustrate and briefly discuss the different purposes of these using appropriate examples from The Appraisal Interview. These might include:

- Open

Angela asks Tony:

‘What sort of thing did you want to say, if you’d had the chance?’

This encourages him to speak and, most important, to tell her his agenda.

- Closed

In the same discussion with Tony, Angela wants clear cut information about how the appraisal interview with Paul had been set up. So she asks a series of quickfire closed questions:

‘Had you done any preparation?’

‘Did you have a preparation checklist?’

‘Had you given it any thought?’

Divide participants into groups of three

Explain the questioning skills exercise which you want them to do, using the flipchart you prepared before the course, which should contain the following information:

- Groups of three
- Interviewer, interviewee, observer
- All choose a topic to be interviewed about Run the exercise three times, rotating roles
- 5 minutes preparation; 3 x 5 minutes interviewing; 3 x 5 minutes feedback (total 35 minutes)

-
- Observers to count open and closed questions and provide feedback on what went well and what might have been improved.

↳ Summarise the learning points

When the exercise is finished, spend a few minutes summarising the lessons which it provided. Stress how important it is for appraisers in particular to think in advance about the questions they will ask at the appraisal interview.

Finally, tell the group that if they take only one lesson away from this course, particularly for those occasions when they are in the appraiser's chair, you would like it to be ask questions, since that is the way to stimulate discussion.

THE INTERVIEW iii: Influencing skills

30 mins

Objectives

To explain the use of different methods of influencing.

Resources

↳ Excerpts from The Appraisal Interview

↳ OHP 6: Influencing styles

Session outline

↳ Introduce the subject of influencing

One question which all appraisers want answered is 'how do I get people to do things they don't want to do?' Tell the group that the answer is: with difficulty!

↳ Explain there are two very different styles of influencing

Either remind the group about or, better still, show them the excerpt from The Appraisal Interview in which Paul starts handing Tony objectives for next year. Paul says:

'So this year's target is to lose another five people, either by moving them to different jobs or by getting them to take voluntary redundancy. I want it done in an organised manner. I don't want the disruption we've had this year.'

↳ Introduce the idea of Pushing

Explain that this example of Paul imposing his ideas is a style of influencing called

↳ Pushing Show OHP 6

↴ Use the top half of OHP 6 to explain that Pushing involves:

- Giving people information
- Making suggestions about what they should do
- Giving them orders.

↴ **Introduce the idea of Pulling**

The other approach to influencing is called, not surprisingly, Pulling.

Remind the group or, better still, show them Angela using this style in her discussion with Paul. Play the excerpt which goes from Angela writing DON'T IMPOSE YOUR IDEAS to her saying:

'Were you specific about his successes?'

Emphasise the way she uses questions - asking for information and prompting him for ideas - to get him to see where he has gone wrong.

↴ **Show the rest of OHP 6**

Reveal the bottom half to show that Pulling is all about:

- Asking for information
- Testing your understanding
- Asking for ideas.

↴ **Ask the group whether there are times when appraisers should Push**

In this discussion stress that:

- It is certainly true that good appraisers do more Pulling than Pushing, since asking questions encourages two-way dialogue and appraisees are more likely to be committed to ideas they come up with themselves, rather than those the appraiser hands to them.
- But Pushing is sometimes the right approach, particularly if the appraisee, through lack of experience, has no ideas to offer or if the appraiser has tried Pulling without success.

Remind the group or, better still, show them Angela using a Push style with Paul. The excerpt you need follows on from the previous one. Angela tells Paul very directly:

'I think the problem is you didn't secure his agreement. He didn't feel that you were jointly involved in trying to sort things out.'

THE INTERVIEW IV: Content and follow up

30 mins

Objectives

To outline the appropriate content of appraisal interviews.

To explain the follow up which appraisal interviews need.

To show good appraisal techniques in action.

Resources

↳ **OHP 4: The Appraisal Interview - Key messages**

↳ **OHP 7: Appraisal Interviews - Content**

↳ **The Appraisal Interview - Part Three**

Session outline

↳ **Introduce the session**

↳ **Show OHP 4**

This is to remind participants that most of the messages in The Appraisal Interview are about preparation and behaviour.

But one of the messages, performance not personality, is about content – what the appraiser and appraisee should talk about.

↳ **Show OHP 7**

Use this to make two further points about the content of effective appraisal interviews.

- The future vs the past/present

You cannot change past performance. The only value it has to provide lessons for the future. Good appraisers continually try to link what appraisees have done in the past with what they will do in the future in similar circumstances.

This point is particularly important when something gone wrong during the appraisal period. Remind the group that, while they must be specific about failure, the purpose of doing so is to learn from what has happened, so that it does not re occur. Appraisal is not a knuckle wrapping session.

- Average performance

It is important to discuss both success and failure, but advise participants not to ignore things which have gone all right, but not spectacularly. As satisfactory performance is likely to be the largest category in most people's work, it therefore offers the biggest potential for improvement.

↳ **Discuss follow up**

Spend a few minutes discussing how appraisal interviews should be followed up. Ask participants why follow up is necessary. Their answers should include:

- To provide the appraisee with support and, where necessary, help to get back on track.
- To adjust to changing priorities and circumstances. While it is absolutely correct that objectives should be agreed at the start of the appraisal cycle, it would be absurd to assume that they will then be set in concrete throughout the cycle.
- To learn from experience. Tony's idea for monitoring cleaning is a good example. Neither he nor Paul can tell whether it will work. They have to try it and see how it goes. After a month or two they will be able to make this objective much more precise.

↳ **Show Part Three of The Appraisal Interview**

Before you start the video, suggest to the participants that now Paul has a second chance to try to put Angela's ideas into practice.

↳ **Lead a brief discussion**

After the video, briefly discuss the improvements which Paul has made in his approach to appraising Tony. Points to stress include:

- They agree an agenda
- Paul asks a good opening question:

'Can I just ask you how you think things have been going generally?'

-
- Paul asks about success:

‘What would you say are the things you are happiest about?’

- Paul tests his understanding

‘Are people complaining about things you’ve already pointed out to the cleaners? Or things you thought were OK? Or things, you know, you haven’t noticed?’

