

**Upward Appraisal as a Means for Improving Supervisory Performance  
and Promoting Process Improvement, With Long-Term  
Implications for Organizational Change**

by

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This study represents the implementation phase of an organizational development project which was initiated last year in the Management Support Division (MSD) at Langley Research Center to diagnose organizational functioning. As a result of MSD survey data from last year's effort, a Quality Action Team was created to address the responses compiled from the MSD Organizational Assessment Questionnaire and Follow-Up Questionnaire. The team was officially named the MSD Employee Relations Improvement Team (MERIT).

MERIT's goal was to analyze major concerns generated by the questionnaires and to present feasible solutions to management which would improve supervisory performance, promote process improvement; and ultimately, lead to a better organization. The team met weekly and was very disciplined in following guidelines needed to ensure a fully functioning team. Several TQM tools were used during the team process, including brainstorming and the cause and effect diagram.

One of the products produced by MERIT was a "report card," more formally known as an upward appraisal system, to evaluate supervisory performance in the division office, its three branches, and in teams. Major areas of emphasis on the 47 item report card were those identified by employees through the previously administered questionnaires as needing to be improved; specifically, training, recognition, teamwork, supervision and leadership, and communication. MERIT created an enlarged and modified version of the report card which enabled scores for each individual supervisor to be recorded on a separate form, along with summary results and employee comments.

Report card results have been compiled and fed back to the Division Chief and Assistant Division Chief. These individuals will in turn, feed the results back to the remaining supervisors and the team leaders. Although results differ among supervisors, some similarities exist. Communication generally appears to be adequate, which represents an improvement over last year. In contrast, recognition and teamwork are the two major areas where improvement in supervisory performance seems to be most needed.

The initial report card results will serve as a baseline against which future performance ratings will be compared. Once supervisors have been presented with their data and given an opportunity to analyze and discuss the results, they will be assisted in developing an action plan for improving their performance and work processes. They will be provided with ongoing support from management in following through with the action plan.