



Impact of Performance Appraisal on Employee Productivity in Kericho County Referral Hospital

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Abstract

Performance appraisal systems in healthcare institutions face significant challenges in effectively enhancing employee productivity and motivation. Limited research exists on the specific impact of performance appraisal components on employee productivity in Kenyan healthcare settings. This study aimed to evaluate how performance appraisals impact employee productivity at Kericho County Referral Hospital, specifically examining the effects of appraisal feedback, training programs, and reward systems on staff performance. A quantitative descriptive survey design was employed, targeting all 300 employees at Kericho County Referral Hospital. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation across clinical, administrative, and support staff categories. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation analysis. The findings revealed that 60% of employees reported increased motivation and productivity following positive feedback during performance appraisals. Training and development opportunities linked to appraisals enhanced job performance for 55% of participants, while 70% of employees who received rewards after positive appraisals demonstrated significantly higher productivity levels. However, 30% of employees expressed dissatisfaction with limited training programs, and those who received no rewards showed decreased motivation. The study concludes that well-structured performance appraisal systems significantly enhance employee productivity when they incorporate constructive feedback, relevant training opportunities, and fair reward mechanisms. The research recommends enhancing feedback quality, expanding targeted training programs, implementing transparent reward systems, and ensuring fairness in the appraisal process to maximize employee productivity in healthcare settings.

Keywords: *Performance, Appraisal, Employee, Productivity, Hospital*

1.0 Introduction

Performance appraisal is defined as the systematic evaluation of an employee's work performance over a predetermined period. Managers use this process to assess employees' contributions during the previous year, functioning similarly to an employee report card. Employees who work across multiple departments often report that performance review processes vary significantly within the same organization. Healthcare facilities employ diverse structures and methodologies for performance evaluation. However, some appraisal systems are poorly designed and executed, creating negative experiences for both managers and staff members. Performance appraisal serves as a mechanism to assess individual worker productivity and performance, determining how effectively employees contribute to organizational growth and the achievement of strategic objectives. While organizations utilize various methods to evaluate employee performance, the primary purpose remains consistent: understanding how each employee performs relative to organizational goals and informing decisions about promotions and role transitions within the company (Eldman & Arnold, 2009).

Employees are fundamental to organizational expansion and operational efficiency. Their productivity is crucial for ensuring businesses advance to higher performance levels (Taouab & Issor, 2019). To maintain standards and achieve expected outcomes, organizations must adapt to emerging information and technological developments. Companies seeking to remain competitive amid rapid advancements across various fields must invest in employee training and development to address these evolving challenges. Organizations employ various strategies including retraining existing employees, hiring trainable personnel, delivering specialized in-service training, and implementing on-the-job training programs that incorporate exchange opportunities (White, 2019). The primary goal of performance reviews is enhancing organizational productivity. Measuring employee productivity represents both a crucial and delicate aspect of human resource management, as individual performance directly contributes to organizational success. It is important to note that some managers may misuse appraisal systems to undervalue contributions from employees who are not their preferred candidates. A well-established performance review process should unite the workplace and employees by clearly communicating expectations and demonstrating how individuals can contribute effectively to the organization. Performance appraisals, combined with productivity assessments, inform decisions regarding promotions, professional development opportunities, and advancement to higher organizational levels.

Performance evaluation remains a contentious issue since many employees prefer to interpret their supervisors' opinions about their work rather than receive direct feedback. Employees in smaller organizations who frequently interact with their supervisors generally understand performance expectations clearly. However, in larger organizations, limited engagement levels may prevent employees from accurately predicting their supervisors' assessments, potentially leading to unexpected appraisal outcomes (Donli, 2008). Fletcher (2001) and Esu and Inyang (2009) describe performance appraisal as a management tool designed to guide workplace and employee management in ways that enable individuals or groups to achieve stated institutional objectives. Performance assessment extends beyond a simple checklist of tasks for evaluating and modifying employee performance. Murphy (2020) defines performance evaluation as the systematic process of documenting and assessing employee workplace performance. This methodical and regular process evaluates each employee's effectiveness and productivity against predetermined criteria and objectives. Supervisors typically examine employee skills and achievements over specified periods, documenting whether employees met, exceeded, or fell short of expectations.

