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June Newsletter - Assessing: Understanding Data

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Data, we crave more. We claim to clean it, massage it, illustrate it, manipulate it and use it and yet we never seem to have enough data. We now have “data scientists,” “strategic data analysts” and “citizen data scientists,” and yet we still hear cries from executives, leaders and managers that they crave more data, better data and more timely data. Is there a disconnect? I would submit that the problem is more about collecting the “right” data and understanding how the valuable information from what is perceived as less valuable data.

I once worked with an organization who had over 30 key performance indicators (KPIs) for their customer service organization. Not only was this unwieldy, but it mashed together KPI measures (a number that is derived from taking a measurement) and metrics (a calculation between two measures). Perhaps more importantly, many of the collected data points did not contribute to learning or the ability to manage or improve a process or customer experience. Much time was spent ensuring the collection of data and rendering it into a dashboard to be displayed on large laptop screens.

To rectify this, we first focused on working with the leadership team to determine the 3-6 true KPIs. [KPI.org](#) states, “Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are the critical (key) indicators of progress toward an intended result. They help you understand if you are achieving your goals. KPIs create an analytical basis for decision making and help focus attention on what matters most.” In other words, KPIs should support the objectives by exposing the desired performance targets that indicate progress towards the objectives, which express how the organization manifests its mission, vision and values.

Once those were established, we could identify the measures and metrics that would provide the necessary data and aggregation of data to feed the KPIs. We often see confusion between KPIs and metrics. All KPIs are metrics, but not all metrics are KPIs. We need to ensure proper relationships so we can assess our progress and understand our performance.

Today we have the advantage of collection measures, analytical tools and huge data processing capabilities that just a few years ago were unimaginable. But this cornucopia of data points has led to confusion and an inability, in some cases, to understand what we are collecting, why we are collecting it and what relevance it has to measuring progress toward our objectives. In at least one case we observed where a signal measurement was being ignored because it triggered too often, losing all meaning. Instead of correcting the measure or its probability of reflecting a problem, code was written to add a persistence factor – so if the measure triggered more than x times in y hours, then the recommended action or notification would be made. This presented a real opportunity for a downward spiral in trusting the data and obtaining any value from the measurement.

Lastly, we must understand our data. In the case of this organization the amount of data being collected and the code they wrote to remove or add weight and impact, meant we were not only collecting data that we were not using, but we were corrupting the data with manipulation. Any metrics or KPIs we applied the measures to were skewed and we were not able to get a true understanding of what we were seeing. Over time, the organization forgot which measures were manipulated and which were not, so we saw secondary efforts to correct or normalize some data, but it was never trusted.

In retrospect, the work to simplify and provide a true ladder from data measure to metric to KPI, was a herculean effort, both in terms of approach and change management. We had to prove the data could be trusted and that by trusting the measures and metrics we could understand how the KPIs were populated and the direct results that could be observed by adjusting operational behaviors to drive toward fulfillment of the objectives.

To be sure, this is hard. First, succinctly articulate your objectives. Second, leverage any available industry standard KPIs, which can be used later for benchmarking outside your organization. Finally, establish and validate the measures used to feed metrics. Collecting the right data at the right pace will provide for metrics that allow for assessment of operations and course corrections where you improve your work effort. The net result will be that you will understand your data and its meaning. Happy data mining!

Eric-Stephan Neill
President, KyCPE

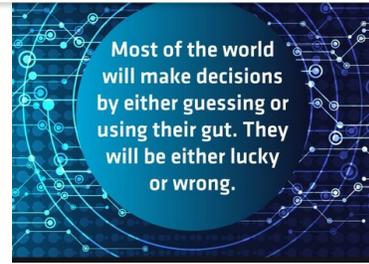
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July 14, 21, 28 - SIT Spark session
(see below)

August 12 - Culture of Productivity
session (see below)

September 1 - letter of intent to apply
due to KyCPE (details found under
"Improved Application Process")

September 18 - KyCPE Conference



Save the Date

What: KyCPE Educational Conference
Where: BCTC Leestown Road Campus Conference Center
164 Opportunity Way, Lexington KY 40511
When: Friday September 18, 2020

2020 Conference Theme: Leading for Performance Excellence

Speakers to include Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winners and others who have achieved organizational excellence. You won't want to miss this opportunity to network with and learn from innovative leaders!

A final decision has not yet been made as to whether the conference will be held in person or online. Registration information will be released when the decision has been made.

Special Opportunity

Upcoming Sessions Available

In cooperation with the Performance Excellence Network and the Alliance for Performance Excellence, KyCPE is offering the following fee-based, online workshops.

[Problem Solving and Innovation During Times of Crisis: "SIT Spark"](#), facilitated by Erez Tsalik, Systematic Inventive Thinking (SIT), July 14, 21, 28 (three half-day sessions)

Organizations today must do more with less. Organizations today must solve complex problems they've never faced before. Organizations today must find ways to create meaningful, breakthrough changes that add value for customers and others stakeholders — they must innovate their products, services, processes, and business models to remain relevant, achieve their missions, and indeed just survive these challenging times.

[Create a Culture of Productivity: Maximize Your Time, Talent and Technology](#), facilitated by Jan Lehman, CTC Productivity, August 12 (half-day session)

Organizations today are feeling increasing pressures to improve productivity, eliminate waste, and maximize efficiency. In good times and now in challenging times, as a leader, you have the opportunity and responsibility to encourage and reinforce productivity throughout your organization. But it must start with you.

Announcement!

Book Release

KyCPE's very own Conley Salyer has released his book, *The Target: One Kentucky School District's Journey of Transportation Transformation*. The book explains, in fictional form, the lessons learned over the last three years about improving school transportation systems. The most important lesson learned is operating with good data. The book is available for purchase on [Lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com).

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▾](#)[RSS](#)**Michele Trimby Hoppenrath**

Michele Trimby Hoppenrath, owner of Quality Systems Consultants, is a first time examiner for KyCPE, but she participated in the Baldrige Examiner Training Experience at the national level in 2018. This month, she shares her insights about the benefits of becoming an examiner and encouragement for potential applicants.

How did you hear about KyCPE?

I first heard about KyCPE while doing research for my doctoral dissertation on MBNQA. I heard more about it through the local ASQ section and the appeal for examiners.

Why did you decide to become an examiner?

I have been interested in becoming an examiner since 1990 when I had an assignment for my undergrad degree to evaluate the company I worked for using the Baldrige criteria. I learned more about Baldrige through my subsequent coursework in my masters and doctorate degree programs. I could not meet the time commitments while I worked full time, so I applied once I retired from full time work.

What advice would you give to future examiners?

Being an examiner is a great learning experience. I have been a quality systems auditor for about 30 years, and being an examiner brings a new level of understanding about reviewing and evaluating these systems.

What advice would you give to future applicants?

Go for it! The depth of understanding an applicant receives about your company's business from completing the application is unmeasurable. The feedback from the examiners is invaluable for improving your business.

How have you benefited personally and/or professionally from being an examiner?

Being an examiner has brought my knowledge of quality systems implementation to a new level. I love learning new things and can see how being an examiner has improved my ability to help my customers.

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