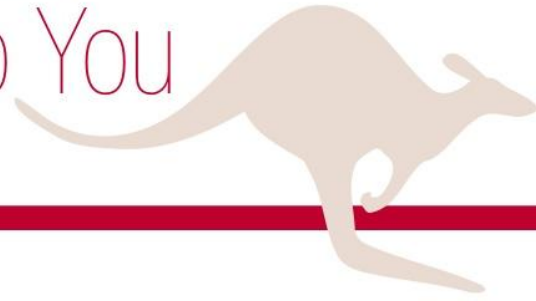


From Roo to You



May 2010

Does this job matter?

Metrics measure but meaning motivates

HR pros regularly write job descriptions for production, professional, and executive level positions. After all, “stuff” needs to get done, we need people to do it, and we need to know what skills are required to do the aforementioned “stuff” involved in day-to-day operations. If we want to recruit the right talent, set expectations and develop people, we need know what “stuff” needs to get done, where to find people who can do it and how much to pay for it. HR / Organizational Development professionals partner with leadership to create organizational structures, conduct needs assessments, cascade goals and prioritize headcount additions with each budgeting cycle. We create scorecards and metrics to monitor every possible leading and lagging business indicator. These metrics are important to measure individual and organization performance and goal attainment, and help employees understand impact, but for many, the end measurement is not enough.

How often do we ask, “**Does this job matter?**” I do not ask this to be a provocateur or place individuals on the defensive, but to challenge each of us to consider why our jobs really matter, and why how well we do them creates a unique contribution to your company and coworkers. As leaders, how well do we provide employees with clear line of sight as to how their jobs and contributions matter, providing both motivation and meaning to their roles? Perhaps if we, as professionals and leaders, spent half as much time pondering meaning as metrics, a more driven, passionate and engaged workforce would emerge.

I offer a special thanks to the Platinum Group, www.pllc.com, for inspiring this month’s topic. I hope these thoughts help you to confirm, or perhaps discover, why your job matters, and why it is critical for leaders to help employees find that meaning. So enjoy, reflect and hopefully, share your metrics or meaning with a leader, peer or direct report who can learn from your wisdom. As always, I welcome your thoughts, stories and feedback.

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My Performance Results: Metrics, Meaning or both?

For those of you have partnered with me, you know I love to juggle multiple projects and am truly energized by accomplishment. But task performance does not always equate to performance results. A former manager once counseled me that I should not worry so much about “crossing things off my list.” It seems that while I was busy “getting things done”, I sometimes forgot to motivate and engage others in the process. Sometimes this left people confused, or resistant to the change I had already justified and explained in my own head. While I cannot say I’ve perfected the balance of task accomplishment versus performance results, I would say that my view of “results” has matured. As we advance in our careers, what we “know” or “do” becomes less important than “how” we do things, adapt and develop others. As a professional, it is incumbent upon us to place organizational success and sustainability ahead of our personal success. As leaders of organizations, our metrics transition from tactical to organizational and to help others discover their meaning and contribution. In addition to functional metrics, I encourage leadership teams to consider overarching shared metrics such as new hire retention, 360 results, employees promoted, bench strength, etc. as key indicators of organizational health that also focus us on providing meaning to our employees.

For You: Find your meaning, then your metric

You were hired to perform a specific job at your company and most likely, you do it well. You “perform x” and work with “y” to meet “z” deadline. You have “_____” years experience and “_____” skills or educational background that made you the best candidate for the role. Buy why do you show up every day and why does it matter to your organization? When you are questioning your position’s value, lobbying for a promotion or completing the [dreaded] annual performance appraisal, consider the following:

Why does your position exist?

You know what you do, but do you know why it matters? Take 5 minutes to write down five reasons why your job is important to the business. Think about outcomes, rather than tasks. How does your job impact quality, cost, relationships or service. Here are a few examples to get you started:

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Customer service: I provide service that our customers brag about. I help customers select the right products the first time, answer questions and solve problems. I make sure both the company and our customers benefit from our relationship.

Quality Inspector: I prevent and resolve problems. Our customer's trust our products and we protect our company's reputation by making sure only the perfect product reaches our customers.

