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Measuring performance during crises and beyond: The Performance Promoter Score



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Abstract Many organizations are curtailing or even abandoning performance management because of difficulties measuring performance and disruptions in performance-based pay due to the COVID-19 crisis. Contrary to this growing and troubling trend, we argue that it is especially important during the crisis to not only continue but also strengthen performance management to communicate a firm's strategic direction, collect valuable business data, provide critical feedback to individuals and workgroups, protect organizations from legal risks, and retain top talent. To do so, we offer a solution to overcome the challenges associated with measuring performance during a crisis. Specifically, we extend and expand upon the well-established Net Promoter Score measure in marketing and introduce the Performance Promoter Score (PPS) to measure performance. We offer evidence-based recommendations for collecting PPS information for individuals, workgroups, and other collectives, computing a Net Performance Promoter Score (NPPS); using multiple sources of performance data, and using PPS for administrative and developmental purposes as well as to provide more frequent performance check-ins. PPS is a convenient, practical, relevant, and useful performance measure during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is also an innovation that will be useful long after the pandemic is over.

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1. Performance management during crises: Is it still relevant?

Performance management is a critical talent management function in organizations of all types and sizes and all industries (Aguinis et al., 2011).

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Specifically, performance management is “a continuous process of identifying, measuring, and developing the performance of individuals and workgroups and aligning performance with the strategic goals of the organization” (Aguinis, 2019b, p. 8). But, because of the COVID-19 crisis, performance management has been severely disrupted. Pushed into survival mode, many organizations are downgrading and even completely discontinuing their usual way of measuring performance. Marygrove Awning Co. in Livonia, Michigan discarded most of the components of their system because, as CEO Mike Falahee put it: “After all, how can we review someone who can’t do their job the way they’re accustomed to doing it?” (O’Connell, 2020).

Before the pandemic, 85% of organizations linked performance to pay (Mercer, 2019). In contrast, during COVID-19, many organizations are intentionally separating performance from pay decisions. Facebook announced that all of its 45,000 full-time employees will receive the same “exceeds expectations” in their first-quarter performance review in 2020 (Seetharaman, 2020). Other organizations stopped performance-based pay increases altogether. Based on data collected by WorldatWork (2020), as of April 3, 2020, 17% of organizations surveyed canceled salary increases in 2020, while another 19% were on hold and waiting to make that decision.

Given this situation, organizations and leaders are asking the following questions:

- Is performance management still relevant and useful during a crisis?
- Because employees cannot do their work the way they used to, performance is more difficult to measure, and there is no performance-based pay increase, what is the point in continuing to manage performance?

These are dangerous questions because talent management is a key determinant of firm performance, and performance management does not just serve an administrative function in support of personnel decisions such as pay and promotions (Aguinis, 2019a). Specifically, performance management also serves additional purposes, including communicating and reinforcing strategic priorities (i.e., strategic and communication purpose), supporting employee development (i.e., developmental purpose), planning and maintaining a high-quality workforce (i.e., organizational maintenance purpose), and collecting information to support

talent management decision-making (i.e., documentation purpose).

It is therefore critical for organizations to continue to measure performance. Organizations must be able to measure performance during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Why? First, during a time of chaos and change, employees look up to their leaders for guidance, and performance management serves as a key channel to communicate the company’s strategic direction. The hidden message of a silenced performance management system is that the top management team—as well as managers at other levels—does not know what to do or what they want employees to do, and whether or not employees are performing well does not matter.

Second, without performance information, managers cannot provide sound and meaningful feedback to employees to improve their performance in the future. Frequent and ongoing feedback not only provides continuity to employees’ professional development, but it also helps employees feel a sense of connection and psychological safety (Aguinis et al., 2012a; Wilken, 2020). Especially at the time of extensive remote working, “a lack of immediate access to a manager increases the need for organizations to put [feedback] mechanics in place to force them to happen versus organically” (Vozza, 2020), said Rhiannon Staples, chief marketing officer of Hibob, an HR management platform.

Third, missing performance data for a significant period puts companies in a vulnerable legal position. At a time of crisis, many organizations are forced to let some employees go and performance is one of the major factors used to decide which employees will be laid off. Without documentation on performance information, decisions may be unfair, and companies might face lawsuits when former employees question termination decisions (Starner, 2020).

