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Kamal K. Jain

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# A day to remember!

Kamal K. Jain

Kamal K. Jain is a member of Faculty, OB & HR Area, Indian Institute of Management, Indore, India.

Hi, Rajan. How are you doing? You seem to be in a world of your own. Hmm. What's the reason for this glow on your face? All smiles!! What is the reason, Rajan?

Indeed, Rajan had a lot of reasons to be happy about! When he realized Kumar's presence, it seemed that he had just come out of his reverie. Rajan fumbled for words and after a pause, replied, "No, Kumar, nothing special. I am good. How are you doing?"

"I am fine, Rajan. As usual, I am getting compressed owing to the heavy burden of teaching! Alas!" Kumar was the Professor of Operations Management at the Holistic Institute of Management (name disguised), a premier business school in India. He had been teaching here since its inception in 1997.

Rajan was the Professor of Organizational Behavior and had been a part of this institute since 2001. Today was his last session for the course and he was heading to his chamber, immersed in his own thoughts, exuberating joy and satisfaction on his face. He was euphoric over the comments given to him by the students at the end of his course. Some had brought greeting cards for him which said, "You are the best teacher!", and some had brought for him gifts and flowers. Some others remarked, "Sir, you simply rock in the class! Thanks for teaching us!" Bemused in his own thoughts, Kumar met him on the way to his own chamber, having finished his Operations Management class. After a brief *tête-à-tête*, they both left for their respective rooms.

When Rajan entered his chamber, he could not suppress his ecstasy, and had a hearty jubilation. He started pasting the greeting cards on the soft board with thumbnails. He was interrupted by a beep of the laptop, indicating an e-mail message. He checked his e-mail messages, where the inbox was flooded with unread messages. One by one, he read the messages, and, his smile was back after every perusal. The students had mailed their acknowledgement and appreciation to him for his excellent teaching and their learning from the course. His joy was unbound! He had been firing on all cylinders all these years, and, today was his day, he mused to himself! He was inspired by the nobility of his profession and believed that "They serve God well, who serve his creatures."

He was sure that his official student feedback collected by the administrative department in the last session of his course is going to be around 4.8 on a five-point scale on the parameter "overall rating of the instructor". This year was all the more special because the management had decided that the Professor with the highest ratings (in MBA program only) shall be felicitated with the "Best Teacher Award" worth a cash prize of 500,000 rupees and a citation. For the past several years, Rajan's feedback on an average had been between 4.7 and 4.95 and this had always been amongst the best. Announcement of this award had made the atmosphere of the faculty tea club lively. Everyone seems to be talking about it and guessing who could be the first recipient of this award. Rajan often emerged as the sole winner in such informal discussions.

The case and teaching note are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. The case and note are not intended to serve as endorsement, sources of primary data, or illustration of effective or ineffective handling of the situation.

Disclaimer. This case is written solely for educational purposes and is not intended to represent successful or unsuccessful managerial decision making. The author may have disguised names; financial and other recognizable information to protect confidentiality.

## Performance assessment of the faculty

Holistic Institute of Management, followed the practice of evaluating its faculty performance in two stages. The first stage of evaluation comprised the cumulative response of the students, wherein the students taught by the respective faculty for a particular course were given the feedback form and they were required to evaluate the faculty on certain parameters (Exhibit 1). The second stage comprised of the review with the Head of the Department concerned and the Director of the Institute based on students' feedback, research, consulting, and contribution to institution building. At Holistic Institute of Management, the first stage was considered to be the most crucial one since it had a weightage of 30 percent. The student feedback form was a structured one using the Likert rating scale (1-5), 1 being "excellent" and 5 being "totally dissatisfied". The student feedback form was collected from the students, and, after being processed in the administration office was given to the faculty on the submission of grades. The institute had followed the policy of releasing the feedback of the entire faculty in due course.