Payroll administrator: I make sure employees don't need to worry about the accuracy of their paycheck. I provide information to managers that help them make good decisions. I protect the company by making sure we are following relevant legislation and tax code.

How will you know when you have done your job well?

Take 5 minutes to write down five things that will tell you (and your boss!) you have done your job well. For example,

Customer service: I have done my job well when:

- Customers ask for me by name or send thank you notes to me or my manager
- I turn an upset customer into a raving fan
- I help a customer select the right product the first time
- I accurately enter orders and set realistic promise dates so the factory can deliver and the customer is satisfied

Quality Inspector: I have done my job well when.....

- I figure out the real cause of defects and help the company fix them
- Production wants me to inspect their parts, because they know I help them understand processes and fix things that aren't quite right the first time
- Customers give us an A quality rating

Payroll Administrator: I know I have done my job well when....

- Employees rarely find errors on paychecks
- Managers can make good decisions based on the information and reports I provide
- Our taxes are filed on time and accurately

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For Your Organization: Meaning before metrics

The top line is important. The bottom line is important. A sales person understands that they add \$X revenue per year, which helps the business grow. A Shipping Manager knows that saving \$X dollars in shipping costs saves the company money, which might result in more money for profit sharing or raises. The Manufacturing Engineer understands how a more efficient production process improves profitability, any may know that a better designed fixture improves the safety of the work environment. Unfortunately, most employees fit somewhere in between the top and bottom line, and don't have a clear line of sight to their impact on the business. Below are a few tips for helping your employees understand why they matter, their impact and ultimately, enhance their desire and ability to do a great job for you and the company.

Providing Meaning

Every person needs to know they matter, and every employee makes a difference in your business. This difference can be positive or negative depending upon how they show up and how well they perform their responsibilities. Consider both formal and informal options for helping employees find their meaning:

- Add "purpose" statements to job descriptions. This is not "overall responsibility for x, y, z" but the true reason the job matters. It should be easily understood by everyone who reads it – think of it as a mission statement for the specific job. Refer to the "Suggestions for You" section for ideas.
- Dedicate a portion of a team meeting to identify your internal and external customers to help define your department's purpose. Internal customers are other departments or individuals in your company that rely on you for something. External customers include the traditional customers, regulatory agencies, shareholders and perhaps the community. What is the product of service you provide to them? What is important to each of these stakeholders?
- Have a real conversation with your employee during a 1:1 meeting. Ask why he/she chose a particular career or accepted the current job. What is energizing? What demotivates? How does he/she know they have done a good job at the end of the day? Does this match your definition of success? If not, keep the conversation going – it may take a couple of meetings to get aligned.

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Providing metrics

Quite often, employees don't know what "good" looks like. Is 85% accuracy of work marginal performance, good or exceptional? Unless we define it, and provide employees the tools and education to achieve success, it is difficult to hold employees accountable or focus on continual improvement.

- For (or ideally, with) your team, create a team scoreboard with key metrics that indicate how well you are doing – orders processed, delivery dates met, customer quotes and recognition. Be sure to show trends and the impacts of successful projects completed.
- Institute a "metric of the month" discussion. Discuss a metric that is measured at the business or department level. Teach your employees how it is measured, and why it matters. Help your employees identify how they can help or hinder performance on this metrics. Provide recognition for suggestions offered that improve performance. If inventory turns are important, does the buyer understand how volume discounts for large quantity purchases that just sit on the shelf are tying up cash? How is that balanced with the risk of stock outs? Does the A/R clerk understand how one day improvement in DSO (days sales outstanding) impacts cash flow?
- Set SMART goals for individuals and projects. Make sure development goals and project plans have clear objectives, timelines and measures of success. Smart goals are: Specific Measurable Actionable Relevant and Time-based
- Celebrate success! While we all know that recognition is important, we sometimes neglect to celebrate what's going well. When goals are attained, or key milestones passed, remember to recognize those who made it happen.

For additional strategies for improving meaning, metrics or managing SMART goals and projects, ask us about strategic execution systems such as the balanced scorecard, A3 or VTOs or training programs, such as "Training and Development on a Budget" or "Managing Your Time and Your Projects".