Finally, performance data are needed to accurately identify and successfully retain top performers who make substantially more important contributions than average employees (Aguinis & Bradley, 2015). This is critical for winning the talent war to survive during challenging times and thrive after the crisis is over (Aguinis et al., 2012b).

In short, due to the COVID-19 crisis, many organizations are seriously curtailing and even abandoning performance management. However, this decision does more harm than good given performance management’s multiple purposes and benefits for individuals and organizations. The solution is not to discontinue the measurement of

performance, but instead to adapt measurement to the new reality. In the words of Amy Webb, Co-Founder and CEO of The Future Today Institute: “This is a time when data matters more than gut” (O’Keefe, 2020, p. 25). Abandoning performance measurement results in loss of valuable information at a moment when data are badly needed.

2. Challenges of measuring performance during crises

The challenge of measuring performance is not new. But, the COVID-19 pandemic—as with any other major crisis and disruption—is exacerbating the challenges.

First, as organizations experience economic downturns, strategic directions are also changing, and it takes some time for the performance measures to catch up. As organizations readjust their priorities, employees’ job duties and daily activities also shift significantly as original work projects are canceled or delayed, product lines are eliminated, and the usual way employees conduct work becomes unavailable. These changes render the typical approaches to evaluating employees’ work irrelevant and measures of performance need to adapt to be informative and useful.

Second, practicality is of particular importance during a crisis. Employees at all levels are pulled in different directions and tasked with doing more with less. Time becomes one of the most valuable resources. Measuring performance with the usual appraisal forms takes a considerable amount of time, which adds a layer of burden to employees and managers on top of the many existing pressures. Thus, there is a need for performance measurement tools that are shorter, more concise, and yet still comprehensive.

Third, the meaningfulness of performance management comes into question during a crisis. For performance management to be meaningful, the standards used to evaluate job functions should be important and relevant, and job functions must be under the control of the employees. However, many things in the workplace are out of control and many performance evaluation standards may be no longer relevant, available, or possible to meet during a crisis. Thus, performance measures must remain relevant though jobs and job functions may change on an ongoing basis.

Fourth, during normal times, there are two major approaches to measuring performance: results (i.e., the outcome of employees’ work activities) and behaviors (i.e., how employees do their work; Aguinis, 2019a). Both measurement

approaches are difficult to implement given today’s special circumstances. For example, employees in roles such as sales or manufacturing are usually evaluated by the results that they produce; however, those results might be out of their control during a pandemic. Many of the goals established between employees and supervisors before the crisis are now out of reach. Because of this, the Shapiro Negotiations Institute in Baltimore has “stopped evaluating employees based on the revenue they generate” (O’Connell, 2020). At the same time, measuring performance based on specific employee behaviors requires a minimum level of first-hand observation and interaction between the supervisor and employee. At a time when at least 62% of the workforce is working remotely (Brenan, 2020), traditional management practices such as the “open-door policy” and “management by walking around” no longer exist (Schrage, 2020). Thus, performance measures need to be flexible and adaptable.

In sum, here is the major challenge: How can we measure performance? Importantly, how can we do so using a tool that meets the criteria of good measures, including being simple, relevant, informative, adaptable, comprehensive, and clear (Aguinis, 2019a)? The performance measurement tool should be easy to understand and complete, concise, and useful across functional areas and hierarchical levels in the organization. Before the crisis, many performance measures included in appraisal forms did not meet these criteria because they were lengthy and time-consuming. During the pandemic, simplicity and adaptability become even more critical.

Next, we introduce a performance measurement tool that meets the effectiveness criteria. Moreover, this tool can be used to measure the performance of individual employees, including managers at all levels as well as workgroups, units, and entire organizations.

3. Meeting performance measurement challenges: The Performance Promoter Score

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a well-established measure used in marketing to assess customer loyalty toward a specific firm. The process begins with asking one simple but powerful question on a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely): “How likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague?” (Reichheld, 2003). Customers who provide a score of 9 or 10 are considered “promoters,” 7 or 8 are

considered “passively satisfied,” and 6 or below “detractors.” Then, after the ratings are collected from customers, a firm’s NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of those classified as promoters from the percentage of those classified as detractors. So, a unit’s or firm’s NPS can, therefore, range from -100% to 100%. In addition to the rating on the 10-point scale and calculating NPS, it is important to ask a follow-up open-ended question: “Why did you provide the rating that you provided?” Moreover, as an additional extension, it is also useful to ask a second open-ended question: “What would it take to raise our score just by one point?” (Hyken, 2016).