- Paul uses a Pull style to check Tony’s agreement to one of his objectives

‘Are you sure? Because if you’re not there’s no point committing to it’

- Paul asks for thinking time when something major comes up for which he is unprepared.

ROLE PLAYS 120 mins

Objectives

To improve participants’ appraisal interviewing skills.

Resources

OHP 4: The Appraisal Interview - Key messages

Handout 4a and 4b or appropriate role playing briefs

Session outline

Organise the role players

Distribute the briefs and allow sufficient time for the role players to prepare.

Brief the observers

Remind them that they are observers, not spectators, and that the subject of the course is particularly appropriate, since you will be asking them to appraise one another’s performance after each role play is completed.

Use OHP 4 as a framework for their observations

‡ **Run the role plays using Handout 4a and 4b or your own role play briefs**

COURSE REVIEW 25 mins

Objectives

To review the main messages of the course.

To agree action plans.

Resources

‡ **The Appraisal Interview - Summaries**

‡ **OHP 4: The Appraisal Interview - Main messages**

‡ **OHP 1: Course objectives**

‡ **Handout 5: Introducing the appraisee's self study pack (optional)**

Session outline

‡ **Summarise the video learning points**

If your course participants are primarily appraisers, you will probably want to show them Paul's summary, from the appraiser's point of view, as well as Tony's summary, from the appraisee's point of view.

‡ **Show OHP 4**

This reinforces the key points which Paul makes.

‡ **Show OHP 8**

This reinforces the learning points from Tony's summary.

‡ **Ask participants to reflect on key points**

Ask participants to spend a few minutes thinking about what they have learned and what they intend to put into action to improve their appraisal skills.

Record one point from each individual on a flipchart.

‡ **Explain the appraisee self study pack**

Find out whether any of the participants want to encourage their people to use the appraisee's self study pack. Discuss the practical arrangements for doing so.

‡ **Give those who want it copies of Handout 5**

This will help them to explain the self study pack to those they will be giving it to.

‡ **Use OHP 1 to recap the objectives of the course**

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

OHP TRANSPARENCIES

The resources in this section may be reproduced or edited for use in presentations, seminars, or courses of which The Appraisal Interview forms a part.

This means that you can retype, photocopy and tailor them to meet your training needs.

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

HANDOUT 1:

PREPARATION CHECKLIST - for the appraiser

↳ **Objectives**

What objectives did you agree with the job holder twelve months ago? How have they been modified during the year? Which have gone well? Not so well? Why? Which were achieved but could have been exceeded? How? What lessons do you think can be learned from the year's work and how would you like to see them applied next year?

↳ **Strengths and weaknesses**

What are the job holder's main strengths and key skills? What about weaknesses? Can you think of examples of how these strengths and weaknesses show up?

↳ **The job**

Has the job changed significantly over the past year?

↳ **Working relationships**

What are the job holder's most important working relationships? Which of these work best? Worst? Why? How do you rate the support you have given the job holder during the year? Again, be specific. Think of examples.

↳ **Development needs**

What development do you think the job holder needs? How do you think this should be provided? Don't simply think about formal training courses.

↳ **Career**

How do you see the job holder's career developing?

↳ **Priorities**

What are the most important issues that you want to deal with at the appraisal discussion? Think about what you want to say and the questions you want to ask.

↳ **Hot spots**

What are going to be the most difficult issues to discuss? How will you handle these?

↳ **Interview structure**

Think about the order in which you want to discuss the job holder's objectives. For example, you may want to begin and end on a high note. The sequence of objectives from last year's form may not be ideal.

HANDOUT 2:

PREPARATION CHECKLIST - for the appraisee

↳ **Objectives**

What objectives did you agree twelve months ago? How have they been modified during the year? Which went well? Not so well? Why? Which were achieved but could have been exceeded? How? What lessons do you think can be learned from the year's work and how would you like to see them applied next year?

↳ **Strengths and weaknesses**

What are your main strengths and key skills? What are your weaknesses? Can you think of examples of how these show up?

↳ **Your job**

Has your job changed significantly over the past year?

↳ **Working relationships**

What are your most important working relationships? Which of these work best? Worst? Why? How well do you and your manager work together? Again, be specific. Think of examples.

↳ **Development needs**

What are your main development needs? How do you think these should be met? Don't simply think about formal training courses.

↳ **Your career**

How do you see your career developing? What issues do you want to raise with your manager about your career?

↳ **Priorities**

What are the most important issues that you want dealt with at your appraisal? Think about what you want to say and the questions you want to ask.

↳ **Hot spots**

What are going to be the most difficult issues to discuss? How will you handle these?

↳ **Other people's perceptions**

Though it is not essential, you may want to talk, for example, to close colleagues about their perceptions of your work.

HANDOUT 3:

MESSAGES FROM THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

↳ Do prepare

↳ Don't impose your ideas

Too much 'telling' leads to a one-sided interview and can easily cause resentment. Tony said to Angela:

'That was it - the whole way through - him going down the list telling me what I'd done wrong'.

↳ Do be specific about successes and failures

You have to be honest, but it is all too easy to concentrate on things which have not gone well.

↳ Don't be destructive

People do not learn from managers who hammer them into the ground.

↳ Do concentrate on performance not personality

Apart from the fact that managers do not have the skills to analyse personality traits, it is much less threatening and easier to act upon for an appraisee to be told 'you didn't explain what you were going to do', than for the manager to say 'you are a lousy communicator'.

↳ Do listen and ask questions

↳ Do agree objectives

The emphasis is on 'agree'. That includes agreeing the criteria for success. Paul fell into the trap of inventing new ones when appraising Tony's objective about reducing staffing levels.

HANDOUT 4A:

ROLE PLAY BRIEFS

Brief for the appraisee

You are the Transport Manager of a large service organisation. You are based in the Head Office and have been in your present job for five years, having been with the organisation now for twelve years. Apart from the Head Office, there are currently six regional offices and plans to set up at least another one in the next two year period to keep up with the steady expansion in operating activity.

You are responsible for company cars, a van fleet and a bike messenger service. You have a secretary, Janet, working for you who really just looks after the typing and filing, and some very low level routine administration.