The student feedback form was designed by an internal committee consisting of three senior faculty members of the institute, two students of its MBA program and one independent consultant. The committee brainstormed over several days to identify the broad areas of a faculty's evaluation. There was a clear consensus on what constitutes good performance. Subject matter knowledge, delivery, prompt evaluation and communication of assignment marks, openness to students' queries, encouraging participation in the class, appropriate use of pedagogical tools, etc. were identified as major areas of a faculty's performance. The committee also felt that apart from a quantitative feedback, students should also be given the opportunity to give qualitative feedback about the course and the instructor so that they do not feel constrained in expressing their opinion in an unstructured manner.

In order to ensure effective administration of the feedback and to maintain high level of integrity of the system, the blank feedback forms were first signed by the faculty teaching the course so as to avoid any kind of manipulation by the administrative office or by the faculty. The feedback form was given to the students in the last session of the course in the presence of the faculty. Around 20 min were dedicated to this exercise in a session of 90-min duration. Feedback was not taken from the students who were absent in this last session of the class. Having collected the feedback forms, they were put up in an envelope and sealed in the faculty's presence.

As far as the second stage of the performance appraisal was concerned, the parameters were more broad-based in terms of aspects like meeting minimum teaching load, research undertaken by the faculty, any consulting work undertaken during the year, and, last but not the least, contribution towards institution's brand-building (any launch of a new subject/discipline/program, any other creative idea of the concerned faculty member *vis-à-vis* the promotion of the B-school's perceived image in the minds of the various stakeholders).

The Institute required a faculty to meet 200 units of work load in a year. It was divided in several components as follows:

Teaching:	100 units (80 class room sessions of 75 min each)
Research	60 units
Administration	40 units

For the purpose of research, work load units were calculated on the basis of quality of publication. A paper published in category "A" journals was given 60 points, publication in "B" category journals was given 50 points, "C" category journals attracted 40 points, publication in non-refereed journals or paper presented in a conference was given 20 points. Points were also awarded for reviewing any paper for a journal (five points), chapter in a book (ten points), working paper (ten points), etc. (Refer Exhibit 2 for details).

For the purpose of administration and consulting, the institute had defined work load units (Refer Exhibit 3 for details). For example, being a chair of any administrative committee like

placement committee, admission committee, academic programs committee, etc. 30 points were given, and for being a member of such committees, ten points were given.

The institute also clarified that any shortfall in the work load units in a particular component (like teaching) could be adjusted with another component (like research/administration). Work load units were calculated on pro rata basis based on the date of joining of a faculty. Additional work load units earned by the faculty were used for giving additional incentive. Any shortfall in a particular work year was allowed to be offset with additional work load units in the subsequent year. Workload units earned by faculty in 2011 are shown in Exhibit 4.

### Next few days

In the next few days, Rajan finished the grading of his course and was waiting for his officially compiled feedback. It was Friday morning and he was hitting his cup of coffee, when there was a knock on his door. Pradeep, the office boy, entered and handed him a parcel with his name on the cover and signed "URGENT – TO BE GIVEN ONLY TO PROF. RAJAN". Rajan opened the packet and found the student feedback forms inside. There was another sheet inside wherein the overall score of the feedback was mentioned. Rajan had taught all the three sections of the course Organizational Behavior. His feedback in Section A was 4.2, Section B 4.3, Section C 4.9, and average 4.46. This was not what he was expecting. He began with the first feedback form belonging to Section A. He had been rated one out of five. He moved on to the second, and, so on. To his contentment, he had been rated one out of five on all of them till now. Then, he noticed something unusual. In this sheet, he had been rated as 5 on an overall score of 5. He was taken aback. He moved forward and found that overall; there were at least eight such cases where he had been rated as 5 in a batch of 60 students. He noticed similar pattern in Section B. However, there was nothing of this sort in Section C. All of a sudden he started feeling very low. How was this possible! Has there been some politics in it? Have those students who rated him "five" wrongly taken "five" as "Excellent"? Or, suddenly like a flash of light a thought occurred to him, could it be those students who were given zero in a group assignment? A group of eight students both in Sections A and B each were given a zero not only because they had plagiarized the assignment but also because both the groups from Sections A and B had copied each others assignment. Could students be so immature? He looked into those feedback forms where he had a rating of five to verify his doubt. Unfortunately, there were no names of students on the feedback form. He got further frustrated because on the parameter whether regular feedback was given on students' feedback, he got a rating of five on this also from the same group. He reflected how regularly and punctually he has given feedback to students on their several assignments. "I may be a bad teacher, but this is not at all true of me", he said to himself. He was getting restless. Did he commit a mistake by penalizing the erring groups? Is he going to lose the Best Teacher Award? His only hope rested on the low feedback of other faculties.