Since the publication of Reichheld’s (2003) influential *Harvard Business Review* article proposing NPS, multiple studies have established its reliability and validity, and it has quickly gained popularity across industries (Colvin, 2020). Improvements in NPS were correlated with firm growth and profitability in U.S. firms across six different industries (Reichheld, 2003). Similarly, in a study involving firms in the U.K., those with a positive NPS grew four times faster than those with a negative NPS (Marsden et al., 2005). Pollack and Alexandrov (2013) assessed NPS’ nomological network and found that NPS leads to repurchase intention. More recently, Raassen and Haans (2017) showed that there is a positive relation between NPS and customers’ online Word of Mouth (eWOM) behaviors. Overall, despite some criticism about NPS’ simplicity (Keiningham et al., 2007; Korneta, 2018), there is little disagreement about its connection to profitability (Van Doorn et al., 2013).

Based on the extensive empirical evidence in support of NPS, we introduce the Performance Promoter Score (PPS). PPS can be used to measure the performance of individual employees, including managers at all hierarchical levels (e.g., first-line managers, functional managers, members of the top management team) as well as workgroups, units, and entire organizations. Moreover, PPS can be used not only during COVID-19 and other crises but also after the pandemic is over.

Extrapolating and expanding upon NPS, measuring performance using PPS involves the following three questions:

1. How likely is it that you would recommend working with [name of individual, workgroup, or unit] to a friend or a colleague?
2. Why did you provide the rating that you provided?

3. What would it take to raise the score just by one point?

PPS addresses the challenges associated with measuring performance in several ways. First, it provides flexibility. During a time of crisis, specific job duties become fluid in response to changes in the environment. Because PPS does not go into the narrow technical details of the job or specific key performance indicators (KPIs), it can be used in any circumstances and for any type of job. Second, it is convenient and practical. One of the challenges of measuring performance has always been the length of appraisal forms and the time-consuming nature of the data-gathering process. PPS is a simple measurement: It does not take raters more than 15 seconds to provide a score and no more than 5 minutes to respond to the two open-ended questions. Also, the data can be collected using freely available tools such as KwikSurveys, SurveyMonkey, or SurveyPlanet. Third, PPS is standardized. Individuals from different functional units, departments, and geographic locations are evaluated on the same criteria, which makes cross-functional and cross-level comparisons easier. Fourth, it is comprehensive. Performance contains two major dimensions: task performance and contextual performance (Aguinis, 2019a). Contextual performance, also known as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), describes discretionary behaviors that contribute to the organization’s overall effectiveness but are not usually explicitly recognized by the formal reward system (Organ, 2018). PPS measures contextual performance in addition to task performance. During a time of crisis, many organizations are calling for employees to contribute ideas to help the organization survive, and many employees are going out of their way to use their talent, skills, network, and innovations to do so. These behaviors are not typically captured by their job descriptions or task-oriented performance indicators, but they are particularly important during a crisis.

4. Using Performance Promoter Score for maximum individual and organizational benefit

In this section, we discuss how to use and maximize the benefits of PPS. Specifically, we describe how to collect PPS data for individuals, workgroups, and other collectives, how to compute a Net Performance Promoter Score (NPPS), how to

Table 1. Recommendations for using and maximizing benefits of the Performer Promoter Score (PPS) to measure performance of employees, workgroups, and other collectives