You are about to have your appraisal interview with your manager, the Administration Manager. He came new to the organisation and the job two years ago. You get on pretty well. The only recent problem has been that he, along with just about everyone else in the organisation, has been somewhat overstretched in the last six months which has meant that it is becoming increasingly difficult even to make an appointment to see him. You used to have regular progress discussions on an informal basis, especially in the early days when he was trying to get to grips with the business. Of late, you have been feeling somewhat abandoned.

Overall, it has not been an easy year. The main difficulties have been caused by a company-wide cost consciousness drive coupled with a general expansion of operating activity. You think this is clearly reflected in your results. Even so, considering the problems, you are fairly pleased with what you have achieved.

You are advised that the appraisal discussion will concentrate on your three main areas of responsibility: company cars, van fleet, bike messenger service.

↓ **Company cars**

You are responsible for a fleet of a hundred and fifty cars. Currently, these are under a leasing agreement, the cost of which covers the vehicle hire but not service and maintenance for which you are responsible together with the insurance administration and the allocation of company credit cards for petrol. You get your secretary to do some of the routine administration for you.

The cars are all Vauxhalls with different models for different levels of seniority. Allocation is a straightforward matter as there are a set of rules for matching car to status. Even so, knowing how sensitive this area can be, you like to do this all yourself. Having said that, your greatest embarrassment this year was caused by this very issue of car allocation. A newly recruited sales area manager was allocated a top of the range car instead of a mid range one from the pool. You're not sure why it happened, but it looks as if the fact that both the Area Manager and the Regional Manager South are called Robin Smith had something to do with it. You managed to sort this out, but it left a nasty taste all round.

Overall, you calculate you have exceeded your budget for this year by five per cent, even though the budget was re-assessed and agreed at the beginning of the last period. This is largely due to the increased cost of servicing and repairs, much of this coming from the sales department. In the last six months, you have implemented a comprehensive reporting system from all those who have a fleet car, as part of your own cost-reduction effort. It is now up & running. The points it covers include suitability of car to driver, mileage, petrol consumption,

frequency of servicing, cost of repairs. From this, it is now becoming clear that the area managers who have been covering more ground, making more calls and generally getting more business haven't time (or aren't bothering) to ensure their vehicles are regularly serviced. Thus accidents happen. Or if not quite accidents, it does seem that the final repair bill greatly exceeds what the interim one would have been.

↳ **Van fleet**

You are responsible for eight transit vans and eight smaller delivery vans, which are based at a depot ten miles away from Head Office, but are usually found spread around the regions.

You are also responsible for the allocation and supervision of the fifteen drivers who handle the fleet. At the beginning of the year, there were fourteen drivers but you persuaded the Administration Manager that you needed one more to cope with the extra workload.

You have the same number of vans as you had two years ago, when admittedly you were working under capacity, but operations have increased. You estimate that the mileage for the fleet has increased by seventeen per cent, while the number of trips logged for the year has increased by twenty per cent. You reckon you have gone over budget by fifteen per cent.

Because the time spent on the road has increased, maintenance schedules are in disarray. Recently there has been a significant increase in breakdowns and thus a disruption of schedules. Complaints are consequently on the increase. You believe the only way round this is to get at least two extra vans and one more full-time driver. The trips the vans make are a mixture of regular scheduled deliveries and other ad hoc calls such as equipment and files to be moved from branch to branch.

The daily transfer of computer disks from the Head Office central computer to a secure store is probably the most important routine call, but even that has been having its own problems of late. Due to the increased workload, the disks are not ready to go out on time, the van driver hits the rush hour and takes longer to deliver and return to base. The drivers' over-time for this particular run has risen substantially, but generally there has been a noticeable increase over the last half year. Your own cost objectives have suffered consequently. You estimate that the over-time claim is up ten per cent on what you had budgeted for. From your vantage point, it looks as if it is going to get worse, as working hours seem to be getting more irregular.

You have been wondering about the possibility of putting the drivers on an annual hours agreement, so doing away with the conventional notion of over-time after five o'clock. This might help you to achieve your own cost objectives, although you recognise that there would probably be an unfavourable reaction to the suggestion from the drivers themselves. For some time you have wanted to broach this to Personnel through your manager.

↓ **Bike messenger service**

You are responsible for a very limited courier service of three motor bikes each with its own rider. This operates a service for carrying documentation and small parcels in the vicinity of Head Office during office hours.

This was set up just over a year ago. The objective was to provide a speedier and more economical service than an outside courier could do.

The operational target set was that ninety five per cent of all calls should be picked up within fifteen minutes. At the moment it looks like thirty five per cent of calls are picked up within ten minutes, but the other sixty five per cent wait for more than twenty minutes. The problem is that it seems that either no-one wants the bikes at all or everyone wants them all at once. Thus either the bikes are frantically working their way through a backlog of trips or are sitting idle.

Not surprisingly, you seem to be getting a steady stream of complaints about how long people have to wait for an in-house bike, and how long it takes to deliver. At times when it's frantic you insist that every request for a bike should be referred to you so that you can decide its priority. The trouble with that is that the priority order can change with every request. It takes up a lot of your time and no-one seems to be pleased with the results. You don't believe that the outside service is any more efficient, but you need to investigate the issue to prove your point. At the outset you agreed that there should be a year end report for the new service. So it is now time to look at it very carefully to see if it is a viable proposition. In its present form the answer seems to be 'no'. It may be a case of abandoning it altogether or expanding it considerably. You want to bring someone in from another department to do a lot of number crunching and close analysis to sort this one out. At present, there is no possibility of taking it on yourself.

HANDOUT 4B:

ROLE PLAY BRIEFS

Brief for the appraiser

You are the Administration Manager of a large service organisation. You are based in the Head Office and have been with the company in your present job for just two years. Apart from the Head Office, there are currently six regional offices and plans to set up at least another one in the next two year period to keep up with the steady expansion in operating activity.

You have had quite a challenging time since you joined the organisation. Obviously, getting to know the organisation took a while, but by having regular progress discussions and informal meetings with the people who report to you, especially in the first nine months, you got to grips with the business and your role in it.

