
Toolkit Item 6 - Measuring Performance

When the time comes to measure performance against previously set performance objectives, there can often be difficulty in understanding what constitutes “achievement” – therefore it is helpful to use performance indicators when initially setting those performance objectives. Performance indicators are a highly specific level of measurement and can act as a gauge of whether set performance objectives have been achieved.

Performance indicators may be either ‘Quantitative’ (numerical data such as percentages) or ‘Qualitative’ (where distinctions are based on descriptive quality). Keeping that in mind, it is wise to balance the types of indicators being used so that performance can be assessed broadly and across indicator types.

Characteristics of effective performance indicators are:

- Expressed as targets for achievement, used for continuous improvement/accountability purposes.
- Simple to understand.
- Expressed as specific measures of success, i.e. percentages.
- Client focused.
- Aligned to the organisation and work area objectives.
- Highly detailed, so there is enough definition even in qualitative indicators.
- Related to significant events (for example: projects that have been completed).

Collecting data on performance effectiveness

We are all surrounded by feedback on our performance effectiveness, which is gathered from a variety of sources and enables a more comprehensive and holistic approach to performance review and development.

Sources of feedback should be agreed between the staff member and supervisor/ manager. This is an area where trust is important. The emphasis is not on ‘checking up’, rather on ensuring data is available to staff so that they can address or progress any issues relating to aspects of their own performance.

Useful sources of feedback could include:

- Co-workers, team members and peers: an invaluable source of information on how a colleague is contributing to the achievement of team outcomes, or to team harmony and morale;
- Other supervisors/managers: who are able to comment on how a staff member is contributing to work area plans and outcomes, or to the quality of management advice given, as well as on their commitment to customer service;
- Internal customers/stakeholders: who are in the best position to comment on the effectiveness of the service being provided, its quality and timeliness, and the ‘customer skills’ of the staff member;
- External clients (organisations with which a staff member works or liaises): may also be asked to comment on issues such as those above; and
- Students: who may be asked to report on the level/quality of service provided.

Timeliness of feedback

Providing feedback on performance as it occurs is important – feedback should not be held over to the formal PRD meeting/s. In other words, there should be no surprises at any formal review discussion. Immediate feedback also ensures that action is taken promptly to improve performance. Feedback should be provided respectfully, which means that in most circumstances this would not occur in front of others.

Objective

Your feedback should focus on facts, not hearsay. Check accuracy before providing feedback.

Informal PRD Reviews (undertaken at any time)

Performance/development plans need to be reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain on track. Reviewing performance on a regular basis can be done informally, perhaps as part of regular 'work in progress' meetings between managers and staff. This has several benefits:

- it recognises that circumstances change and that it may be necessary to adjust goals accordingly.
- it provides encouragement and support to the staff member, thereby maximising their chances of achieving a good result.
- it allows the supervisor/manager to feel confident that overall work area plans can be achieved, and that progress is being made towards the goal/s set.

How frequently informal reviews occur will vary with the nature and complexity of the role, the rate of change and the needs of the work area.