| Recommendations | Implementation guidelines |
|--|--|
| 1. Collecting PPS for individuals, workgroups, and other collectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure performance using the following three questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How likely is it that you would recommend working with [name of individual, workgroup, or unit] to a friend or a colleague? 2. Why did you provide the rating that you provided? 3. What would it take to raise the score just by one point? • Compute PPS summary statistics (e.g., mean, median) for specific individuals, workgroups, and units for making performance comparisons and establishing benchmarks • See Figure 1's Panel A for details and Table 2 for an example |
| 2. Computing a Net Performance Promoter Score (NPPS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subtract the percentage of detractors (6 and below) from the percentage of promoters (9s and 10s). • See Figure 1's Panel B for details and Table 2 for an example |
| 3. Using multiple sources of performance data (aka 360-degree systems) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect performance information from multiple sources (i.e., employees themselves, supervisors, peers, direct reports, partners, vendors, and customers) • Use multiple strategies to create a list of raters who are sufficiently familiar with the employee or unit being assessed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Employees being rated can invite raters because they are familiar with the people with whom they interact closely ◦ Managers can also contribute to the list of raters thus minimizing employees' personal bias ◦ The human resources function can use name rosters of workgroups, committees, and meeting attendees to invite people to evaluations for each other • Use self-evaluations to enhance acceptance and gather information for performance improvements, but do not collect just self-ratings to make administrative decisions |
| 4. Using PPS for administrative purposes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link reward, recognition, and promotion to PPS • Reward employees promptly • Use monetary as well as nonmonetary rewards |
| 5. Using PPS for developmental purposes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give employees time to process and absorb the feedback and incorporate a debrief during performance conversations • Use answers to the two open-ended questions to (a) identify areas of strengths and improvements, (b) establish new developmental goals, and (c) identify additional resources (e.g., training, improved IT support) that may be needed to improve performance • When answers to the two open-ended questions are too voluminous to analyze manually, use text-analysis tools available in the public domain |

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

| Recommendations | Implementation guidelines |
|---|--|
| 6. Using PPS to provide more frequent performance check-ins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent feedback to adjust work hours, job responsibilities, and priorities, and create a sense of connection and belongingness |

use multiple sources of performance data, how to use PPS for both administrative and developmental purposes, and how to use PPS to provide more frequent performance check-ins. Table 1 includes a summary of our evidence-based recommendations.

4.1. Collecting PPS for individuals, workgroups, and other collectives

As shown in Panel A of Figure 1, the first question can include the name of a specific employee if the goal is to measure individual performance. Similarly, in terms of the individual level of analysis, the first question can include the name of a particular manager. Alternatively, the first question can refer to the performance of a particular workgroup or functional unit such as human resources, marketing, or an organization's top management team. For example: "How likely is it that you would recommend working with the human resources department to a friend or a colleague?"

After the data are collected using the first question, and assuming a sufficient number of responses, it is possible to compute PPS summary statistics (e.g., mean, median) for specific individuals, workgroups, and units. These summary statistics are useful for making performance comparisons and establishing benchmarks.

4.2. Computing a Net Performance Promoter Score (NPPS)

Similar to the computation of the Net Promoter Score, it is possible to use PPS scores to calculate a Net Performance Promoter Score (NPPS). As shown in Figure 1's Panel B, NPPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters. So, an individual, workgroup, or unit's NPPS ranges from -100% to 100%. Moreover, as is done with NPS, it is possible to calculate the NPPS for a particular functional unit, department, or an entire firm.

Table 2 shows ratings provided by the 19 direct reports of a manager at a services organization. Her mean PPS score is 8.79 and the median is 9.00. This is useful information in terms of comparing this manager to others in her functional unit as well as in other units of the organization.

Moreover, given that 84.21% of her direct reports are promoters (i.e., direct reports who gave her performance ratings of 9 and 10) and 10.53% are detractors (i.e., direct reports who gave her performance ratings between 1 and 6), this manager's NPPS is +73.68%. We can use this information to compare this manager with other managers in the organization in the same way that NPS is used to compare firms within industries. For example, based on global benchmark data from 150,000 organizations, the average NPPS score is +32% and the top 25% performing organization have an NPS of +72% or higher (Gitlin, 2020). So, if these benchmarks also apply to individual performance, we can speculate that this manager's performance puts her among the top 25% best-performing managers.

4.3. Using multiple sources of performance data (aka 360-degree systems)

In most organizations, employee performance appraisals are completed only by managers, and close to 70% of companies also ask for employees' self-evaluation (Mercer, 2019). However, multi-source performance management systems are not used that often. For example, Vozza (2020) reported that only 17% of employees are also evaluated by their teammates.

Another positive feature of PPS is that it can be used to implement a multisource feedback system (Aguinis, 2019a). Multisource systems are referred to using other labels such as 360-degree systems, multi-rater, full circle, or 450 feedback because the basic principle is the same: We gather performance information from multiple sources. Because PPS is short, people can provide ratings for multiple co-workers and units without too much burden. In addition to the employees themselves and their immediate supervisors, PPS information can also be collected from peers, direct reports, partners, vendors, and customers.