This last year has not been easy either. The main difficulties have been caused by a company-wide cost consciousness drive which in many cases has meant budgets have been frozen at the level they were a year ago or at least have not been raised as much as the operating managers would have liked. This coupled with a general expansion of operating activity has led to most departments, including your own, being severely overstretched. Overall, you feel this is not a bad thing, agreeing with the 'Leaner and Fitter' philosophy espoused by the Board.

You are about to conduct the appraisal interview for your Transport Manager. He has been in the organisation for twelve years and in his present job for five. You get on pretty well, and until the last six months or so used to meet fairly frequently.

You always felt that he was doing a decent job, but, while acknowledging the current budget constraints and business expansion, you now fear that he is carrying on in exactly the same way even though the ground rules have changed. He hasn't really geared himself up to match the new level of business activity in the way that everyone else has had to. Everyone has had an increased workload in the last year and most people are coping. Your Transport Manager, however, seems to be lagging behind in some aspects of his work and not really using his initiative to look into new ways of doing things.

At the appraisal interview, you have agreed that the discussion will concentrate on his three main areas of responsibility: company cars, van fleet, bike messenger service.

↳ **Company cars**

He is responsible for a fleet of a hundred and fifty cars. Currently, these are under a leasing agreement, the cost of which covers the vehicle hire but not service and maintenance for which he is responsible together with the insurance administration and the allocation of company credit cards for petrol. He has a secretary, Janet, who does some of the routine administration.

The cars are all Vauxhalls with different models for different levels of seniority. Allocation is a very straightforward matter as there is a rule book according to which cars are matched to company status. Having said that, there was one incident this year, which caused a lot of embarrassment to the Transport Manager. Due to an administrative hiccup, a newly recruited area manager was allocated a top of the range car instead of a mid range one from the pool. The first you knew about it was when you received a phone call from an indignant Financial Controller asking when was it that sales men had been accorded greater status than the Head Office management team. No one ever got to the bottom of why this happened. However, the fact that both the Area Manager and the Regional Manager South are called Robin Smith clearly had something to do with it. At the time you felt you had better things to do than investigate the administrative shortcomings of fleet allocation, although you did tell the Transport Manager that it must never happen again. However, a few days ago, Janet, the

Transport Manager's secretary, went to Personnel to complain about how she was fed up with only being given the absolutely mundane and routine work to do when she has been in the job for over eighteen months and is quite capable of doing more. Personnel reported the conversation to you, as Janet is a bright young lady and if the situation does not change she intends to hand in her notice. You had noticed in the past that the Transport Manager seems to do everything for himself. Delegation is a word unknown to him, it seems.

He spends so much time on the routine matters, which could easily be delegated to Janet, that he fails to find the time to organise the bigger, more strategic and long-term projects.

Overall, he has exceeded the car fleet budget for this year by five per cent, even though the budget was re-assessed and agreed at the beginning of the last period. Although you are not happy with the overspend itself you are very pleased with the comprehensive reporting system implemented by the Transport Manager over the last six months which has brought to light the causes of the overspend. The reporting system covers all those who have a fleet car and includes details on suitability of car to driver, mileage, petrol consumption, frequency of servicing, cost of repairs. From analysis of this information, it is clear that the overspend is largely due to a substantial increase in costs for servicing and repairs in the sales department.

You have wondered why it is that **your organisation uses a leasing arrangement for its fleet, whereas all your major** competitors use contract hire which includes servicing and maintenance. There are several months in hand before the leasing arrangements have to be renewed. In this time, you want to make it one of the Transport Manager's objectives to produce a detailed report on leasing versus contract hire.

↳ **Van hire**

The Transport Manager is responsible for eight transit vans and eight smaller delivery vans, which are based at a depot ten miles away from Head Office, but are usually found spread around the regions.

He is also responsible for the allocation and supervision of the fifteen drivers who handle the fleet. At the beginning of the year, there were fourteen drivers but he put up a good case to persuade you that he needed one more to cope with the extra workload.

There are the same number of vans as there were two years ago, but then they were working under capacity. Since then, operations have increased. A recent memo from the Transport Manager suggests that the mileage for the fleet has increased by seventeen per cent, while the number of trips logged for the year has increased by twenty per cent.

Recently there has been a significant increase in breakdowns and thus a disruption of schedules. Complaints are consequently on the increase. The trips the vans make are a mixture of regular scheduled deliveries and other ad hoc calls such as equipment and files to

be moved from branch to branch. The daily transfer of computer disks from the Head Office central computer to a secure store is probably the most important routine call, and has priority over just about everything else, but even that has been having its own problems of late. You've noticed that the travel time from Head Office to the secure store has been getting later and later, and that this along with other trips finishing outside normal working hours is causing a substantial increase in over-time. It is estimated to be ten per cent above budget. With this as a contributory factor, the budget for the van fleet is about fifteen per cent over, the rest accountable by the increase in breakdowns and repairs.

Before you set objectives for the coming period in terms of overall budget, you need to have a detailed analysis of why the objectives have not been met this year.

↳ **Bike messenger service**

The Transport Manager is responsible for a very limited courier service of three motor bikes each with its own rider. This operates a service for carrying documentation and small parcels in the vicinity of Head Office during office hours.

This was set up just over a year ago. The objective was to provide a speedier and more economical service than an outside courier could do.

The operational target set was that ninety five per cent of all calls should be picked up within fifteen minutes. At the moment it looks like thirty five per cent of calls are picked up within ten minutes, but the other sixty five per cent wait for more than twenty minutes. The problem is that it seems that either no-one wants the bikes at all or everyone wants them all at once. Thus either the bikes are frantically working their way through a backlog of trips or are sitting idle.

Not surprisingly, there is a steady stream of complaints about how long people have to wait for an in-house bike, and how long it takes to deliver. You don't know whether or not the Transport Manager has introduced a system for coping with the busiest times. You suspect, however, that this is one area where Janet could be doing far more than she is allowed to do at present.

Now that the courier service has been up and running for a year, it is time to carry out a thorough investigation as to whether it is a viable proposition. It was agreed at the beginning that there would be a year end report. At the moment, it is not looking optimistic for the future. You want to set a date with the Transport Manager for the completion of this study, after which you can decide whether or not the service should continue.

