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## 4 Tips for Metrics Success

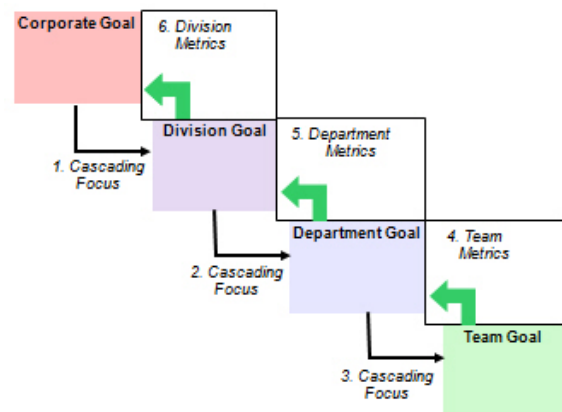
by Lynn Hunsaker

Goals are essential for taking your personal life and business prosperity to higher levels of performance, satisfaction and success. All too often, best intentions can get derailed over time. Here are 4 basic principles that apply to any resolution, initiative, program, dashboard, or MBO (management by objectives; incentives or stretch goals):

1. *Connected* - make sure you're focusing on things with strong connections to overall objectives.
2. *Actionable* - select strongly connected success measures that allow you to control outcomes.
3. *Predictive* - emphasize actionable, connected metrics with strong cause-and-effect to objectives.
4. *Sustained* - setup the right environment for predictive measures to keep producing strong results.

**How to Connect to the Big Picture** One of the biggest metrics mistakes is random selection. The best metrics start with the big picture:

- *Overall Objective:* Identify the overall objective of your company or initiative. State it quantitatively. It should answer the question: "We'll know this is successful when we see \_\_\_\_ happen."
- *Cascading Focus:* Like a waterfall, the overall goal is cascaded to each level of the program or organization, to identify successive contributions to the big-picture goal.
- *Metrics:* Metric definition moves in the opposite direction of the cascading goals. How will you measure progress of the action plan at the lowest level of the organization or initiative? How will this roll upward through the successive layers of the organization or initiative?
- *Validate:* Scrutinize your answers for logic and refine as needed.

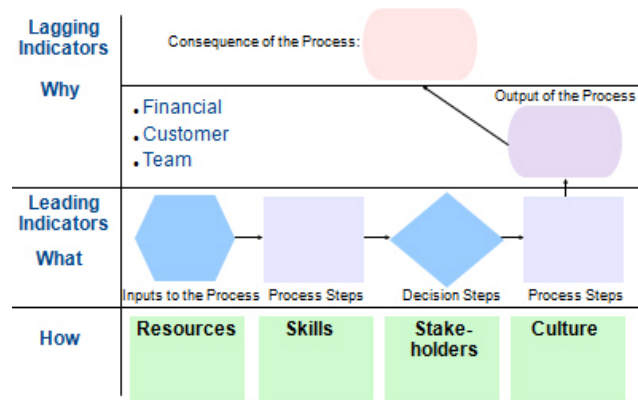


**How to Make Measures Actionable** Metrics at the lowest layer of an initiative or organization have the highest actionability. A focus on the most actionable metrics is essential for 'moving the needle' of big-picture metrics.

- *Opportunity or Problem:* When you identify a problem or opportunity that needs to be addressed, this is the symptom that you will explore for root cause analysis. Start with the observable problem or opportunity, not with possible solutions.
- *Objective & Goal:* For the symptom identified, specify the non-quantitative goal as well as the quantitative objective before exploring root causes and metrics.
- *Root Cause:* Identify the root cause(s) of the overall symptom by using the 5 Why's technique or the Fishbone Diagram.
- *Validate:* Validate the root cause(s) to make sure it's the malfunctioning issue that ties clearly to the symptom.
- *Shared Vision:* Use your root cause analysis diagram to help create a shared vision, empowerment, and momentum.

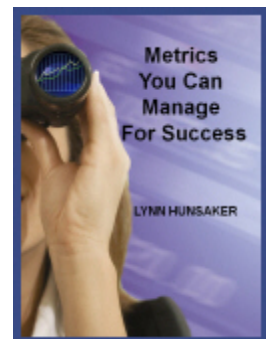
**How to Make Measures Predictive** Not all actionable metrics are predictive of the big-picture goal. Focusing on predictive actionable metrics leads to desired results for big-picture metrics.

- *Inputs & Control Points:* Among the root causes identified earlier, some may be inputs to a key process, and others may be critical junctures within the process itself.
- *Resources & Culture:* The ability of a process to meet its objectives is often determined by resources, skills, stakeholder buy-in and cultural factors. These are levers you might employ to improve the process inputs and process control points.
- *Tallies:* To track action plan progress, use tallies, check sheets, control charts, run charts, pie charts, or any other monitoring method.



**How to Sustain Results** Now that you've built momentum in connected, actionable, predictive metrics, make sure you get lasting results.

- *Tashiro Chart:* For sustained momentum in leading indicators' progress, the Tashiro Chart is a one-page action plan combined with a trend chart of the action plan's leading indicator.
- *Flag Chart:* For a birdseye view of what's going well, the Flag Chart gives management a quick indication of trends, highlights, and concerns.
- *Balanced Scorecard:* Like a pilot's dashboard of dials reflecting the spectrum of an airplane's key metrics, a Balanced Scorecard concisely depicts the spectrum of key metrics for an entire organization or initiative. Ideally, it includes layers of inputs, control points, and levers.
- *Goldmines Versus Landmines:* Appropriate use of dashboards is imperative. It's quite common for metrics to be mis-used, mis-trusted and mis-managed. What gets measured gets done, so improper use of metrics can lead to unintended behaviors that may negate the expected value of having metrics in the first place.



**Impossible to Measure?** Many business and personal efforts are inherently non-quantitative. It's difficult to see any way of measuring such efforts. Yet there's always an associated leading indicator that can be tracked with yes/no, low/medium/high, or other metric that can be monitored over time to observe trends and assess predictive strength. Creativity tools are great for viewing these challenges constructively. For hard-to-quantify topics, ask yourself: what's the big picture objective, what's actionable, what's predictive, and how can it become sustainable over time?

To increase likelihood of achieving great results for any goal, identify *connected* and *actionable* focus areas, and emphasize *predictive* metrics with well-planned tools for *sustained* momentum and success.

*Find out how to customize these tips to your situation; contact the author [lynn.hunsaker@clearaction.biz](mailto:lynn.hunsaker@clearaction.biz).*