Eric P. Bloom: How do you measure your team’s success?

By Eric P. Bloom

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When answering this question, are you listing statistical categories that you track on a weekly or monthly basis, or are you thinking off the top of your head based on items in your last status report?

As a department manager, there is enormous value in keeping hard statistics about your team’s work volume, work quality, client/customer satisfaction, and other related areas. In fact, keeping these weekly or monthly statistics has many advantages:

- Allows you to graph group productivity over time
- Can be used as a basis for status reporting
- Help find inefficiencies in internal processes
- Allow use of statistical measurements in performance reviews
- Can be used to create individual team member benchmarks for use within annual performance reviews.
- Can be used statistically to track increases in department workload which can help you justify staff increases
- Allows you to write status reports more easily by including calculated statistics rather than writing text
There are a number of methodologies, and tools that can help you define, calculate, store, use, and report statistical information about your department. Very generally speaking, I tend to mentally put them into the categories listed below. For any methodology enthusiasts reading this column, yes, the list below could have been divided in a hundred different ways. I selected the following categorizations for two specific reasons: first, because it’s extremely high level and second, because my column is only six hundred to seven hundred words. That said, please bear with me.

- Quality Management Methodologies
- Process Control Tools
- Reporting and Analysis Tools

The Quality Management Methodologies, such as Six Sigma and Lean Six Sigma, are generally constructed around the premise that first you define a problem, analyze it, try to fix it, assess if the issue has been fixed, and monitor/control it going forward. Relevant to this topic, they analyze and track the problem using specific measurable statistics. Kaizen is also a concept that falls into this category. The word Kaizen is Japanese for “change for the better”. The equivalent English term is usually referred to as continuous improvement.

By Process Control Tools, I’m referring to a number of great software tools that help manage specific department functions. The types of tools that come to mind help manage Sales, Customer Service, Computer Help Desk, and other high volume service type departments. These type tools have three advantages.

- They help document everything that has been done
- They provide to-do lists of things that need to be done
- Relevant to this topic, they can create summary statistics of department activities for analysis and reporting

Lastly, the Reporting and Analysis Tools analyze data existing in various types of computer databases and software applications. Their role is to read and analyze the data and generate statistics, calculate trends, produce reports, and provide types of analytical and insightful information.
With this information in hand, my questions are:

- How can you better control your department’s processes?
- How can you enhance your personal insights into your department’s process bottlenecks?
- How can you improve the measurement of your department productivity?
- How can you gain greater insights into department trends related to quality, work volume and productivity?
- How can you enhance status reports that you give to your boss and/or your customers?
- How can you improve the performance reviews that you give to your staff?

... by using the types of methodologies and tools previously discussed?

In closing, two old expressions come to mind:

- If you can't measure it, then you can't monitor it or improve it
- If your work cannot be measured and counted, then you don’t count

The primary advice and takeaways from today’s column is to know that:

- Keeping statistics about your team’s work volume, work quality, client/customer satisfaction, and other related areas can help improve department productivity and effectiveness.
- There are a number of methodologies and tools that can help you define, calculate, store, use, and report statistical information about your department.

Until next time, manage well, manage smart, and continue to grow.

Author Bio:

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