The fear of losing gripped him and he started doubting the maturity level of the students. He tried to convince himself by saying that student's evaluation was mostly superficial and was strongly influenced by a professor's smile, gesture, and other mannerisms rather than objective measures like professor's knowledge, clarity, organization, or other qualities that have close correlation to good teaching. He also quickly reflected how organization and its systems (organizational structure, policies, procedures, systems, etc.) and several external environmental factors may affect the performance of a faculty which can never be captured by students' feedback. However, hard he tried to rationalise he could not but help feel offended and his self-esteem had taken a beating. He felt exhausted and extremely despondent and began to have self-doubt.

### Arrival of the doomsday

Rajan anxiously waited for the annual feedback of all the faculties to be released at the end of the academic year. He had been getting the message from the grapevine channel that his average feedback was low to few others. He had been in a denial mode all these days.

**Keywords:**  
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 India,  
 Higher education,  
 Teaching

Friday, the 12th of April was the day when feedback was to be uploaded on the institute's intranet. The day arrived. Rajan and many others were busy surfing the institute's intranet since morning. The moment he found that link, he clicked it and got extremely disappointed for he had lost to Kile, the professor of Strategy. He looked into the feedback table (Exhibit 5) and tried to read the numbers. There were several grey areas that he thought need to be looked into. Giving someone "The Best Teacher Award" based on these numbers, unless due efforts are made to analyze the performance of an individual, may not be a good idea. How can we ignore facilitating and inhibiting factors attributable to the appraise, appraiser, environment, organization's system and policies, etc.? Will someone listen?

**Reference**

Rao, T.V. (2009), *Performance Management and Appraisal Systems – HR Tools for Global Competitiveness*, Nineteenth Printing, Response Books, New Delhi.

**Exhibit 1**

NB: Please feed in your responses in the third column against each item on a scale of 1-5 (1 = excellent, 2 = good, 3 = average, 4 = tolerable, 5 = totally dissatisfied).

**Section A**

<b>Table E1</b> Student feedback form: Holistic Institute of Management		
<i>Serial number</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Rating (one to five)</i>
1	Which among the following statements best describes you in the professor's classroom? 1 – I understand everything which is taught in the classroom 2 – I understand most of what is taught in the classroom 3 – I am a little behind in the classroom 4 – I am struggling to keep up with the work in this class 5 – I am much behind the schedule as far as the classroom lectures are concerned. I find it impossible to match the tempo of the classroom lecture all the times. I am like a silent spectator in the classroom	
2	The professor organizes his class well	
3	Before proceeding with the lecture, the professor gives an outline of what the session is all about with a brief introduction thereof	
4	All the teaching aids used by the professor are contextual to the session covered and integrated	
5	There is continuity between one theme and the other during a session, hence avoiding monotony in the session as a whole	
6	The professor gives a briefing on the assignments and the readings to be covered well in advance	
7	The professor clearly states the deadlines for the assignments, and provides his feedback promptly	
8	The class timing is well utilized by the professor	
9	The professor gives examples and instances to explain his point	
10	The professor possesses an immaculate command over his subject and expression	
11	The instructor is open to a dialogue in the classroom, thereby encouraging student participation	
12	I get a lot of help from the professor whenever I need to clear my doubt	
13	The professor welcomes suggestions/feedback on the course or a particular topic in general	
14	Overall rating of the instructor	

### Section B

What did you like most about the course?

What did you like most about the instructor?

Suggestions for improvement of the course.

Suggestions for improvement for the instructor.

*Note:* Although several students provided their feedback on these components to Rajan, it was not used by the institute for the “Best Teacher Award”. This part of the feedback was meant to be given to the faculty for their personal use and improvement.