Performance evaluation encompasses a comprehensive review of job performance and assigned responsibilities (Wu et al., 2019). For evaluations to succeed, supervisors must establish clear performance standards and ensure employees receive necessary training, feedback, and incentives to enhance their performance.

Employee productivity represents a critical concern in workplaces globally. Organizations strive to maximize team output to achieve organizational success and well-being. Employee productivity worldwide depends primarily on the effectiveness of existing structures and procedures. This represents a vital aspect for organizational success in today's globally competitive economy. Companies maximize employee productivity and available resources to produce cost-effective goods or services that benefit their establishments (Latva, 2022).

1.1 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how performance reviews impact worker productivity in Kericho County Referral Hospital

1.1.1 Specific Objectives

- i. Analyze how Kericho County Referral Hospital employees' productivity is affected by performance reviews.
- ii. Examine the extent to which Kericho County Referral Hospital personnel' productivity is impacted by appraisal feedback.
- iii. Assess the degree to which Kericho County Referral Hospital staff' productivity is impacted by their training.
- iv. Examine how Kericho County Referral Hospital employee pay affects workers' productivity.

2.0 Literature Review

This literature review examines the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence surrounding performance appraisal systems and their impact on employee productivity. The review is organized into six key areas: conceptual frameworks of performance appraisal, the relationship between employee productivity and performance evaluation, the role of performance feedback, employee performance dimensions, reward systems, and employee training alongside criticisms of current appraisal practices. The literature reveals that performance appraisal serves as a critical management tool for enhancing organizational effectiveness, though its implementation varies significantly across different organizational contexts. Current research demonstrates mixed findings regarding the effectiveness of performance appraisal systems, with success largely dependent on factors such as feedback quality, fairness in evaluation processes, alignment with reward systems, and integration with training and development programs. This review provides the theoretical foundation for understanding how performance appraisal components influence employee productivity in healthcare settings.

2.1 Conceptual Issue

Cardy and Leonard (2011) define performance appraisal as a formal, structured interaction between an individual and supervisor that takes the form of periodic interviews designed to identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities for improvement and future skill development. Organizations employ appraisal outcomes either directly or indirectly to make reinforcement decisions, meaning that high-performing employees may receive bonuses, promotions, or merit pay increases based on their performance evaluations. Employee performance

reviews represent one of the most effective methods for improving output, morale, and overall performance.

Manoharan et al. (2009) emphasize that performance reviews serve as important management tools for measuring worker productivity in the workplace. The primary purpose is to support individual and team efforts in progressively ensuring fulfillment of the organization's overall mission (Cardy & Leonard, 2011). In various organizations, performance appraisals are used to determine employee rewards such as promotions, bonuses, or position changes. Additionally, they can identify underperforming employees who may require counseling, demotion, termination, or salary reduction. Armstrong (2012) notes that performance appraisal is frequently integrated within broader performance management systems.

Performance feedback represents a crucial component of all performance management systems (Aguinis, 2009; DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). This feedback can be characterized as information about an employee's past behavior in relation to standardized employee conduct and outcomes. The primary goal is to enhance individual and team performance, employee engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction (Aguinis, 2009). Mello (2015) suggests that this type of performance management may represent a significantly different approach compared to conventional manager-subordinate reviews. This approach can function as a standalone development strategy and is not intended to replace traditional processes. It involves evaluating feedback from individuals whose perspectives are considered highly relevant and beneficial.

2.2 Employee Productivity and Performance Evaluation

Okeke et al. (2019) investigated the impact of performance management on worker productivity in South-East Nigerian banking institutions. Their study examined how performance reviews, evaluations, feedback, and self-assessments affect employee productivity. Using Equity Theory as the theoretical foundation, the researchers employed a descriptive survey design. From a population of 2,081, the Taro-Yamane formula yielded a sample size of 366 participants. Hypothesis testing revealed that employee productivity was significantly influenced by feedback, performance reviews, and evaluations. Nduati and Wanyoike (2022) conducted research on staff productivity and performance management, evaluating how employee efficiency is affected by performance reviews and role clarity. Their literature review identified gaps in the relationship between role clarity and performance reviews. The assessment found that performance management is influenced by organizational culture and behavior, leadership, training, employee engagement, commitment, globalization, technological expertise, resilience, and employee capabilities. The findings suggested that top management should ensure employee-specific procedures, deliverables, and goals are clearly established.

