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Title: Performance Management: How Does Your Organization Measure Up?

Author: Bob Alves

Summary: Historically, associations have manually measured their performance. However, organizations are now looking for ways to use technology to support the analysis of their efforts, improve their operational processes, and further develop their business strategies.

By putting a focus on performance management while leveraging their IT infrastructure, organizations can discover mission-critical information and deepen their connections with members.

What to Measure

In order to improve future performance, it's important for organizations to determine exactly what they would like to measure. Associations typically use financials to measure their performance, but does this really help them improve upon their current business and determine strategies for future growth?

Many organizations that measure performance well focus on satisfaction and retention of members. Organizations need to focus on what's easy to measure and should look at more than just the hard numbers. Rather, they should consider using performance management frameworks, such as the Balanced Scorecard, to help clarify their goals, identify how to track them, and put in place the necessary mechanisms to achieve them. These out-of-the-box management systems will need to be modified in order to effectively work for each association, but using one will help associations stay focused on their goals and make improvements that will enhance the organization.

How to Improve Performance

There are a number of ways associations can fully leverage their IT infrastructure to help drive performance improvements, which will help the organizations run more smoothly and better enable them to meet their objectives. In addition, by following these best practices, associations will not only gain greater insight into their organizations but also ensure that the needs of staff and members are being met.

Implement self-service functionalities and empower members to do things on their own, such as pay their dues and make other financial transactions online. Managing these operations independently will make members feel more connected to the organization and will allow them to access these items around the clock. Applying

technology in this way also can help staff process payments, transfer financial transactions, and handle accounts receivable items more quickly and accurately, allowing them to spend more time communicating with members and focusing on the core goals of the organization. These tools can help associations ensure that financial transactions are easy and smooth for all members and employees, leading to improved accuracy and more valuable data that can be used for future planning.

Look at business-process automation to streamline operational processes and increase efficiency. Tasks such as updating member contact information should not be time consuming; automation instead allows staff to better manage data and process it more quickly, creating more time for them to focus on communicating with their constituents. Associations can easily access and piece together demographic, transactional, activity, and channel preference and motivational data, which also will help them find new ways of strengthening their member relationships. Having the database connected to the organization's website also can save staff a significant amount of time. With business-process automation, associations can ensure that online transactions such as membership renewals, event registrations, product sales, and profile updates are recorded directly in their databases. The use of business-process automation can help organizations improve upon their operations while eliminating unnecessary resources.

Use business-intelligence tools to analyze data and get a more complete picture of the constituent base. Organizations can better manage their member communities and strengthen their relationships with constituents through the deployment of personalized, real-time dashboard tools and a single, comprehensive database system. Technology allows organizations to measure performance and monitor staff while optimizing time and resources. To get a clear understanding of the metrics that best demonstrate progress toward goals, organizations will need to define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). For example, do your members prefer to register for events over the phone or online? Dashboards provide visibility into the full scope of an association's initiatives; for example, organizations can accurately measure performance by comparing member habits, engagement, and other metrics. Visualization tools such as dashboards also enable executives to see this information anytime they choose, without having to wait for manual reports to be run, compared, and refined. Associations can then analyze and report this data in real time and map it to their business goals.

Make sure that associations' IT infrastructure enables member relationships. Ask for direct feedback from the community and apply suggestions to let members know they are being heard. This will not only strengthen the association-member relationship,

but it will also allow the organization to improve its processes based on the community's needs. Having this information will assist an association in finding new ways to effectively reach out to members. Once an organization knows their concerns, it can work to address the issues and show the community that they are being taken into consideration.

Organizations are continuously evolving and looking to find ways to improve down the road. Performance management can show what processes work best for employees, which will allow associations to eliminate unnecessary resources and streamline their operations, making them more productive and helping them achieve their business goals. Using tools such as the Balanced Scorecard as a starting point will help organizations get a clear picture of their objectives and point them in the right direction for achieving them. Once a performance-management plan is in place and an association decides what it wants to measure (and what's easy for it to measure), technology can be used to improve processes and provide staff members with more time to focus on what's most important to the organization.

Bob Alves is chairman and CEO of Advanced Solutions International in Alexandria, Virginia. Email: <u>balves@advsol.com</u>