HANDOUT 5:
INTRODUCING THE APPRAISEE'S SELF STUDY PACK

Members of your team can use the self study pack without having it explained to them. The booklet that forms part of the pack will tell them what to do. However, handing the pack over to them gives you an opportunity to stress how important you believe appraisal to be and to explain how you can both make the process work better by preparing thoroughly and working positively together during the actual discussion. Particular points to emphasise include:

↳ **A two-way discussion**

Appraisal is not simply a matter of you dishing out the end of term report. If it is going to be worthwhile, it must be a discussion between two people who, whatever their relative positions in the hierarchy, meet as equals.

↳ **Preparation**

You must both prepare. Draw the appraisee's attention to the Preparation Checklist in the booklet.

↳ **Documentation**

Make sure that the appraisee has a copy of last year's appraisal form and any modifications you agreed to objectives during the year.

↳ **The agenda**

Encourage the appraisee to identify issues which he or she would like to talk about at the interview and, if these cover anything unusual, to consider giving you prior warning so that you can get your thoughts in order.

↳ **The future**

Emphasise that the object of the exercise is to learn from the past and apply those lessons to similar situations in the future. Ask the appraisee to concentrate on this point when preparing.

↳ **An opportunity for reflection**

If you work in an organisation where the pace is often frenetic, opportunities to step back from the job may be all too rare. That probably means that neither of you are very good at having discussions of this type. Reassure the appraisee that you are going to try your best to ask questions, listen, discuss and restrain yourself from leaping to solutions. Ask the appraisee to do likewise.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

↳ Preparation

↳ Structure

↳ Appropriate behaviour

- Listening
- Questioning
- Influencing

↳ Content

↳ Follow up and support

OHP 1

THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

WHO'S WHO



↴ ANGELA
Paul's manager



↴ PAUL
Tony's manager



↴ TONY
The premises manager

OHP 2

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

↳ Paperwork

↳ Notice

↳ Location

↳ Physical setting

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

OHP 3

THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

KEY MESSAGES

- ↳ Do prepare
- ↳ 10- Don't impose ideas
- ↳ Do be specific about successes and failures
- ↳ Don't be destructive
- ↳ Do concentrate on performance not personality
- ↳ Do listen and ask questions
- ↳ Do agree objectives

OHP 4

IMPROVED LISTENING

- ↳ Get surroundings right
- ↳ Concentrate and persist
- ↳ Judge content not delivery
- ↳ Test understanding
- ↳ Take notes
- ↳ Suspend prejudice
- ↳ Practise

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

OHP 5

INFLUENCING STYLES

PUSH

- ↳ Giving information
- ↳ Making suggestions
- ↳ Giving orders

PULL

- ↳ Asking for information
- ↳ Testing understanding
- ↳ Asking for ideas

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

OHP 6

APPRAISAL INTERVIEWS - CONTENT

- ↳ Performance not personality
- ↳ Future vs Past/present
- ↳ Average performance

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

OHP 7

APPRAISEE'S SUMMARY

- ↳ Prepare properly
- ↳ Review last time's objectives
- ↳ Ask colleagues for assessment
- ↳ Use the past to shape the future
- ↳ Set tough but achievable objectives
- ↳ Review your job description
- ↳ Think about what you want to achieve

OHP 8

THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

quick guide

This quick guide is designed to be used when time for preparation and training is limited. It provides an introduction to the whole pack and guidelines for running a ninety minute training session. The full course guide contains more detailed training notes and information.

You do not have to be a trainer to use the quick guide. Your role is to lead a discussion of the points spelled out in the video and to make sure that you and your colleagues agree some lessons you can apply.

Use the quick guide to fit the working pattern of your organisation -for example at working lunches; for an evening session at a management conference; on late opening morning in retail and banking.

TECHNICAL ADVISER

Pat Mitchell



MELROSE

PRODUCED BY

Melrose Film Productions, 16 Bromells Road, London SW4 OBL
Telephone: 0171 627 8404 Fax: 0171 622 0421

INTRODUCTION

Objectives

This 90 minute workshop aims to:

Identify common errors made before and during appraisal interviews

Discuss and agree how to prepare for an effective appraisal interview

Identify appropriate behaviour to use during the interview.

Audience

Anyone who has to appraise or be appraised.

Contents of the trainer's pack

↳ Video

- Case study: **The Appraisal Interview** (30 mins)

We first see Tony being appraised badly by his boss, Paul. Tony complains to Angela, Paul's boss, who then helps Paul to understand what he has done wrong. Finally Paul puts Angela's suggestions to work in a second meeting with Tony.

- Summaries (7 mins)

The video concludes with two summaries, from Paul and Tony respectively, which show what they have learned from the different perspectives of appraiser and appraisee.

↳ Course guide

The full course guide provides you with all the notes, overhead transparencies and handouts needed to run a one day course.

↳ Quick guide

These notes will help you run a shorter session, using the video and selected resources from the full course guide.

↳ Appraisee's self study pack

There is a separate pack (video case study and appraisee's summary plus support notes) which appraisees can use to help them prepare to be appraised.

PREPARATION

↳ **Read Appraisal - the context**

This section will provide you with background information about the purpose of appraisal systems and how they are adapting to change in many organisations.

↳ **Watch the video**

Note the main messages which Angela writes on a flipchart. Note any other points which seem important to you, both about preparation and about the actual interview, since you will be reviewing these two issues during the workshop.

↳ **Prepare resources**

Make copies of Handouts 1, 2 and 3. Prepare a flipchart listing the objectives of this 90 minute workshop.

↳ **Be prepared to keep tight control of the time**

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OUTLINE TRAINING SESSION 90 mins

Introduction 5 mins

↳ Outline the objectives using the prepared flipchart

Those taking part will:

- Identify common errors made before and during appraisal interviews
- Discuss and agree how to prepare for an effective appraisal interview
- Identify appropriate behaviour to use during the interview.

