Behaviorally anchored rating scales

BARS refers to Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales. It was developed by Smith and Kendall to provide a better method of rating employees. It differs from "standard" rating scales in one central respect, in that it focuses on behaviors that are determined to be important for completing a job task or doing the job properly, rather than looking at more general employee characteristics (e.g. personality, vague work habits).

So, rather than having a rating item that says: Answers phone promptly and courteously, a BARS approach may break down that task into behaviors: For example:

- Answers phone within five rings.
- Greets caller with "Hello, This is the Dinkle Company, how may I help you?"

Notice how the BARS items are describe the important BEHAVIORS. Once those behaviors are identified for a particularly job, or employee, the items can be used to base a numerical or performance label on, let's say a five point, or seven point scale.

As with most things related to performance management the success of a BARS (behaviorally anchored rating system) approach to employee reviews depends on how well the system is implemented. In theory, a BARS system, if properly implemented should result in fairer, and more accurate assessments of employee performance. In theory, they are indeed better than more vague rating systems where it's hard to get any two people to agree on what a particular rating item means.

However, BARS still involves RATINGS, and ratings still have inherent flaws, the most notable being that ratings themselves (let's say assigning some number to "reflect" performance) are not very helpful in helping employees improve performance because too much information is lost. Another problem is that there is a tendency for people to believe that BARS system ratings are objective, and that is definitely not the case. Ratings cannot, by definition, be objective, because they involved labelling and generalizations.

The issue with BARS is that it requires extensive upfront analysis necessary to identify the job behaviors. Without that, it's no improvement. And, if you are going to invest all that time into the upfront analysis, maybe it makes more sense to use that data without a rating system per se, or use it in a way similar to how goals and objectives are used in a Management by Objectives system (MBO).

In psychology research on behaviorism, Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) are scales used to report performance. BARS are normally presented vertically with scale points ranging from five to nine.

BARS Behaviorally Anchored Rating scales is a method that combines elements of the traditional rating scales and critical incidents methods. In order to construct BARS seven steps are followed as mentioned below 1.Examples of effective and ineffective behavior related to job are collected from People with knowledge of job. 2.These behaviors are converted in to performance dimensions. 3.A group of participants will be asked to reclassify the incidents. At this stage the incidents for which there is not 75% agreement are discarded as being too subjective. 4. Then the above mentioned incidents are rated from one to nine on a scale. 5. Finally about six to serve incidents for each performance dimensions- all meeting retranslation and standard deviation criteria will be used as BARS.