

Managing Staff Performance

By Joe Feliu in conjunction with Harris Kern's Enterprise Computing Institute

Description: IT is not a good career choice for those who like calm, quiet and order. Every day presents new challenges, and learning to live with pressure is an essential requirement for success. How can the CIO focus staff on the key projects and day-to-day activities that lead to a high performance IT organization? In this section, we will discuss two tools that have proven effective in multiple settings.

Most organizations have some form of performance management system in place, often tied directly to compensation. (Our favorite approach is a Management By Objectives program, which ensures employee performance is tied directly to measurable objectives.) In IT, the formal corporate performance evaluation program is not enough. How can you align the efforts of the entire organization to work as a team toward accomplishing the primary objective of delivering high quality services to customers? We recommend using the IT Customer Expectations Matrix approach, a simple one-page statement of expectations of the delivery of service to customers. It includes explicit identification of customer groups, a statement of their expectations, and measurements that define success. Measuring performance against these measurements ensures that the IT team is performing against the defined expectations. This tool serves as an excellent communication mechanism, from your IT organization straight through to your customers. A sample form is provided in the example below.

Very often it is the “small stuff” that leads to the highest level of customer satisfaction – the devil is really in the details! Establishing expectations for your organization around the day-to-day behaviors that lead to a reputation of excellent customer service is a challenge. Here we will define another straightforward approach that leads to results. Define a set of IT Business Practices, in collaboration with your management team, that forms a baseline of business behavior for your entire organization. The focus should be on those areas that matter most to your customers: staff responsiveness and availability. Be sure to align these behaviors with the fundamental processes defined earlier in this chapter (e.g. Change and Problem Management Processes, Service Interruption Reports, Outage Notification Processes, etc.). Below is what such an IT Business Practices document might look like.

IT Business Practices

1. Each workday, we will listen to voicemail at least at the beginning of each day, between noon and 1:30PM, and at the end of the day. Voicemails requiring a response will be responded to within 24 hours after receipt. If a voicemail relates to an urgent matter, response will be immediate.
2. Voicemails will be cleared so that the "voicemail box full" message will never be received by a caller.
3. We will read all emails at least once each day. Emails requiring a response will be responded to in not less than two working days.
4. An extended voicemail absence greeting will be left when out of the office for one day or more.
5. The out-of-office email feature will be used whenever someone is out of the office for more than one business day.
6. Cellulares and pagers should be kept operational (e.g. batteries charged) and available at all times.
7. All commitments made will be kept or renegotiated before the expected due date.
8. An Unscheduled Outage Notification will be sent by the [responsible party] to affected users using the standardized format immediately upon becoming aware of the outage. A follow-up message will be sent immediately after service has been restored.
9. A Scheduled Outage Notification will be sent by the [responsible party] to affected users using the standardized format at least 3 days prior to the scheduled outage. A second notification will be sent a minimum of two hours prior to the outage on the day of the event using the same standardized format.
10. For each production outage, a Service Interruption Report (SIR) will be completed by the technician accountable for the resolution of the outage within 24 hours of the event. If the root cause and/or prevention are not known within 24 hours, the form will so indicate; a revised form will be completed once the required information is available. If the root cause is not resolved within one week, the technician will escalate to his/her manager.
11. An attempt should be made to resolve all issues at a peer level. Escalation should be made to management only if peer level resolution cannot be achieved.
12. Punctuality for meetings is expected.

Benefit: The benefits of the two approaches discussed in this section are in the identification and communication of key expectations for organizational success. Coupled with an objectives measurement program, these tools become a powerful foundation for improved organizational performance.

First Steps: Supplement your organization's existing performance management program with the two approaches mentioned above. Here's how to begin.

1. Ask each of your direct reports to define the "critical success factors" for their organizations and for IT as a whole (no more than 5)
2. Convene a meeting of your direct reports in which your team defines the vital few factors, and generate an IT Customer Expectations Matrix, in which customers, expectations and measurements are defined
3. Calibrate this Matrix with key internal and external customers
4. Communicate the Matrix to your staff
5. Put measurement and reporting in place (both to customers and staff)
6. Next, launch a brainstorming session on IT Business Behaviors with your direct reports; start by identifying no more than five behaviors
7. Communicate to your staff in an All Hands Meeting that these behaviors are now the norm in IT
8. Expand the IT Business Behaviors list by adding one behavior a month (keep the document to one page, at most)
9. Review this list at each of your Management Meetings and place appropriate measurements in place to determine whether your organization is meeting these expectations

Example: Figure 1 below contains a sample IT Customer Expectations Matrix.

IT Customer Expectations Matrix

<u>FUNCTIONAL GROUP</u>	<u>CUSTOMER</u>	<u>EXPECTATIONS</u>	<u>MEASUREMENT</u>
Systems Admin. Support	External Customers	Ext. DB & Systems Availability	>99.99% Availability
	External Partners	Ext. DB & Systems Availability	>99.95% Availability
	Internal Users	Email Availability	>99.9% Email Availability
		File & Print Services Availability	>99.9% Local/>99.5% Remote
		Int. DB & Systems Availability	>99.5% DB & Local System Avail.
Networking Support	External Customers	Ext. Network Availability	>99.99% WAN Availability
	Internal Users	Data Network Availability	>99.9% Availability
		Voice Network Availability	>99.9% Voice/Voicemail Avail.
Applications Support	Finance/Sales (ERP)	ERP Apps Availability	>99.95% Apps Availability
	Project Support	Delivered Systems	Within 15% of time/\$ plan
	Existing Sys. Support	Response to Problems	Lo Priority - Within 4 hours Hi Priority - Within 1 hour
Customer Support	External Customers	Accurate & Timely Response	>98% Accurate/90%<48 Hrs. Old
	Internal Customers	Immediate Access to Sales Rep Help Desk Support	>95% of Inquiries w/in 1 Hr. >85% Tickets Closed w/in 24 Hrs.