Principles of appraisal interviewing 50 mins

↳ Show OHP 2 to introduce the video

Explain to your colleagues that you are going to show them a 30 minute video (divided into three parts) with three main characters, Tony, his boss Paul and Paul's boss Angela.

↳ Ask participants to take notes

Ask them to note any points, positive or negative, which strike them as they are watching.

↳ Show The Appraisal Interview

Stop before the two summaries.

↳ Lead a brainstorming session

Brainstorm the main points which your colleagues took from the video. Note that you will not have time for much discussion.

Issues arising may include:

- The need for preparation by both appraiser and appraisee. (You will cover this in more detail in the next session.)

-
- The lack of notice which Tony had of the meeting
 - Different perceptions. Tony gets the impression that Paul isn't ready for him and may, in fact, have forgotten about the appraisal interview. Paul's recollection is that he was brisk and friendly, whereas Tony wasn't interested
 - Tony's hidden agenda (from the conversation with Barry at the beginning of the video)
 - Angela's deliberate failure to react to Tony's criticisms of Paul
 - Paul's failure to listen to Tony
 - Paul's failure to agree a clear agenda and process with Tony
 - Interruptions
 - Paul introducing new criteria for judging Tony's performance. Tony says:

'I was on target - you said'

Paul says:

'Yes, but you've got to admit - the way it's turned out - it was a mess'

- Angela's excellent questioning technique
- Paul's habit of personalising his criticisms of Tony.

Paul says:

'You're just not tough enough'

- The importance of getting the setting right.

Preparation and behaviour 25 mins

Give out Handouts 1 and 2: *Preparation checklists*

Use Handout 1 to summarise and (briefly!) discuss the main areas on which appraisers should focus when preparing an appraisal interview.

Point out that the issues covered in Handout 2, which is aimed at appraisees, are substantially the same as those for appraisers.

↳ Show OHP 4

This summarises the main messages which Angela gives Paul about how to behave during the interview.

These are:

- Do prepare. Both appraiser and appraisee should think about how work has gone during the appraisal period and decide what they want from the interview.
- Don't impose your ideas. Too much 'telling' leads to a one-sided interview and can easily cause resentment. As Tony says to Angela:
- 'That was it - the whole way through - him going down the list telling me what I'd done wrong'
- Do be specific about successes and failures. You have to be honest, but it is all too easy to concentrate on things which have not gone well.
- Don't be destructive. People do not learn from bosses who hammer them into the ground.
- Do concentrate on performance not personality. Managers do not have the skills to analyse personality traits and it is much less threatening and easier to act upon for an appraisee to be told 'you didn't explain what you were going to do', than for the boss to say 'you are a lousy communicator'.
- Do listen and ask questions.
- Do agree objectives. The emphasis is on 'agreement', particularly about the criteria for success.

Summary 10 mins

↳ **Play the two summaries at the end of the video**

Briefly deal with any other points which these raise.

↳ **Ask for ideas for improvement**

Ask each of your colleagues what single improvement in their approach to appraisal they are going to make as a result of this workshop.

↓ **Distribute Handout 3**

This summarises the key messages from **The Appraisal Interview**.

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MELROSE

THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

appraisee notes

TECHNICAL ADVISER

Pat Mitchell

PRODUCED BY

Melrose Film Productions, 16 Bromells Road, London SW4 OBL
Telephone: 0171 627 8404 Fax: 0171 622 0421

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↓ **Fact and Fiction**

All the characters and events in **The Appraisal Interview** are entirely fictional. Any similarity to real people, products or organisations is coincidental.

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INTRODUCTION

What the notes are for

These notes will help you to use the video *The Appraisal Interview* to get maximum benefit from your appraisal.

What the notes contain

- As well as this brief introduction, the notes comprise: A short description of the video
- A self study programme. By working through this, you will learn how to prepare for your appraisal and how to contribute to the discussion itself
- A preparation checklist
- An appendix which describes the context of appraisal. This gives you a better understanding of why organisations have appraisal systems and how these systems are adjusting to change.

How to use the notes

The whole programme will take about 90 minutes.

- Read *Appraisal - the context* on page 15
- Read *The Video - The Appraisal Interview* on page 62
- Work your way through the self study programme.

THE VIDEO - THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

The characters

There are three main characters in the video. Tony is the organisation's Premises Manager. His responsibilities include cleaning, security, maintenance and safety.

Paul is Tony's boss. He is keen, busy and energetic but not very well organised and not a good appraiser, largely through inexperience.

Angela is Paul's boss. She has the experience, knowledge and detachment to help Paul and Tony get more from their appraisal discussions.

The story

The **Appraisal Interview** is in three main parts, followed by a summary.

↳ Part One

We see Tony's appraisal interview with Paul. Much of this is shown in flashback, during separate conversations which the two men have with Angela.

Tony is so fed up with the way Paul has behaved at the interview that he goes over Paul's head to complain to Angela. After she has spoken to Tony, we see Angela beginning the difficult job of showing Paul the mistakes he made in the appraisal interview and getting him to understand and accept ways of doing it better.

↳ Part Two

Angela and Paul continue to discuss the very real difficulties of appraising Tony. She helps him to recognise a number of key points about preparation, the structure and content of the interview and the way good appraisers behave.

↳ Part Three

Paul sets up another meeting with Tony. Not surprisingly, Tony is suspicious of Paul's motives and not inclined to co-operate, so Paul has to work hard to put Angela's advice into practice.

↳ Summary

In the summary, following the main video, Tony reflects on what he has learned. He now realises there is much that appraisees can do to make the experience worthwhile.

SELF STUDY PROGRAMME

Programme outline

The programme is divided into five short sessions, as follows.

Session	Resources
How to prepare	Video - Part One Preparation checklist
Appraisal Interviews: What goes wrong?	
Appraisal Interviews: How to get them right	Video - Part Two
Appraisal Interviews: Demonstrating the lessons	Video - Part Three
Summary	Video - Tony's summary

You will see that we ask you questions in each of these sessions. Please try to answer these before continuing.

How to prepare

↓ Watch Part One of The Appraisal Interview

Pay particular attention to Tony's behaviour, both in the interview with Paul and in his subsequent discussion with Angela.

