

Performance-Based Rubrics for Measuring Organizational Strategy and Program Implementation

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It has been said that the need to measure things is a result of the need to understand them (Spitzer, 2007). In complex organizations, the need to measure performance at both an individual and an organizational level may stem from the need to understand the nature of the actions or behaviors that contribute to high or low levels of performance. The *Criteria for Performance Excellence* (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2013a) challenges organizations to collect, report, and use performance measures in the areas of products, customers, operations, finances and the marketplace, and the workplace as a key means to make fact-based decisions, leading to excellence at all levels of the organization.

The research and literature in the field of performance measurement has produced a body of knowledge of best practices in the measurement of organizational activity focused on what to measure (Danks, 2013; Neely, Gregory, & Platts, 2005), and authors have advocated for the use of both in-process and outcome measures or key performance indicators (KPIs); strategic and operational measures; perceptual and tangible measures; descriptive and predictive measures; and a balance among strategic, workforce, customer, financial, and internal business indicators to evaluate performance (Bititci, Carrie, & McDevitt, 1997; Harbour, 2009; Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Neely, Adams, & Kennerly, 2002; Poister, 2003; Spitzer, 2007). The problem still remains that very few users of this flurry of data truly understand the antecedents of excellence—the “structures and conditions that precede, anticipate, or predict excellence in performance” (White, 2005, p. 28).

While a majority of the literature in the field of performance measurement has focused on what organizations *should* measure, report, and use in order to improve overall organizational results, organizational leaders still experience difficulty in identifying performance measures to track the achievement of organizational strategy. This article describes the methods used to measure organizational strategy and program implementation and proposes the use of a performance-based rubric to better enable organizational leaders to capture and identify the essence of organizational strategy as implemented and to attribute performance outcomes to specific strategic actions. Implications for organizational leaders and researchers from all sectors are presented.

Literature from both scholars and scholar-practitioners has shown that while performance measurement has the power to be a useful “enabler in achieving desired performance goals” (Harbour, 2009, p. 1), it also has the power to generate confusion among practitioners untrained in how to effectively attribute organizational actions, behaviors, and processes to their intended results, a phenomenon affectionately known as the “black box effect” (Hunter & Nielsen, 2013; Patton, 2011; White, 2005). While program evaluation methods and other evaluative frameworks have emerged to support practitioners in their efforts to better evaluate the effectiveness of their programs, policies, strategies, and other processes to deliver intended results (Patton, 2011; Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 2010), the employment of these models can be costly and is sometimes neglected in many organizations (Hatry, 2013).

This article assumes that readers are familiar with the key function, uses, and methods to develop performance measures as a part of an integrated performance measurement system. It focuses on the measurement of interventions that organizational leaders commonly use to improve organizational excellence—strategies and programs—and proposes an additional option to the family of measures of these efforts: the *performance-based rubric*. This conceptual article will enable academics and practitioners to better understand how the performance-based rubric may be used to evaluate the components of strategy and program implementation that contribute or fail to contribute to desired performance, and therefore support these individuals to both practically and statistically create a line of sight between organizational actions and overall results.

The Current State of the Measurement of Strategy in Organizations

It is typically acknowledged that the process by which organizational leaders achieve their key goals or outcomes has the following steps: (1) the identification, aggregation, and use of multiple requirements and inputs to design strategic objectives; (2) the identification of measures of success; (3) the allocation of resources; and (4) the design of systems, processes, programs, policies, strategies, or other initiatives to reach those outcomes (Harris, 2010; Hunter & Nielsen, 2013; Phillips, Brantley, & Phillips, 2012; Poister, 2003; White, 2005). To support this work in the alignment of objectives, measures, and strategy, the balanced scorecard (BSC), developed by Kaplan and Norton (1996), has served as the most frequently implemented framework worldwide for the measurement of organizational performance (Garengo, Biazzo, & Bititci, 2005). While other measurement and evaluation frameworks and methods have also been frequently used in the nonprofit sectors (Buzachero, Phillips, Phillips, & Phillips, 2013; Harris, 2010; Patton, 1994; Poister, 2003; Centers for

Disease Control, 2013), Neely's (2005) citation analysis of publications and work in the field of performance measurement revealed that the vast majority of academics and practitioners cited the model and its derivatives. While the BSC encourages the linking of strategic objectives together in a chain of cause-and-effect relationships (Kaplan, 2001), many organizations continue to "have difficulty determining appropriate measures," and "measuring progress in accomplishing their strategy is a key challenge" (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2013b). Many visualize the model using a linear table approach, as shown in Table 1. Table 1 illustrates two examples of the use a balanced measurement system from the industries of health care and nonprofit research.