The employee productivity index (EPI) represents a human resource function that measures employee or team output compared to invested resource inputs. Productivity is measured by dividing output by the inputs required to create that output. Higher productivity occurs when fewer resources are needed to create the same amount of output. Research reveals significant heterogeneity between business units (Bartelsman & Doms, 2000). For example, Syverson (2004) analyzed labor productivity in US manufacturing establishments using 1997 Economic Census data, showing that plants at the 90th percentile of productivity distribution were over four times more productive than plants at the 10th percentile within the same four-digit sector. Similarly, Criscuolo et al. (2003) demonstrated a fivefold productivity difference between these deciles in the UK during 2000.

2.3 Performance Feedbacks and Employee Productivity

Performance feedback represents a crucial component of performance management systems (Aguinis, 2009; DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). This feedback provides information about employee past behavior in relation to established criteria and outcomes. The primary objectives include improving individual and team performance, employee engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction (Aguinis, 2009). Compared to conventional manager-subordinate assessments, this performance management approach may be viewed as a powerful developmental strategy (Mello, 2015). Dixit and Sharma (2021) investigated staff productivity at a textile company in Bhilwara city using various performance management techniques. The study examined reward programs, staff development and training, performance reviews, and feedback mechanisms as independent variables. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires administered to 100 respondents across the firm's top managerial ranks. A descriptive research approach was employed for data analysis. Results demonstrated that performance reviews and feedback systems can increase employee productivity by motivating employees to focus on their work and participate in achieving company objectives. The study concluded that proper training and development can be ensured when performance gaps between expected and actual performance are identified.

Kihama and Wanaina (2019) examined the impact of employee assessment and feedback on staff productivity at Kenya's Kiambu County Water and Sewerage Company. Using a descriptive approach, the researchers focused on 972 employees as the target population. A stratified random sampling approach was used to determine a sample size of 300 respondents. Data was collected through structured questionnaires. The findings revealed that positive feedback is easier to communicate than negative feedback. The results also confirmed that organizations should establish appropriate methods for communicating employee feedback.

2.4 Employee Performance

Performance in organizational environments is typically defined as the effort organizational members exert to accomplish organizational goals. In service-oriented businesses, employees represent the primary source of competitive advantage (Luthans & Stajkovic, as cited in Asamu, 2013). The commitment-performance approach values employee voices and views them as resources and assets, creating highly positive impacts on organizational success. Güngör (2011) defines employee performance as consisting of output quantity, output quality, output timeliness, work diligence, and cooperativeness. Boachie-Mensah (2011) demonstrates that enhanced organizational performance depends on improved employee performance. Current performance evaluation research advocates integrating performance evaluation within broader performance management systems rather than implementing it independently. Performance management can improve organizational performance by enhancing both individual and team performance (Armstrong, 2006). The system helps and encourages employees to perform as productively and efficiently as possible while meeting organizational requirements (Bititci et al., 2018). Effective performance management establishes common understanding of company aims and objectives, assists each worker in recognizing and appreciating their contributions to achieving those objectives, and controls and enhances performance at individual and organizational levels (Williams, 2002).

2.5 Reward System and Employee Productivity

Armstrong (2013) defines reward systems as sets of tools employers can use to attract, retain, motivate, and satisfy employees. Thompson (2002) describes rewards as expressions of gratitude

given to employees for their additional contributions to the company, which may take monetary or non-monetary forms. Armstrong (2009) also conceptualizes rewards as total satisfaction linked to financial and other incentives within recognized reward systems. Armstrong further clarifies that total rewards are typically emphasized because it is not always clear whether monetary or non-monetary rewards are more effective at boosting employee morale and encouraging improved performance. Unfair performance review practices lead to workplace dissatisfaction. Adler et al. (2016) emphasize that fair performance evaluation systems must provide accurate and reliable data. Organizational success depends on performance management systems that treat employees fairly. Many performance review procedures focus solely on determining employee raises, promotions, or position details. However, performance reviews should assist both individuals and organizations rather than merely making decisions. Continuous evaluation represents a strategy for employee retention and can identify organizational strengths and weaknesses. When poor reviews result in difficult assignments, promotions, pay raises, or dismissals, managers become reluctant to provide precise evaluations (Kim et al., 2021).