Neither Paul nor Tony are adequately prepared for their meeting. Tony, in particular, brings nothing with him.

↓ Consider the following questions

What documents do you need to help you prepare for your appraisal?

You should consult:

- The objectives you agreed at the beginning of the appraisal period

-
- Any subsequent modifications you have made to these and agreed with your boss
 - Your job description (to see if it has changed).

What issues should you think about when preparing for your appraisal interview?

Check your answers against the *Preparation Checklist* on page 68. In particular, note:

- The need to identify examples. If you want the discussion about your performance to be specific, rather than vague, these will help to give it focus.
- The need to think through any difficult issues - what they are and how you will tackle them - in advance.
- The need to be positive - to think about your strengths and what has gone well.
- The need for ideas. Your boss will want to know how you will apply the lessons you have learned during the appraisal period. It is much easier to come up with ideas when you are preparing than in the middle of the discussion.

If you have thought through all the issues on the checklist before you meet your appraiser, it is much more likely that the discussion will be two-way and constructive.

Appraisal interviews: what goes wrong?

It is very clear that the first discussion between Tony and Paul went badly. Though that was mostly Paul's fault, it takes two to tango!

Consider the following question

What (apart from the essential step of preparing properly) should Tony have done to make that first meeting go better?

He should have been more assertive. That is different from being aggressive or passive. Assertive people look and sound confident and positive. They do that by:

- Watching their language - their body language, that is. Tony's whole posture at the beginning of the meeting tells you he is irritated and ill at ease. And throughout the early discussion he largely avoids eye contact with Paul.

It is not surprising that Paul's perception is that Tony has been oversensitive and disinterested. Remember that communication - like beauty - is in the eye of the beholder. It is important to appear positive and confident, even if you don't altogether feel that way, because that encourages the other person to reciprocate.

- Using a confident tone of voice. In the argument which he & Paul have about his relative lack of toughness, Tony's defensive & belligerent tone simply makes matters worse.

-
- Avoiding aggressive statements. As Tony said: *'I couldn't bloody well make him, could I?'* Assertive people are very direct. Unlike passive people, you are never in any doubt about what they mean. But they choose words which are neither insulting nor provocative.

Appraisal interviews - how to get them right

Watch Part Two of The Appraisal Interview

Think about your contribution to the agenda

Angela spends some time talking to Paul about the need to agree an agenda. She stresses the word 'agree'.

You can help to make this all important part of the discussion work by being prepared for the standard question *'what would you like to talk about?'*

Try to be as specific as you can. Your answer might be something like:

'I'd like to talk about how my department works with marketing, because we've been having a few problems, particularly with that new product development project that was down as Objective 4.'

Your boss will take the lead in setting the agenda, but make sure you contribute as well. The interview is for your benefit, so make sure it covers the things you want to talk about.

You will have seen that Angela advises Paul to look for the hidden agenda. Though that is excellent advice, it is often very hard to act on, particularly with someone as unprepared and defensive as Tony.

When you are being appraised, you can eliminate this potential problem by making sure that there is no hidden agenda. Agree what you want to talk about at the outset and your boss will not have to play detective.

↓ Consider the following questions

How many of the 'do's' and 'don'ts' that Angela wrote on the flipchart can you remember?

They are:

- Do prepare
- Don't impose your ideas
- Do be specific about successes and failures
- Don't be destructive

-
- Do concentrate on performance not personality
 - Do listen and ask questions
 - Do agree objectives

Think about each of these in turn (except for Preparation, as you have already covered that). What can you do as an appraisee to contribute to the 'do's' and avoid the 'don'ts'?

- Don't impose your ideas

If your appraiser seems to be telling you what to do without finding out what you think, try:

- Testing understanding. Asking questions to clarify what is being said is an excellent, non-threatening way of breaking into the appraiser's flow and turning a monologue into a dialogue.
- Building. If you more or less agree with what the appraiser is saying, add your own ideas to his. Again, that starts a conversation.
- Disagree. There is no point in accepting something you do not agree with. Just remember when you disagree to stick to the facts.
- Do be specific about successes and failures

There are three separate issues here.

First of all, being specific. Think about the difficulty which Angela experienced in getting Tony to say precisely what was bothering him. She had to use a lot of patient questioning technique before he stopped pacing about the room and talking in generalities. He said:

'Oh, bloody hell. I'm in a hole and I can't stop digging!'

When you have something difficult to say to your boss, think about how you will put it across before you meet and then concentrate on being as direct and specific as you can.

Next, come to the meeting equipped with examples of success and use them if the discussion becomes too negative.

Finally, when your work is criticised, remember that the object of the entire appraisal exercise is to help you improve your performance. So:

- If you agree with the criticism, agree.

'You are quite right. The project took longer than it should have done and we were over budget.'

If appropriate, apologise, but not too much. The use of sackcloth and ashes is passive behaviour.

Then try to make the discussion both positive and forward looking.

'I've given this a lot of thought. This is what I have learned. This is what I will do next time. What do you think?'

- If you think that your appraiser may have a point, or if their criticism looks logical, even though you don't accept it, fog.

'You may have a point. I can see why it might seem that way to you.'

- If you don't understand the criticism, ask.

'I've achieved the target, but you are obviously not very happy. What's the problem?'

- If you disagree with the criticism, say so. Be clear and direct in what you say, but not belligerent. In this situation, Tony is a model of how not to behave.

It is possible that you will have a fair idea in advance about the areas your appraiser may criticise. That is another reason why we recommended that you think about potential 'hot spots' when you are preparing.

- Don't be destructive

To be successful, appraisal has to be about learning, on the part of both appraiser and appraisee.

- Do concentrate on performance not personality

If the criticism is personal, react. Don't allow personal attacks to go unacknowledged. If you do, you won't find out what the criticism is really about and you will encourage the person to use similar tactics with you in the future. Ask for examples. Try to get the discussion back onto performance.

- Do listen and ask questions

That advice applies just as much to you as to your appraiser.

- Do agree objectives

Good appraisers like Angela know that people only give of their best if they feel committed to what they are doing. So work with your boss to agree objectives which are both challenging and realistic.

