

Critical measures for effective leadership

By Jeffrey Anderson,
AchieveGlobal Senior
Consultant



Today's tight timeframes and slim margins make it critical for leaders to have measurement systems that generate timely, practical information — information they can use to make decisions at Internet speed.

Yet the data to support wiser decisions and spur organizational improvement remains as elusive as the answer to the simple question “does it work?”

The critical link

Measurement is principally a practical matter. Its purpose is to inform decision making, fulfill demands for accountability and clarify opportunities for improvement. To start getting the information you need about key initiatives,

begin by clarifying the purpose of the initiatives. Then focus the measurement by linking the data collection to the type of decision you need to make.

When you specify whether the goal of the initiative is to create strategic change, improve performance or develop foundational capabilities, a clear purpose screens out inappropriate metrics. For example, seeking to improve sales performance and customer satisfaction is an initiative designed to improve performance.

This clarity of purpose eliminates or at least raises some questions about the value of concentrating measurement efforts on testing knowledge of sales and service skills. It helps shift the

focus to outcomes that are important to the organization — level of sales and customer satisfaction.

With the purpose of the initiative in mind, specify the type of decision that must be made about the initiative. Are you deciding what it will take to launch the initiative, how you can improve and refine the implementation, or whether the outcomes warrant continued investment?

Spelling out the questions you want to resolve narrows the selection to metrics that will aid your decision making. When an organization is launching a strategic change initiative, decision makers need timely feedback about the implementation process so they can make adjustments and refinements. Too often evaluators focus on the long-term outcome measures (which are important) and forget about providing the information necessary to ensure the eventual success of the initiative.

Another frustration decision-makers face is receiving assessment or evaluation reports that summarize the easily collected data — not the data that address the critical issue. Specifying the decisions being considered results in measures that help you lead effectively. And once decisions are specified, measures must be focused as depicted in the *Focus the measures* chart on the

following page.

The link to action

Following are three examples where leaders have made measurement an integral part of leading important organizational initiatives.

The teaching hospital

Customer feedback indicated service was slipping; existing measures, however, failed to provide decision-makers with information that would help diagnose causes or identify likely remedies.

Before launching an initiative to improve service, the decision-makers needed quick information about the factors hurting service to patients and their families. AchieveGlobal collaborated with a team of hospital employees to:

- assess the gap between current and desired service
- determine the factors that hindered providing excellent service
- identify the types of changes required to improve customer experiences

Using the assessment findings, hospital administrators made decisions about how to allocate available resources to close the service gap.

Continued on page 20

Telecommunications sales

Midway through the year, an inbound call center was charged with increasing sales by 20 percent — with no additional personnel. AchieveGlobal worked with the management team to plan and implement substantial changes in training, call monitoring and coaching.

And because they lacked effective ways to ensure these critical changes were being implemented, AchieveGlobal designed a call monitoring and coaching feedback process that became an integral part of their performance improvement effort.

As part of the initiative, the coaches reviewed their call monitoring and coaching experiences during weekly supervisor meetings. As a further implementation check, service representatives provided feedback on their experiences with being coached on a written questionnaire they named the “coach-the-coach survey.”

Monitoring helped minimize the likelihood of partial or poor implementation. The weekly supervisor meetings and the “coach-the-coach” survey enabled management to track implementation of a critical change in operation and to increase sales by more than the required 20 percent.

Telephone banking

Ultimately, people want

Focus the measures

Purpose of the Initiative	Purpose of the Measurement		
	Assess the Gap	Monitor the Implementation	Measure the Outcomes
Strategic Change			
Performance Improvement			
Foundational Development			

With the purpose of the initiative in mind, specify the type of decision that must be made about the initiative. This will result in measures that help you lead effectively.

to know if the promised and hoped for outcomes are realized.

- Do behaviors change in anticipated ways?
- Does the organization realize a benefit from the changes?
- Is the realized benefit worth the cost of the investment?

Decision-makers at a financial institution wanted information they could use in deciding whether a service training initiative warranted ongoing investment.

They reached agreement on the definition of success — improved call quality, improved customer feedback and decreased call escalation.

Also, management wanted the initiative to show positive results without having a negative impact on average

call handling time.

The bottom line: Does the initiative result in higher service levels without increasing operating costs?

AchieveGlobal designed a call monitoring process that built on the work already performed by the bank’s quality assurance team. By helping with sampling and analysis issues, AchieveGlobal helped the quality assurance team provide reliable, trustworthy responses to the decision-makers’ questions.

The call monitoring results demonstrated a clear and substantial improvement related to the training. A comparison between the pilot site and another site showed call handling performance improved by more than 50 percent at the pilot site. Customer surveys indicated a significant increase in the bank exceeding service expectations.

Surprisingly, it was the results of the third measure — call escalation — that allowed the initiative to move forward. After training, calls escalated to supervisor level decreased by more than 50 percent. The money saved in supervisor time paid for the training! This became a key factor in getting decision-makers to reconsider how average handling time for a call, the total time needed to resolve a customer issue and customer loyalty were related.

Moving from strategy to measurable results

Answering the simple question “does it work” is easy when the “it” is a controllable dosage of an intervention such as fertilizer and the “work” is measured in crop yield at the end of the growing season. When the “it” is a multifaceted organizational initiative introduced into a dynamic environment and “work” is an organizational outcome imperfectly measured, the answer is not as simple.

AchieveGlobal consultants are available to collaborate with you to clarify the assessment and measurement questions you need answered and then help you obtain practical, trustworthy information. For more information visit www.achieveglobe.com. ■