There are many ways to create the list of performance raters, and each has its advantages as well as potential disadvantages. First, employees being rated could invite raters themselves because they are familiar with the people with whom they interact closely. However, this procedure could bias the scores if raters only include people who

Figure 1. Performance Promoter Score (PPS) and calculation of the Net Performance Promoter Score (NPPS)

Panel A

Performance Promoter Score (PPS) questions:

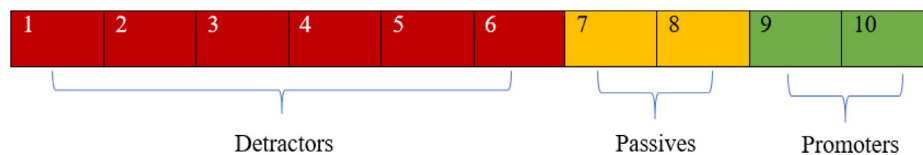
1. How likely is it that you would recommend working with [name of individual, workgroup, or unit] to a friend or a colleague?
2. Why did you provide the rating that you provided?
3. What would it take to raise the score just by one point?

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Not at all likely | | | | | | | | | Extremely likely |

Panel B

Calculation of the Net Performance Promoter Score (NPPS):

NPPS: Percent of promoters - Percent of detractors (across a particular individual, workgroup, or unit, or entire organization).



would provide high scores (e.g., close friends). Second, the managers could also contribute to the list of raters to invite, thus minimizing employees’ personal bias. However, managers might not be familiar with the frequency and depth of interactions between employees and the raters. Third, the human resources function can use name rosters of workgroups, committees, and meeting attendees to invite people to provide evaluations of each other. Overall, the recommendation is to use a combination of different strategies to create a comprehensive list of raters who are sufficiently familiar with the employee or unit being assessed.

As mentioned earlier, it is possible and also beneficial to gather PPS information from employees themselves—and it is particularly useful to collect answers to the second open-ended question: “What would it take to raise the score just by one point?” Here is why. First, employee involvement enhances their acceptance of the results and minimizes defensiveness when results are not positive (Aguinis, 2019b). Second, employees are in a good position to provide information on what would be needed for them to improve their performance: Is training needed? Resources? Supervisory support? Or, perhaps the workgroup is negatively affected by a toxic culture or incompetent leadership that prevents employees from performing better. It is not recommended to collect self-ratings on PPS and then only use this

information to make administrative decisions because they are more lenient and biased than ratings provided by other sources (Hoffman et al., 2010).

Finally, research on 360-degree feedback systems has documented the many advantages that would result from collecting PPS information from multiple sources (Morgeson et al., 2005). Employees become aware of others’ expectations about their performance—including supervisors and also peers, direct reports, and customers. If some employees have a distorted view of their performance, this is likely to change because it is not easy to hold such a belief of one’s performance in the presence of overwhelming evidence that these perceptions may not be correct. Another advantage of multiple data sources is that it supports supervisors expressing what some feel are “undiscussables” when providing negative feedback. A multisource system facilitates communication and feedback because it is less likely that employees will become defensive regarding the accuracy of negative performance feedback when it originates from multiple sources.

4.4. Using PPS for administrative purposes

One of the key purposes of performance management is administrative, which means using performance information to make decisions about

Table 2. Illustrative Performer Promoter Score (PPS) information collected from direct reports of manager at a services organization

| Rater ID | PPS (from 1 to 10—see Figure 1's Panel A for details) |
|------------|---|
| 1 | 10 |
| 2 | 9 |
| 3 | 9 |
| 4 | 10 |
| 5 | 8 |
| 6 | 9 |
| 7 | 9 |
| 8 | 9 |
| 9 | 9 |
| 10 | 10 |
| 11 | 5 |
| 12 | 9 |
| 13 | 9 |
| 14 | 6 |
| 15 | 10 |
| 16 | 9 |
| 17 | 9 |
| 18 | 9 |
| 19 | 9 |
| Mean PPS | 8.79 |
| Median PPS | 9.00 |

| | |
|--|---------|
| % of Promoters (9s and 10s) | 84.21% |
| % of Detractors (1s to 6s) | 10.53% |
| Net Performance Promoter Score (NPPS) = % Promoters - % of Detractors (see Figure 1's Panel B for details) | +73.68% |