Appraisal interviews - demonstrating the lessons

In the third part of the video, Paul and Tony meet again to have another shot at Tony's appraisal. As you watch it, pay particular attention to Paul's behaviour.

↳ Watch Part Three of The Appraisal Interview

↳ Consider the following question

What improvements did you notice in how Paul tackled the interview?

- He asked good questions
- He listened to Tony
- He tested his understanding of what Tony said
- His body language was open and supportive
- He did not react negatively to Tony's behaviour.

This is precisely the style which both parties - appraisees as well as appraisers - use during effective appraisal interviews.

Summary

↳ Watch Tony's summary of the lessons he has learned

↳ Review what you have learned

What specific lessons will you apply to your next appraisal interview?

PREPARATION CHECKLIST - for the appraisee

↳ Objectives

What objectives did you agree twelve months ago? How have they been modified during the year? Which went well? Not so well? Why? Which were achieved but could have been exceeded. How? What lessons do you think can be learned from the year's work and how would you like to see them applied next year?

↳ Strengths and weaknesses

What are your main strengths and key skills? What are your weaknesses? Can you think of examples of how these show up?

↳ Your job

Has your job changed significantly over the past year?

↳ **Working relationships**

What are your most important working relationships? Which of these work best? Worst? Why? How well do you and your boss work together? Again, be specific. Think of examples.

↳ **Development needs**

What are your main development needs? How do you think these should be met? Don't just think about formal training courses.

↳ **Your career**

How do you see your career developing? What issues do you want to raise with your boss about your career?

↳ **Priorities**

What are the most important issues that you want dealt with at your appraisal? Think about what you want to say and the questions you want to ask.

↳ **Hot spots**

What are going to be the most difficult issues to discuss? How will you handle these?

↳ **Other people's perceptions**

Though it is not essential, you may want to talk to close colleagues about their perceptions of your work.

APPRAISAL - THE CONTEXT

Introduction

The Appraisal Interview is a training resource pack which examines the skills we all need to discuss performance effectively with one another. If we don't have these skills then, no matter what kind of organisation we are in or what type of system we use, appraisal won't work for us. So skills are fundamental. But of course skillful appraisers alone will not necessarily make appraisal work. To set this training programme in context, let us take a brief look at what else is needed to get real benefits from appraisal systems.

Purpose

Like everything else in management, appraisal needs a clear aim. So, first of all, we must decide what these systems are for.

Broadly speaking, there are two choices: a system which is about assessment, comparisons between individuals, ratings and direct links to reward, and one which is about improvement, development and motivation.

Each purpose can be achieved in certain circumstances, but appraisal systems cannot deliver both at once. Discussing improvements means being open with one another. It is unrealistic (and unfair) to expect individuals to be open about their weaknesses, or to tell the boss that he is failing to give them the support they need, when they know that next year's pay rise will depend on the rating he gives them at the end of the interview.

Ownership

Then there is the familiar question of ownership. If bosses and job holders think that appraisal is valuable it will work. If they don't, it won't. So sensible organisations get as much involvement as they can in the design of their systems from those who will have to put them into action.

Once an appraisal system is running, it needs support. People need to be trained. Practical difficulties have to be spotted and sorted out. Appraisers need protection, so that they can devote the time to appraisal that getting it right demands. Perhaps most of all, the organisation must be seen to deliver on the conclusions that people reach at appraisal interviews. To take a common example, there are few things more demoralising than agreeing training or development with one of your people and then finding that you cannot get the support needed to provide it.

Adapting to change

Finally, as thoughtful organisations adapt to change, so they adapt their appraisal systems accordingly.

The pressures on organisations - public as well as private - to become more focused about what they do is causing many of them to tie their appraisal systems much more tightly into their broad strategy. No longer is appraisal being treated as something which the Personnel Department dreams up and imposes on managers. Instead, it is increasingly seen as part of a much wider approach to Performance Management - linked into effective business planning, a clear organisational vision, appropriate reward systems, a communication strategy and so on. This is really good news because the more those who have to make appraisal work see it as being in the mainstream of their jobs, the more seriously they will take it and the more benefits it will deliver to them. Change is also forcing organisations to look at their structures and how they use the talents of those they employ. The ranks of management are thinning. Layers are disappearing from hierarchies. The increasing use of task groups and project teams is making organisations more flexible and quicker on their feet. People at the sharp end of organisations, who in the past were sometimes told to leave their brains at home when they came to work, are now being empowered to accept responsibility and take decisions.

What does all that imply for appraisal? Well, several things. It means:

-
- Learning how to discuss performance amongst groups of people who are different from those we are used to. Professional people - research scientists, doctors, teachers - often take a view of their work and their place in organisations which is quite unfamiliar to traditional managers.
 - Finding different ways of looking at performance for different groups - standards or competences, rather than objectives perhaps.
 - Working out how to appraise teams.
 - Deciding how to appraise people who have more than one boss.
 - Solving the problem created by having managers with large numbers of people nominally responsible to them.

These issues are going to make unfamiliar approaches to appraisal much more common. Look for:

- More self appraisal, both by individuals and by teams.
- More upward appraisal. If organisations really mean it when they say that a manager's job is to support those who are one step nearer to their clients, then the best people to appraise that support will be those who are receiving it.
- Peer review. This is an approach familiar to professional people, such as scientists, university teaching staff and hospital consultants. It may in future have a part to play within empowered, self-managing teams.
- Shared appraisal - getting views about performance from more than one source.

Above all, expect change to create variety in how we appraise. One system will not fit everybody and the days of trying to feed people through the same sausage machine are fast coming to an end. Universal systems are dead, even if some of them seem reluctant to lie down.

There is a very important message in that word 'variety' for those organisations, in education and healthcare for example, which are new to appraisal. Find your own solutions. Those who adopt other organisations' approaches uncritically run the risk of dressing themselves in clothes which others are trying to take off.

Let us go back to where we started. Of course we have to get the context right; have clear objectives; design and support appraisal properly; understand the implications of change and adapt appraisal to fit; create the right sort of variety in the systems we adopt.

But never forget the need for basic skills. When you come right down to it, appraisal is about two adults sitting down to discuss performance at work. Do that right and the benefits are immense.