



## Wringing out Performance - Spring 2010

When it comes to Performance Management, people almost always think of measurements, balanced scorecards and others, but it means much so more than that. Performance is about improving results and reducing costs using a wide variety of techniques, including technical resources, systems and most importantly, management techniques.

The following outlines a number of key areas you can use to improve performance. It's important to pull yourself out of the daily grind and put some time into forward looking approaches. Look at as short term pain for long term gain.

**Strategy** - If you don't have a strategy for what you do, you are probably just fighting fires and keeping the status quo.

- Develop a strategy for the next year at least, and even for the next few years. It doesn't need to be a 100 page brick. Keep it simple, even a few pages to start. Focus on what's important to your organization's success. Promote it to your leadership and get buy-in based on improved results.
- Think into the corners to discover things you can the "not invented here" or "it's the way we've always done it" attitude from your team. Look outside your organization to understand how others are doing it.
- Improve your visibility. You may be considered a cost centre so turn that around and promote yourself as a saving centre. You can reduce costs, whether its operation costs, project costs or lease/portfolio costs. Align those initiatives with the important sustainability issues to get attention.

**Use Information Better** – You (hopefully) have lots of data available to you about your operation, but often its raw data. You need to turn it into information and knowledge you can use to make decisions that improve results or save money.

- With a Help Desk and/or Work Order management system, you have the information you need to make strategic decisions, but are you collecting it, analyzing it and using it to your benefit, or assuming that just by having these systems, you are getting better performance? The long term value is in the information they provide. If you don't have these systems, they should be in your strategic plan.
- Condition information about your facilities will improve your capital planning and help you justify projects and activities. Doing it formally each year will highlight changes that need action. For leased buildings, you can use the information as leverage during negotiations.
- You may collect Customer Satisfaction information, but is it simply an exercise or is it designed to gather information you can analyze to improve performance, including management of subcontractors? Look carefully at your process and your questions – do they give you valuable information? Are you analyzing and creating action plans based on them? Do you communicate back to the user groups? All this can help you improve results.
- Do you get reporting from your systems? Are they useful? Do they enable you to make decisions? If not, put something useful in place that will provide you information you can make decision with. Do subcontractors provide reports? Are they useful? Is it just data or do get analysis and recommendations for improvements? They are experts in their area, so leverage their knowledge. Just because they are in the contract doesn't mean they can't be eliminated or changed to meet your needs.

**Subcontractors** – Are they just contractors or are they partners and a key part of your overall service delivery? Always remember, if your subcontractors fail to perform, so do you.

- Don't use old-school approaches. They are important to your success, so manage them to improve performance. Use their skills and knowledge. Communicate about problems and give them a chance to propose solutions and provide action plans.
- Implement measurements but put away the sledge-hammer and start formal performance management meetings that focus on resolution and improvement rather than penalties. Implement regular performance feedback. Just like employees, regular feedback is the best approach to get results.
- Take a good look at your procurement approach for key service contractors. Do you focus on price and specifications or are you focusing on fit, past performance, sophistication and skills, their ability to recommend leading practices and share
- Balancing subcontracted services with in-house re-sources is important. Take a look at what your staff are doing compared to what is subcontracted and you may be able to shift some of the low-value activities to a subcontractor while you and your team focus on the high-value and strategic aspects of your responsibilities.

These are a few relatively simple tips that can assist your agency to be better on a consistent ongoing basis during these times of continuing change.

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