

Pfeiffer™

Evaluating Human Resources Programs

**A 6-Phase Approach
for Optimizing Performance**

Jack E. Edwards

John C. Scott

Nambury S. Raju



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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Preface

Why We Wrote This Book

The path to deciding to write this book was circuitous.

Around six years ago, we began editing *The Human Resources Program-Evaluation Handbook*. In our preface for that book, we noted the lack of information about program evaluation as it pertains to human resources (HR). Our goal was to supply practitioners and researchers with insights into key criteria, potential pitfalls, and general guidance in assessing *specific* HR-related programs. We determined that the best way to do this was to ask two or more authors—typically a practitioner and an academic—to write about a single HR program such as performance appraisal or diversity. This allowed us to seek insights from content matter experts for each reviewed HR program.

Midway through the preparation of the *Handbook*, one of our chapter authors asked us to conduct a workshop at the 2002 Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology convention. When we were allotted only three hours for our workshop presentation, we decided that the time could best be used with an orientation different from that of the *Handbook*. More specifically, we prepared the workshop materials so that they walked participants through the steps found in a typical program evaluation, regardless of the specific HR program being evaluated.

The enrollment for the workshop and the comments that we received from attendees suggested that, while our *Handbook* might fill part of the earlier identified void, practitioners and academics also needed a hands-on, practical guide to HR program evaluation.

We concluded that the additional guide should lead HR specialists in a step-by-step fashion from the beginning of a program evaluation to its conclusion. We hope this book provides that guidance.

Objectives of This Book

We have three primary objectives for this book. They are to increase readers' understanding of, knowledge of, and ability to use HR program evaluation in organizations. Those objectives can be further broken down as:

- Understanding of
 - Techniques and strategies for evaluating and improving HR programs
 - Major steps and primary considerations when conducting an HR program evaluation
- Knowledge of
 - How to lay groundwork and develop milestones for effective HR program evaluation
 - How to construct measures of effectiveness within the context of HR program evaluation
- Ability to
 - Identify and then lessen or avoid the effects of potential pitfalls when evaluating HR programs
 - Identify appropriate analyses based on evaluation design
 - Organize and document findings so that results have impact and are actionable
 - Implement results of the evaluation to enhance the effectiveness of the HR program

Obtaining an understanding of the information contained in this book will provide internal organizational members and consultants with a foundation for deciding what needs to be considered in

their roles as part of an evaluation team. Likewise, this book can act as an introduction to HR program evaluation for graduate students who are preparing for careers in HR. On the other hand, more experienced HR program evaluators will benefit from new perspectives on HR program evaluation as well as from our reminders of traditional concerns.

We believe that the most effective way to use the information in this book is to read the whole book before the HR program evaluation starts and then refer back to a particular phase as it approaches during the actual evaluation. While we have attempted to warn readers about future pitfalls before they become an issue, having as much knowledge as possible about what lies ahead during the entire process can add peace of mind and limit rework, especially for those new to HR program evaluation. In the way of analogy, it's like driving down a curvy, mountainous road. If you routinely drive the road, you will be aware of every stop sign or other place where there is likely to be an accident, but you must still be alert for the unexpected obstacle waiting around each bend. If you have only been down the road a time or two, signs 200 yards before a stop sign or dangerous intersection will allow sufficient time to take appropriate action. Finally, if you have never been down the road, a navigator giving you timely warnings and other advice can help to avoid sudden swerves or crashes.

A Few Words of Thanks

We wish to express our appreciation to the many people at Pfeiffer who helped us see this book to its completion. Matt Davis, senior editor, supplied early encouragement to us as we refined our overall message. Samya Sattar provided excellent editorial assistance, improving our ability to convey a clear message. Also, Kathleen Dolan-Davies, Julie Rodriguez, Dawn Kilgore, Rebecca Taff, and others ably handled the many other tasks that were required to transform our manuscript into a book and get it out to our audience. We would also like to thank the four reviewers who provided invaluable feedback on earlier drafts of our book.

Last but not least, we'd like to thank the following people who received less of our time and attention while we worked on this book. Those people are Deborah Edwards, Mary Edwards, Harold Edwards, Susie Hoke, Patti Groves, Bill Lawson, Willie Mae Lawson, Kimberly Scott, Justin Scott, Jeremy Scott, Marijke Raju, Indira Hanley, Kevin Hanley, Colin Nambury Hanley, Marijke Kathleen Hanley, and Saroja Raju.

Jack, John, and Nam