Watling (1995) emphasizes the importance of basing appraisals on facts rather than emotions, stating that the best approach to measuring performance involves surveys, on-the-job observations, peer feedback, and results against targets. This represents an important consideration when determining successful performance review elements. If managers conducting appraisals find it difficult to provide candid and truthful feedback, evaluations will be inaccurate. Because such processes involve emotional fluctuations, accuracy is unlikely to be achieved. Tomno (2018) evaluated the impact of performance management procedures on employee productivity at KALRO in Kisumu, Kenya. The study examined how staff development plans, performance reviews, and employee recognition and reward procedures affected productivity. Based on goal-setting, institutional, and contingency theories, the investigation used descriptive and census research approaches, with questionnaires distributed to 140 participants. Results showed that employee productivity was positively and significantly correlated with staff development plans, performance reviews, and recognition and reward programs. The report recommended that KALRO promote experienced staff to increase productivity and satisfaction while implementing assessment systems that provide employees with clear, concise goals.

2.6 Employee Training and Criticisms of Performance Appraisal

Raja et al. (2011) explain that training is regarded as the most important tool in modern global business because it increases efficiency for both companies and employees. Khawaja and Nadeem (2013) view training as an activity business use to raise awareness and acquire skills for human capital growth and subsequent contribution to welfare and overall productivity. This process increases worker output and establishes connections between current performance and optimal performance potential. Armstrong (2003) states that learning, planned experiences, and instruction generate systematic and formal behavioral changes. Despite years of research and management efforts to improve organizational performance, most managers still find performance evaluation and management very challenging (Armstrong, 1994). Numerous authors have criticized performance assessments throughout the literature. Shields et al. (2020) argue that seldom has a system promised so much and delivered so little in corporate history. Performance evaluation is criticized as a costly process that can create conflict between appraisers and appraisees, may be ineffective, and could even prevent employee performance improvement (Redman & Wilkinson, 2009). Carroll and Schneier (1982) found that performance appraisal represents the least popular managerial activity. One common characteristic among performance appraisal critics is their

inability to identify suitable alternatives or replacement systems. Rather than completely eliminating performance review systems, organizations should focus on improvement and ensuring effectiveness. They must rethink, modernize, and renew performance review processes to better meet company and environmental demands.

2.7 Employee Productivity

Productivity refers to the effective and efficient use of resources including time, people, ideas, information, money, tools, space, energy, and materials. Productivity is defined as the output-to-input ratio and represents an evaluation of how businesses effectively and efficiently use resources like labor and capital in production. Increased productivity refers to producing more output with the same quantity of labor and capital. This can be interpreted as performing tasks correctly and appropriately to obtain maximum value and efficiency. Productivity evaluates the relationship between inputs and outputs and can be considered the ratio of actual production to required production. It also represents the quantity and quality of goods produced from utilized resources (Grönroos & Ojasalo, 2004; Calabrese, 2012). Productivity measures how specific components including labor and capital are adjusted to produce particular output levels. Productivity is regarded as a fundamental metric for national performance evaluations and international statistical comparisons, as it represents a crucial component of economic growth and competitiveness.