salary adjustments, promotions, terminations, recognitions, and merit increases, among others. Reward and recognition is a powerful tool for enhancing employee motivation (Gerhart & Fang, 2015) and organizations that link pay to performance enjoy higher levels of return on assets (Brown et al., 2003). As former Avon CEO Hicks Waldron put it: "People do what you pay them to do, not what you ask them to do" (Cascio & Cappelli, 2009). Accordingly, to maximize the positive effect of using PPS on motivation and linking performance to reward and recognition, it is important to reward employees promptly and use monetary as well as nonmonetary rewards (Aguinis, et al., 2013a, b).

4.5. Using PPS for developmental purposes

While monetary and nonmonetary rewards are powerful motivational tools, rewards alone do not improve employees' job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs; Aguinis, Joo, et al., 2013). Accordingly, PPS should also serve a

developmental purpose (Aguinis, 2019a). As Colvin (2020) and Temkin (2016) pointed out, a key and valuable part of NPS is understanding the feedback behind the rating. Therefore, giving the employees enough time to process and absorb the feedback solicited from the two open-ended questions and incorporating a debrief of the qualitative feedback during the performance conversation between employees and managers are critically important. The feedback can be used to help employees identify areas of strengths and improvements and to establish new developmental goals to address suggestions in response to the two open-ended questions (Aguinis et al., 2012a). Also, this feedback can be used to identify additional resources (e.g., training, improved IT support) that may be needed to improve performance.

When PPS is used for units or an entire organization, the qualitative data collected with the two open-ended questions may be too voluminous to analyze manually. In those situations, it is useful to implement text analysis with tools available in the public domain (Banks et al., 2018). Specifically, such analyses can help identify additional skills needed by individual employees as well as organizational culture and leadership issues that may need to be addressed to improve performance in the future (Kremer et al., 2019).

4.6. Using PPS to provide more frequent performance check-ins

One of the key purposes of performance management is to provide timely and constructive feedback (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). Given the simplicity of PPS, it is not time-consuming to conduct check-ins more often compared to the use of longer and more complicated performance measures. During a crisis, it is particularly important to remain flexible and adaptable, and more frequent performance conversations can help employees adjust work hours, job responsibilities, and priorities. In addition, at a time when most people are working from home and do not see their colleagues very often, more frequent performance conversations help employees to stay connected and create a sense of belonging.

5. Anticipating and minimizing problems with PPS

Although we have described PPS's multiple benefits, we readily acknowledge that, in the end, it is just a measurement tool. Accordingly, like all measures, it could be misused. For example, some

Table 3. Recommendations for anticipating and minimizing problems with using the Performer Promoter Score (PPS) to measure performance of employees, workgroups, and other collectives

| Potential problem | Recommendations for addressing the problem |
|---|---|
| 1. Begging: Putting psychological pressure so that raters provide a high score | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warning employees and units that they should not preempt PPS scores by contacting potential data sources (e.g., “the company reserves the right to ask raters whether employees have mentioned PPS to them and, if they have, those scores would be automatically eliminated”) |
| 2. Nudging: Offering special incentives hoping to get higher ratings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure rater anonymity and confidentiality |
| 3. Exchanging: Employees teaming up together to game the system (e.g., agreeing to give a score of 9 or 10 to each other) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the quality of answers to the two open-ended questions to differentiate between people who are genuinely rating others as higher performers and people who are just giving out high ratings as favors |
| 4. Skewing the sample: Including only raters with whom employees have a positive relationship in the hopes of receiving a high rating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use multiple methods to create the rater list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raters are chosen by employees, managers, and by using rosters of various workgroups, committees, and meeting attendees Raters are chosen based on an analysis of email communication and identifying individuals with frequent and close work relationships When evaluating the performance of workgroups, use both internal and external raters |

may try to obtain positive results by gaming the system. Given Goodhart’s law, best described by anthropologist Marilyn Strathern that “when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure” (Byrne, 2017), in this section we describe how to anticipate and minimize potential problems with PPS. To a large extent, these are similar challenges faced when using the NPS (Colvin, 2020). Overall, most of the challenges can be addressed by creating checks and balances. For example, performance raters should not be chosen exclusively by the employee or unit being assessed. Table 3 includes a summary of our evidence-based recommendations.

