

What Are Your Measurements?

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That which is measured is managed, provided of course that those measurements are also analyzed, interpreted, documented, reported — and acted on. For example, if you weigh yourself regularly, you can make an informed decision about whether to cut back on donuts or cheesecake or cholesterol surprise. You can choose to switch to low-calorie alternatives. And you can gauge how often you can pig out (a technical term for a way to increase your storage capacity).



Of course, some things can be managed even without being directly measured. If you overdo the donuts (as I've been known to do), eventually the consequences will become apparent. You won't need a scale or a mirror or a mean-spirited colleague to tell you the terrible truth. Your attempts to buckle your belt over your billowing bulge will tell you all you need to know.

But why avoid taking measurements if they'll help you prevent a potential problem? If you take regular measurements, the fact that something is taking too long, exceeding an acceptable limit, or failing to have the desired impact is much less likely to elude you.

Consider support services, for example. Groups that provide technical or product support collect an amazing array of statistics, much of which is automatically generated by sophisticated look-ma-no-hands call tracking and problem management software.

But if you are a support specialist, do you regularly review this staggering set of statistics as a basis for assessing your service effectiveness? Do you periodically analyze the data



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to identify which customers have made the most calls, how many calls are for the same old problems, and which problems have taken the longest to resolve?

If you don't track product defects, hardware downtime, customer complaints, class no-shows, or whatever is relevant to *your* products and services, you may not know if things are getting better or worse, or staying exactly the same. This is especially serious if the absence of such data is leading you to do more and more of what you shouldn't really be doing in the first place.

On the other hand, if you monitor performance, you're much more likely to pay attention if those measurements reveal a perplexing (or pleasing) change over time. Having noticed evidence of change, you can ask: What does this change signify? What do we make of it? What action does it require of us, if any?

But in answering these questions, consider all possibilities. For example, if the number of calls for help with a particular product has dropped significantly, it'd be easy to conclude that customers have become proficient in its use. But it could also mean just the reverse — that they've become so baffled they've heaved the product into the trash. Or maybe they gave up trying to reach you when they became trapped in your company's loop-de-loop voicemail system.

Next time someone asks you what your measurements are, you'll understand it's a question about your service savvy. Unless, of course, it's from a colleague who's noticed you've been dining on donuts. ☺

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