3.0 Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive survey design to determine the role of performance appraisals on staff productivity at Kericho County Referral Hospital. The quantitative approach was selected to enable objective, replicable analysis of numerical data regarding employee perceptions of performance appraisal processes and their impact on productivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). The target population comprised all 300 employees at Kericho County Referral Hospital, including clinical personnel (doctors, nurses, medical technicians), administrative staff (management, human resources, finance), and support personnel (maintenance, security, cleaning). Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation across the three employee categories, with the sample size of 300 deemed adequate for statistical power while remaining manageable for data collection and analysis (Panneerselvam, 2020). Data was collected using structured questionnaires containing demographic information and Likert-scale items (ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5)) measuring perceptions of feedback quality, training and development, reward systems, and productivity impacts, plus open-ended questions for additional qualitative insights (Saunders et al., 2020). A pilot test with 30 employees who were not part of the main sample established questionnaire validity by identifying potential wording issues, while Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85 confirmed high internal consistency and instrument reliability (Pallant, 2020). Data analysis employed descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) to summarize findings and inferential statistics (Pearson's correlation coefficient) to examine relationships between performance appraisal components and employee productivity (Aguinis, 2021), while open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and provide deeper understanding beyond numerical data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation with withdrawal rights, maintaining respondent anonymity and confidentiality, secure data storage, and aggregate-level reporting, with all procedures following American Psychological Association (2020) ethical guidelines to ensure research integrity and participant rights protection.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings from the quantitative descriptive survey conducted among 300 employees at Kericho County Referral Hospital to examine the impact of performance appraisals on employee productivity. The results are organized according to the study's specific objectives: analyzing how performance reviews affect employee productivity, examining the impact of appraisal feedback on productivity, assessing the influence of training programs on staff productivity, and investigating how employee compensation affects productivity. Data was collected through structured questionnaires using five-point Likert scales and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) and inferential statistics (Pearson's correlation coefficient). The findings reveal significant relationships between various performance appraisal components and employee productivity levels across clinical, administrative, and support staff categories.

4.1 Impact of Performance Appraisal Feedback on Employee Productivity

The analysis of feedback quality revealed significant variations in employee responses to different types of performance appraisal feedback. Among the 300 respondents, 180 employees (60%) reported that positive feedback during performance appraisals significantly enhanced their motivation and productivity levels. These employees indicated higher job engagement and improved work performance following constructive positive feedback sessions. The findings align with Aguinis (2021), who emphasized that feedback represents a critical but often underutilized performance driver for employees. Positive feedback helps employees recognize their strengths and reinforces appropriate behaviors while encouraging continuous improvement. Conversely, 75 employees (25%) reported that negative feedback adversely affected their motivation, particularly when the feedback was ambiguous and lacked constructive elements. These employees experienced decreased confidence and uncertainty about performance improvement strategies, resulting in reduced productivity. This observation supports Choi et al. (2020), who found that improperly delivered negative feedback can significantly limit motivation and hinder productivity. When feedback fails to provide actionable guidance, employees may feel misunderstood and undervalued, leading to decreased focus and job satisfaction. Neutral feedback produced moderate responses, with 45 employees (15%) reporting modest increases in motivation. While lacking the motivational power of positive feedback, neutral feedback generated moderate productivity improvements among employees who valued objective performance criticism.

Table 1: Impact of Feedback Type on Employee Motivation and Productivity

Feedback Type	Number of Employees	Percentage (%)	Impact on Productivity
Positive Feedback	180	60%	High
Negative Feedback	75	25%	Low
Neutral Feedback	45	15%	Moderate
Total	300	100%	

4.2 Training and Development Opportunities and Employee Productivity

The relationship between performance appraisals and training opportunities demonstrated significant impact on employee productivity. Among the respondents, 165 employees (55%) reported that performance appraisals coupled with training programs enhanced their skills and job performance. These employees who received training aligned with their appraisal feedback indicated higher productivity levels. This finding supports Raja et al. (2011), who emphasized that continuous training initiatives play crucial roles in addressing skill gaps, promoting professional development, and enabling employees to meet position requirements effectively. Training programs provide employees with necessary tools and knowledge for enhanced work performance. Performance appraisals that connect skill development with measurable goals help employees establish clear targets and achieve greater productivity. Training becomes particularly important for addressing weaknesses identified during appraisals, enabling employees to improve performance and contribute more effectively to organizational objectives. However, 90 employees (30%) expressed concerns that hospital training programs were insufficient and failed to address skill deficiencies identified during performance appraisals. These employees perceived training offerings as misaligned with their professional development needs and career advancement objectives. The remaining 45 employees (15%) were neutral about training effectiveness.

