

Kaizen Corner

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Performance measures, or key performance indicators (KPIs), serve as a compass for identifying areas that require attention, drive continuous improvement effort decisions, and provide the necessary structure to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of processes, projects, and organizations. Knowing how to identify, integrate, and monitor them in projects and processes is a critical step to successfully implementing any continuous improvement effort. Keep in mind that an identified performance measure can be qualitative (interpretation-based or descriptive) or quantitative (numerical data).

Begin by defining clear objectives for your project or process. By identifying your goals and priorities, you can then determine the KPIs that are most relevant to your objectives and directly align to your goals. They might include measures like academic progress, number of students served, percent participation in a new program, or financial claims in monitoring grants.

The next step is to integrate these into your progress monitoring system through establishing a data collection process to track the selected KPIs. Data can come from various sources, including software systems, surveys, manual records, and financial statements.

Monitoring performance measures is not a one-and-done effort. Targets or benchmarks should be defined and reflect the desired levels of performance and then an implementation system established to integrate regular performance reviews and reporting to key stakeholders. Generally, performance reviews are established at weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or quarterly intervals.

By initiating a cycle of improvement, performance measures can be used to create feedback loops. When performance falls short of targets, corrective actions are initiated. When targets are exceeded, an analysis is performed to identify the factors contributing to success and then we seek to replicate those practices. Over time there may also be a need to adapt your performance measures. As your organization, projects, or processes evolve, the KPIs that were once relevant may change. There is a need to regularly reassess and adjust your performance measures accordingly.

One of the many benefits of this work is the gradual embedding of a continuous improvement culture where employees are encouraged to take ownership of their performance and seek ways to continually improve.

In summary, performance measures play a vital role in continuous improvement by providing a structured way to assess progress and guide decision-making. By aligning KPIs with your objectives, regularly monitoring performance, and using the data for feedback and improvement, you can drive positive changes in projects and processes and ultimately impact organizational strategic objectives.