### Exhibit 2

<b>Table EII</b> Research and publication		
<i>S. no.</i>	<i>Research output</i>	<i>Workload nominal</i>
1	Publication in an A-class journal	60
2	Publication in a B-class journal	50
3	Publication in a C-class journal	40
4		
5	Publication in journals not categorized as A, B, or C	20
6	Editor of book (management and related field)	30
7	Paper accepted to be presented in international conference	20
8	Paper accepted to be presented in national conference	15
9	Chapter in an edited book	10
10	Teaching case	30
11	Thesis supervisor	20
12	Working paper	10
13	Publication in a newspaper/business magazine	10
14	Review of papers for a journal (per paper)	05 (maximum 20 points)

### Exhibit 3

<b>Table EIII</b> Administration and consulting		
<i>S. no</i>	<i>Administrative activity</i>	<i>Workload points</i>
1	Dean	40
2	Chair of any long duration academic programs committee	30
3	Chair placement/chair admissions/chair hostel/any other regular administrative committee	30
4	Head of the department	20
5	Member of permanent committee (non-ex officio)	10
6	Chair/coordinator of <i>ad hoc</i> committee	10
7	Member of <i>ad hoc</i> committee	05
8	Organizing a conference	20
9	Consulting	Two points for each consulting day (subject to a maximum of 80 points)

## Exhibit 4

**Table EIV** Workload units earned by faculty in 2011

Name of the faculty	Teaching (MBA and all other courses)	Research and publication	Administration and consulting	Total
Ashi	130	50	50	230
Brit	100	70	70	240
Rajan	120	80	60	260
Dev	100	50	50	200
Elva <sup>a</sup>	60	40	20	120
Fred	100	40	70	210
Kumar	140	70	15	225
Hugh	150	50	40	240
Insta	90	60	60	210
Juli <sup>a</sup>	60	30	10	100
Kile	100	50	30	180
Robin	80	90	40	210
Emila	75	80	50	205
Farra	110	60	45	215
Issa	85	65	30	180
Jane	115	70	20	205
Lome	105	–	–	105
Madh <sup>a</sup>	60	20	10	90
Nesh	120	50	30	200
Opal	140	60	30	230
Math	125	70	25	220
Savi	110	50	40	200

Note: <sup>a</sup>Either joined during the academic year or left during the year

## Exhibit 5

**Table EV** Example summary feedback of faculty – 2011

Course	Year	Name of the faculty	Section A	Section B	Section C	Average
Regulatory environment of business	1	Ashi	3.54	4.2	4.3	4.01
MIS	1	Brit	2.9	3.5	3.7	3.37
Organizational behavior	1	Rajan	4.2	4.3	4.9	4.46
Oral communication	1	Dev	2	2.3	2.4	2.23
Written communication	1	Elva	3.4	3.7		3.55
Written communication	1	Fred	–		3.9	3.9
Operations management	1	Kumar	3.8	3.9	4	3.9
Accounting for managers	1	Hugh	3.7	4.0	4.5	4.07
Quantitative techniques	1	Insta	2.8	3.1		2.95
Quantitative techniques	1	Juli	–		3.6	3.6
Strategic management	1	Kile		4.4	4.8	4.6
Strategic management	1	Robin	3.9			3.9
International business	2	Emila	3.8			3.8
International business	2	Farra		2.7	2.9	2.8
Marketing management	2	Issa			4.2	4.2
Marketing management	2	Jane	4.1	4.3		4.2
Supply chain management	2	Lome	3.2	3.4	3.7	3.43
Security analysis	2	Madh	1.98			1.98
Security analysis	2	Nesh		3.2	3.3	3.25
Consumer behavior	2	Opal	3.6	3.5	3.9	3.67
Investment banking (elective)	2	Math	2.9	3.2		3.05
Risk management (elective)	2	Savi	3.6	3.7		3.65

### Corresponding author

Kamal K. Jain can be contacted at: [kamal@iimdr.ac.in](mailto:kamal@iimdr.ac.in)