

Measurement Tales, Woes, and Scenarios

KEY QUESTIONS

- (1) How realistic is this scenario?
- (2) Has something like this ever happened to you?
- (3) What are the strengths and challenges in this case?
- (4) What role does measurement play in this scenario?
- (5) What kind of information and analyses are needed to result in a successful outcome?

“Impromptu” Press Conference



Daniel Suarez had been in his position as the new head of the EEO and Inclusion office in the Department of Agriculture for just under three months. He liked the job, and he really liked the people that were in his office. Although he only had a few people, each one possessed a great deal of knowledge and experience in EEO and diversity. Dan was also getting along very well with the senior leadership. In a short time, he had gained their trust in his ability to handle sensitive, and critical, information.

Over the last few weeks, a number of employees had been coming into the office to complain about the results of the recently implemented pay for performance process. Most of them alleged that the system was unfair to minorities, especially African Americans and Hispanics. Each person had specific examples of discrepancies in the payouts. At first, employees came in individually; of late, however, larger groups of employees were coming in together to file complaints. The traffic was steady, and it was really getting to be more than Dan and his small staff could handle.

Dan heard through the rumor mill late on Friday that a number of employees had contacted the press to air their grievances and complain that their concerns were being ignored. The Public Affairs Office contacted him at 5:30 pm and said that they anticipated an “impromptu” half hour press conference “sometime” on Monday. Dan and his staff decided to meet first thing on Saturday morning to evaluate the situation and prepare for the public meeting.

As he drove home late that night, Dan was concerned. He wondered what kind of information they had on hand and what data he needed to pull together to get a better understanding of the facts and address the employee and press concerns appropriately. He worried that he would come into the office on Monday morning and find lights and cameras glaring at him.

Competition Ain't Nothin'

Trina Nugyen was facing a dilemma and she needed a fresh, new, innovative approach. Over the years, the senior leadership reviewed performance in EEO and diversity on a quarterly basis, along with other corporate measures, but lately, the sessions were just “ho-hum” and there was not much energy or interest in the topic. All of the measures on the diversity scorecard, most of them basic and standard, had been stagnant for a few years. Some indicators were increasing, but the growth was painfully slow. Although the corporate session was open to all organizational leads, the managers never came to the sessions anymore.



At EEOC's Directors' monthly meeting, Trina heard a briefing and thought that she might be able to incorporate some of the ideas. One presenter talked about how she had “breathed life” into an old measurement system at her agency by focusing on agency leaders' natural sense of competition. Before the corporate session, the presenter met with each organizational lead in the agency and reviewed their individual performance and their rankings compared to other units. She said that she reviewed a number of performance measures with them.

Trina met with her staff the next morning and talked about what she heard and asked for ideas about how they could incorporate aspects of this new approach into their strategy. They all agreed that something new like this—focusing on individual organization results in addition to reporting out in the aggregate—would make people uncomfortable and could be risky. They also acknowledged that this level of discomfort might be just what was needed to re-awaken the interest in senior leadership's commitment to diversifying the workforce. Outstanding questions remained, though—how often should they meet with managers, what kind of measures should they use, how would they elicit support rather than make enemies...and so on.

My Kingdom for a Good Rating

Jerry Smith was caught completely off guard in his meeting with Jerome Campbell, the new head of Human Resources (HR).

Jerry had just finished up his first year as the Chief of the Diversity Office, which reported to HR, and he had built a very positive relationship with Elaine Miller, his former boss. Elaine had a very “laid back” leadership style and it was really easy to work with her. She was very informal and the happiness of the “folks in her shop” was the most important thing to her.

Unfortunately along with the informality, Elaine focused little on building a management framework in her organization. The strategic plan had never been completed; HR policies were old or nonexistent; no one in the office had any formal, written objectives; and ratings had not been completed for the two years that she held the job.

This lack of discipline and structure had not gone unnoticed by senior leadership. One day Jerry came to work and discovered that Elaine had been unceremoniously let go. In a short staff meeting, the Vice President for Operations announced that she left to “spend more time with her family” and that a new person was going to be joining the leadership team soon.

Jerome Campbell reported to work the first Monday in the month. He had moved his things into the office over the weekend, so he had already set up shop by the time his direct reports started filing in that morning. He sent around an e-mail stating that he would be holding individual meetings with each office lead on the hour, starting at 9:00. Jerry arrived at 8:45, a little earlier than his usual time, read the e-mail, and noticed that he was the first person on the list. He decided that he would keep an open mind and work on making a good, positive first impression.

Jerry was stunned, and a little nervous, when he saw that Jerome only had one piece on paper on his desk, and it was Jerry’s resume. After a little small talk, Jerome asked Jerry to provide a copy of his current rating. Slightly embarrassed, Jerry said that Elaine really didn’t provide ratings to anyone on her staff. Jerome frowned with this news and then said, “An HR Director that doesn’t believe in ratings?” He shook his head vigorously.

Then he said, “Well I see here that you have just completed your first year in this job—how successful have you been?” Without hesitation, Jerry said that he had been very successful...but then his mind went blank. Growing more distressed, Jerry was unable to speak. Jerome just stared at him for a while and then said, “How do you know that you’ve done a successful job, Jerry?” More uncomfortable silence and then, “I can see that you are not prepared for this session right now. Go back to your desk and let’s meet again today at 2:00.”



Jerry decided to go back to his office and list the things that he could talk about that would focus on his accomplishments for the year. The only problem was that he did not know just where to begin.