5.1. Begging

Begging involves putting psychological pressure so that raters provide a high score. For example, employees may tell coworkers and professional friends that if they do not receive a PPS score higher than a certain number, they will not be eligible for a bonus or promotion or they can even be fired. Begging bias can be minimized by warning employees and units that they should not preempt PPS scores by contacting potential data sources. Employees can be told that the company reserves

the right to ask raters whether employees have mentioned PPS to them and, if they have, those scores would be automatically eliminated. A similar approach is effective in the personnel selection domain in which job applicants are warned that if any of the self-reported information is found to be untrue (e.g., misreporting educational or professional credentials), the individual will automatically be excluded from the job applicant pool (Cascio & Aguinis, 2018).

5.2. Nudging

Nudging happens when employees offer special incentives hoping to get higher ratings. For example, when direct reports are the raters, they might believe that they have to give their supervisors a high score for them to also receive a high score in return. Similarly, vendors, partners, or clients might also be offered additional incentives or preferential treatment if they rate performance in a certain way. The nudging bias can be minimized by ensuring rater anonymity and confidentiality. The effectiveness of this solution has been documented in the performance appraisal literature (Aguinis, 2019b).

5.3. Exchanging

Another potential problem is that employees could team up together to game the system. For example, a small group of people could come together and agree to give a score of 9 or 10 to each other. To address this potential problem, the quality of responses to the two open-ended questions is particularly useful for differentiating between people who are genuinely rating others as higher performers and people who are just giving out high ratings as favors. The effectiveness of this solution is documented in the measurement validity literature, which refers to this procedure as “triangulation” (Scandura & Williams, 2000).

5.4. Skewing the sample

It will not be surprising that some employees might only invite people with whom they have a positive relationship in the hopes of receiving a high rating. As a result, the PPS score will not be accurate due to a skewed sample. The way to address the sampling issue is to use multiple methods to create the rater list. In addition to asking the employee, managers could also invite raters. Moreover, companies could use other sources of data to invite raters for employees, such as the rosters of various workgroups, committees, and meeting attendees. Deglon (2016) recommended analyzing email communication frequencies to identify individuals with frequent and close work relationships who can also be added to the list.

When evaluating the performance of a workgroup, both internal and external raters should be used. First, asking the workgroup to evaluate itself discourages social loafing on the workgroup (Aguinis, et al., 2013a, b; Erez et al., 2002). Second, using external members, such as workgroup members’ functional managers who are familiar with their work or other people who have first-hand experience with the focal workgroup members (Aguinis, et al., 2013a, b; Meyer, 1994) also helps minimize biases.

6. Summary

Organizations are struggling to survive during the COVID-19 crisis and many are joining a troubling trend of severely curtailing or even discontinuing performance management. However, doing so does more harm than good because abandoning performance measurement results in loss of valuable information at a moment when data are especially needed to make critical decisions to be

able to survive the crisis and thrive when the crisis is over. Rather than abandoning performance management because performance is understandably difficult to measure, a better solution is to adapt performance measurement to the new organizational and societal realities. What is needed is a measure of performance that is simple, relevant, informative, adaptable, comprehensive, and clear. Extending from the Net Promoter Score (NPS) literature, we met this need by introducing the Performance Promoter Score (PPS) as a way to solve the challenges involved in measuring performance during a crisis. PPS can be collected for individuals (including managers at all organizational levels), workgroups, and other collectives such as functional units and departments (see Figure 1’s Panel A). Also, PPS can be used to calculate Net Performance Promoter Score (NPPS), which allows for easy comparisons among individuals and collectives (see Figure 1’s Panel B). We offered evidence-based recommendations for using and maximizing benefits of PPS for individuals, workgroups, and other collectives; computing an NPPS; using multiple sources of performance data; and using PPS for administrative and developmental purposes as well as for providing more frequent performance check-ins (see Table 1). Also, we offered recommendations on how to anticipate and minimize potential problems when using PPS including begging, nudging, exchanging, and sample skewing (see Table 3). There is no question that the COVID-19 crisis will have a long-lasting negative impact. On a more positive note, the crisis is also leading to important innovations and PPS is one of them. PPS is a practical, relevant, and useful measure not just during the COVID-19 pandemic, but an innovation that will also be useful long after the crisis is over.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.09.001>.

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