Stakeholder Relationship Measurements
Integrating & Deploying the Learning

Measurement, whether it be of customer loyalty, employee commitment, corporate reputation, or otherwise, is only one component of successful stakeholder listening. No matter what the quality of measurement, it alone cannot guarantee success. It must be accompanied by sound integration and deployment plans; otherwise there is the real risk that measurements will be of limited value. They will not be the catalyst for change, nor will they have their full impact on business performance.

Fundamentally, at Forum, we see integration and deployment activities falling in to three broad areas: at the program development stage, during the actual measurement and implementation process and post implementation, once information has been compiled, analyzed and interpreted.

Program Development Stage

There are a number of actions and initiatives that companies can take at the ‘front end’ of a program that’ll facilitate ‘back end’ success. In essence, most of these have to do with gaining ‘buy in’ from managers critical to program success - the people who will make or break the program. Without this buy in, an already difficult task can become prohibitively challenging. Forum recommends:

- Involve decision makers and influencers in the formulation of program objectives. The goal is to create a sense of cross-functional ownership. Think about who you’ll need to ‘champion’ the program and how you can involve them;
- Position the measurement as a continuous activity and a key management tool, rather than an isolated one-time project. It should be viewed as systematic, not ad hoc;
- When selling the program internally, demonstrate how the measurement information will be specific enough that executives, managers and supervisors can take action – whether it be for making market decisions, setting priorities, launching programs, canceling projects, or whatever;
- If appropriate, look to create a link between the measurement outputs and information contained in established corporate or functional strategic management systems. Once it gets on the corporate ‘dashboard’, it’s difficult to ignore;
- Where possible, show how the information links to other metrics such as complaints, cycle time, service standards and so on;
Program Implementation Stage

In our judgment, nothing is more critical than establishing a deployment management structure for directing the integration and deployment process. Not only this; the structure should be established well before actual measurement data is available. If information is allowed to become ‘stale’ an excuse for inaction exists. A proactive approach minimizes delays in responding to the information once it does become available.

As depicted in the Figure below, Forum recommends including three different tiers of management in the integration and deployment management structure. This should include key senior management, cross functional managers and middle management who hold responsibility for specific functions, products or services.

INTEGRATION & DEPLOYMENT MANAGEMENT

Senior management support is critical. In essence, they must be the ultimate champions of the program – stressing its importance to all stakeholders involved. They are also tasked with ensuring that the measurement program has the desired ROI for the business.

Cross functional senior managers, often typified by organizational excellence and operations management, are important because they bring a corporate wide view of the business, as opposed to a narrower view that would tend to come from those having business unit, functional or business process responsibilities. Cross functional senior managers are usually well equipped to sort out corporate priorities and they can be important to keeping things on the right track.

Middle management, essentially, is the group that will be tasked with developing and implementing action plans. Most often, these individuals are functionally aligned (e.g. technical support, customer service, training, sales, contracts and billing, etc.) and their
level of involvement in deployment is often determined by what areas of the business the measurements have isolated as being in need of a ‘fix’.

**Post Implementation Stage**

Fundamentally, effective integration and deployment of stakeholder measurement learning relies on two key activities – communication, and the process for ensuring action. With change a constant in today’s corporate world, established processes and protocols for communication and implementing change are often in place. Where appropriate, these should be utilized.

In Forum’s experience, communication of insights from measurement programs should be based on the following considerations:

- The communication objectives
- The recipients
- The process for using and sharing the information
- The help and education needed to capitalize on the information
- What will be disseminated and to whom
- Ensuring relevancy for its recipients
- Timing of communication
- Who will communicate what

The approach for taking action on measurement results will vary company to company, being dependent on a number of cultural, operational, organizational and historical experience factors. Generally, however, there is a common framework that involves…

- An assessment off the results to isolate which improvement priorities have corporate wide vs. business unit vs. process vs. individual stakeholder ramifications
- For each of these, isolating a few critical areas for attention
- Agreeing on an approach for addressing each
- Developing a tactical plan and timeline for each
- And, agreeing on a means for monitoring actions and gauging progress

Companies need to evaluate this framework in the context of their own corporate environment, and enhance and modify it accordingly. The key, regardless of whether this framework is adopted or another is used, is to ensure a sound integration and deployment plan exists before embarking on any ambitious stakeholder listening process. If you don’t have a roadmap to get you to where you want to go, it’s possible you’ll never reach your end destination.

**Forum Research Inc.**

*Providing Roadmaps for World Class Relationship Management*

Forum Research Inc. provides direction for effectively managing relationships with key stakeholders – customers, employees, the general public, the financial community, special interest groups and the like. Through our stakeholder measurement and analytical expertise, Forum succinctly tells its clients the what, the where and the how – in essence, providing them with critical insights into their relationships that they can lever for improved business success. Forum provides ‘roadmaps’ to help its clients reach their stakeholder relationship management goals.