

The CONSORTIUM Measurement Framework: Implementing and Sustaining a Successful Measurement Program



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The Not-So-Lowly Level One

Level One data is the Rodney Dangerfield of learning measurement, says Peggy Parskey, Global Learning Process Manager at the Hewlett-Packard Company: It just gets no respect. But the truth is that if your organization has a stockpile of historical Level One data that you think is useless, think again.

If data has been gathered throughout the entire organization, and assuming corporate-wide adoption of a single survey instrument, it may be possible to elevate the value of Level One data significantly, as Hewlett-Packard has done. Working across groups, the company is now able to use its data to help to make important decisions that range from the transactional to the strategic.

Working with Michael Ross from the Performance Challenges Corporation, HP started to mine their data in order to examine their learning infrastructure and analyze how learning is being leveraged. During this process they kept in mind several principles:

- Transaction reporting can reveal actual growth of e-Learning Tactical reporting informs instructors and delivery support specialists how well their programs are working.
- Strategic reporting illuminates the actual utility of a course by examining the systemic issues in the organization that need to be addressed from a strategic level.

Some of what they learned surprised them. Consider the issue of regional development vs. central development of Learning. Many professionals in the Learning and Development field support the premise that courses should be developed at the regional level, rather than the central level, despite the additional cost.

This approach allows content to speak more directly to employees and reflect individual regions' culture. On the other hand, management at most organizations typically wants Learning to be created centrally and rolled out locally.

To try to answer which method was best, HP analyzed responses to questions such as how much learners believed that their courses contributed to their effectiveness on the job, gathered the data across all geographies, and compared results. From this, HP was able to conclude that there was no advantage to producing locally – and certainly no way to justify the additional costs of doing so.

The data has also enabled them to look at the perceived utility of e-Learning courses vs. classroom courses and identify where systemic changes are necessary. The view that one can roll out e-Learning to everyone (simply because it is "e") is changing as solution owners look at the results and realize that it's all about appealing to your audience. As more and more solution owners are stepping back and asking if they should have a narrower audience and a more focused design, Learning improves. These "ah-has" are coming directly from the results of the

company-wide data analysis, and are helping the organization understand what works, not just for their solutions, but across the board. "You can't do that if you are looking at the data just at the tactical level," says Parskey.

For those of you who may still dismiss this as "smile sheets," consider this: Level One survey instruments are no different than those customer satisfaction surveys that have our CEOs on the edge of their seats.

For that reason, you might add the following question to your Level One surveys: "Would you recommend this to peers?" It's a customer survey psych-metric, darling. Don't discount the information this question will reveal when you ask your learners about their experience. Parskey and team specifically looked at internal customer survey instruments so that they could transform Level One surveys into an effective "Learner Listening Post."

Here's another way to elevate Level One data. "Reach," "loyalty" and "stickiness" are highly regarded e-business measures which are really just a semantic side step from Level One results such as "Number of Learners," "Number of Learners reporting that they'd come back" and "Completion Rate".

"Voice of Customer" surveys and web metrics get a lot of attention and can carry a lot of weight within our organizations.

Don't our Level One, "Voice of Employee" surveys deserve at least as much respect?