

Mining the data all around you

Why you need to make friends with others who measure results

Communication measurements can be even more powerful when compared against measures of operational outcomes that communication is affecting.

I'm not suggesting communicators take on yet another measurement assignment. But what I do recommend is that we find out which other people in our organizations are measuring activities, behaviors and other outcomes, and make friends with them – good enough friends to have them regularly share their data with us. The first advantage of doing so is that you'll find out what other departments find important, and what results they're trying to achieve. Once you know that, you may find that the type of communication you do can help them achieve those goals better or faster. Then you can find ways of tracking changes in the other departments' outcomes against the communication you're delivering.

Take a look at the following types of data that are probably being gathered already, and find some that you believe you can affect through your job – and that your organization feels are important to its success.

Typical HR measures

Much of the work that Human Resources departments do these days is driven by data. Plus, their HR information systems programs have become fairly sophisticated at being able to collect, analyze and report statistics very quickly and by different demographic variations.

Here are some of the types of measures they may already be collecting that have an impact on your organization's expenses: *Safety*: accident rates (and insurance premiums based on those rates), percentage of employees who go on disability leave (both legitimately and those who try to abuse the system); *Lost time*: usage of sick days, absenteeism, tardiness.

Compensation and benefits:

Percentage of managers conducting performance reviews, benefit plan enrollment and usage statistics.

Attraction and retention: number and types of candidates recruited from various sources, reasons for leaving the company (extracted from exit interviews), average length of employment, factors affecting job satisfaction (which can be analyzed from organization-wide culture or opinion surveys).

Workforce demographics: diversity of age, education, salary levels, gender.

Training: percentage of employees and management who have taken different training courses, composite results of various research instruments used as part of training that identify people's communication or management styles, or personal values.

Employee questions and concerns: suggestion systems, ombudsperson complaint topics and sources, topics on which employees ask questions about the HR programs (if they have a centralized call center).

Information systems

Your information technology group can easily run reports on many things that are automatically tracked by their systems:

- phone usage: number of incoming phone calls (often can be sorted by area code to see if a particular external communication to one geographic location has resulted in an increase in calls), outgoing calls categorized by long distance versus local, average length of phone calls;
- number of e-mails sent in an average month to different group lists, percentage of e-mails never opened;
- Web site and intranet usage: which Web sites people visit, which pages they print out, where they enter and exit your site, times of day of heaviest usage, most common Web

browsers used. They can also track employees' intranet activity in detail.

Operations measures

Many organizations are driven by measuring nearly every aspect of their operations that can be measured. (For example, if your organization keeps talking about "Six-sigma" or "ISO 9000," learn more about it and jump on the bandwagon.) Some of the key areas of measurement include:

- quality – error rates, returns of merchandise;
- waste reduction – cost of goods sold, shrinkage;
- productivity of employees or different teams of employees;
- cycle time: how long it takes to complete various steps of the process that leads to delivering your product or service, how often it's delivered on time.

Customer service

Consider:

- number of complaints (often organized by topic or department that is the source of the problems);
- incoming calls – average wait before talking to a representative, number of problems resolved on the first call, average call length, productivity by representative, accuracy of answers provided.

Sales and marketing

Consider:

- number of sales leads generated from different sources, average percentage of converting different leads into sales;
- market research on customer satisfaction, purchasing habits and attitudes;
- response rates to different direct mail solicitations. **TCM**

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