Table 2: Employee Perceptions of Training and Development Programs

Training Perception	Number of Employees	Percentage (%)
Training Enhanced Performance	165	55%
Training Insufficient	90	30%
Neutral	45	15%
Total	300	100%

4.3 Compensation and Recognition Systems Impact on Employee Productivity

The study revealed strong connections between compensation, recognition, and employee productivity. Among employees who received positive performance appraisals, 210 respondents (70%) who were subsequently rewarded through promotions, salary increments, or bonuses reported significantly increased motivation and job dedication. These employees felt appreciated and valued for their efforts, resulting in enhanced job satisfaction and improved performance. This finding aligns with Armstrong (2021), who noted that monetary rewards and formal recognition serve as powerful incentives for promoting substantial improvements in employee performance and productivity. Promotions and salary increase represent tangible recognition that validates employee efforts and enhances motivation and organizational loyalty. When employees observe direct relationships between performance and rewards, they are more likely to strive for excellence and meet performance requirements. This supports the principle that reward systems must be integrated with performance appraisals to maximize employee motivation. However, 90 employees (30%) who did not receive rewards following positive performance appraisals expressed dissatisfaction, which negatively impacted their productivity. These employees felt undervalued and unappreciated, resulting in decreased engagement and motivation. This finding supports Shields et al. (2020), who stated that the absence of rewards or recognition following

positive performance appraisals can decrease employee commitment and adversely affect productivity.

Table 3: Impact of Rewards and Recognition on Employee Productivity

Reward Status	Number of Employees	Percentage (%)	Productivity Impact
Received Rewards	210	70%	High Increase
No Rewards Received	90	30%	Decreased
Total	300	100%	

4.4 Overall Performance Appraisal System Effectiveness

Comprehensive analysis of all performance appraisal components revealed that 225 employees (75%) perceived the overall appraisal system as having positive impacts on their productivity when feedback, training, and rewards were effectively integrated. However, 75 employees (25%) expressed concerns about system fairness and consistency across different departments. Thematic analysis of open-ended responses identified recurring themes including the need for more frequent feedback sessions, improved training program alignment with individual development needs, and more transparent reward allocation processes.

5.0 Conclusion

This study successfully determined the significant role of performance appraisals in enhancing employee productivity at Kericho County Referral Hospital. The quantitative descriptive survey of 300 employees across clinical, administrative, and support staff revealed that well-structured performance appraisal systems substantially impact employee motivation and productivity when they integrate quality feedback, relevant training opportunities, and fair reward mechanisms. The findings demonstrated that 60% of employees who received positive feedback reported increased motivation and productivity, while 55% of employees who accessed training programs linked to their appraisals showed enhanced job performance. Most significantly, 70% of employees who received rewards following positive appraisals exhibited markedly higher productivity levels. However, the study also identified critical areas for improvement, particularly the need for more constructive feedback delivery, expanded training programs that address skill gaps identified during appraisals, and more transparent reward systems. The research confirms that performance appraisals serve as vital management tools for driving organizational effectiveness in healthcare settings, but their success depends heavily on proper implementation, fairness, and integration with broader human resource management practices. These findings contribute valuable insights to the limited literature on performance appraisal effectiveness in Kenyan healthcare institutions and provide a foundation for enhancing employee productivity through improved appraisal systems.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that healthcare institutions implement three key improvements to enhance their performance appraisal system effectiveness. First, hospitals should establish quarterly feedback sessions instead of annual reviews, where managers receive specific training on delivering constructive feedback that includes clear examples of strengths and actionable improvement plans, ensuring all feedback is documented and followed up within one month.

Second, healthcare institutions should create dedicated skills development programs that directly address gaps identified during appraisals, with each employee entitled to regular professional development opportunities based on their appraisal outcomes and career advancement needs. Third, hospitals should implement transparent reward systems that clearly define promotion criteria, salary increment guidelines, and recognition structures linked to performance ratings, with all reward decisions communicated to staff promptly after appraisal completion and fair appeals processes established for employees who believe they were unfairly evaluated. These practical recommendations can be implemented within existing institutional frameworks and will create measurable improvements in employee motivation and productivity while ensuring fairness and transparency in the performance management process.

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