As is the case with many performance measurement frameworks, the design of the performance measurement system relies heavily on the use of outcome-based KPIs, which may align with strategic objectives but do not necessarily measure the strategy itself (Patton & Patrizi, 2010). Leading authorities in measurement theory have recently questioned the logic gap between strategies and overall outcomes, especially given the complex nature of the system in which the strategies or interventions take place (Brinkerhoff, 2003; Buzachero et al., 2013; Patton, 2011; White, 2005). To further challenge the assumption inherent in the use of outcome measures to infer performance capabilities, the *Criteria for Performance Excellence* (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2013a) encourage organizations to also collect and report measures of strategic actions:

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1. What key performance indicators do you use to track the effectiveness of your action plans [strategies]?
2. How do you ensure your overall action plan measurement system reinforces organizational alignment?
3. What are your results for key measures or indicators of the achievement of your organizational strategy and action plans, including intelligent risks and building and strengthening core competencies? (pp. 12, 26)

Few organizations at this time have developed what the *Criteria for Performance Excellence* refer to as an "action plan measurement system" (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2013a, p. 12). Neely, Kennerley, and Adams (2007) reported that most frameworks do not incorporate measures of strategies or initiatives. Neely et al. (2007) therefore urge practitioners to create a comprehensive measurement system that incorporates measurement sources "consistent with management techniques and improvement initiatives that exist within the organization" (p. 150). They remind us that the role of measurement is to "track whether or not the strategies they have chosen are actually being implemented, . . . [use measures] to communicate these strategies within the organization, . . . [apply measures] to encourage

TABLE 1 EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, MEASURES, AND STRATEGIES BY SECTOR

FOCUS AREA	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	MEASURE	STRATEGIES
Example: Health care			
Workforce	Increase employee and leader engagement	% employees engaged; % retention	Implement leadership engagement model Implement physician integration initiative
Service	Increase patient satisfaction	% patients satisfied by service line	Deploy service excellence model Modify complaint system
Quality	Decrease performance on core measures: mortality; readmissions, length of stay, patient falls, etc.	% mortality; % readmitted; length of stay; % patient falls, etc.	Implement safe surgery model Implement education programs
Stewardship	Improve cost position for services; increase operating margin	System cost as a % of revenue; operating margin	Employ clinical integration model to control supply costs Implement electronic medical records
Development	Increase market share by service line	% market share; inpatient and outpatient volume	Modify physician recruitment plan Implement population health management system
Example: Nonprofit research organization			
Products, research	Increase products available to stakeholders; Increase product satisfaction; Increase publications	Number of patents awarded; % customers satisfied with research product/expertise; number of publications	Implement model for stakeholder inclusion throughout research process Implement technology solution to ensure rapid transfer to market
Research capability and capacity	Increase research capability; increase workforce engagement and retention	% highly qualified researchers; % workforce retained	Implement recruitment plan Expand university partnership model to include intradisciplinary schools
Financial	Reduce overhead costs; Increase market share for research products	System cost as a % of revenue; % market share by product	Implement cost-control procedures and standards to relevant process stage-gates

Note. The organization sources have been omitted to maintain anonymity.

and incentivize the implementation of strategy, [and use] measurement data to challenge whether the strategies are working as planned” (p. 153).

Measurement of Complex Phenomena

How do organizational leaders measure such a highly complex construct as the organizational strategy? Buzachero et al. (2013) categorize the work of strategic improvement into the buckets of programs, projects, systems, initiatives, policies, procedures, events, meetings, processes, people and capabilities, and tools and affirm that the terms can be used interchangeably when it comes to how these efforts can be measured or evaluated to determine their contribution to outcomes. Regardless of the terms used, it is generally understood that each of these constructs represents complex phenomena, where multiple parts work together to contribute to the results of the system, making it difficult to partition out or isolate the components that lead to desirable or undesirable outcomes.

In some cases, measures of improvement tactics may be operational in nature, easier to quantify and report, and therefore easier to track than measures of organizational strategy (Phillips et al., 2012). However, Hubbard (2010) reminds organizational leaders that while certain constructs may seem “intangible” and not easily measured, any construct, organizational efforts included, can indeed be measured through specifically designed instrumentation. To develop and use an instrument to measure the “intangible” phenomenon, Hubbard recommends the following steps:

1. Decompose the uncertain construct until certain observable behaviors are identified.
2. Classify each of the observable things into a comprehensible framework that can be understood by intended stakeholders.
3. Test and calibrate the instrument to decrease error, ensure consistency in its use, and affirm the validity of the causal model.
4. Use sampling and other efficient efforts to collect the appropriate amount of information needed to make critical decisions.

By employing the critical steps of decomposition, classification, development, testing, calibration, and appropriate use, the academic or practitioner can be equipped to assign value to a complex phenomenon and therefore measure its critical components.

The Performance-Based Rubric

One methodological approach an organizational leader might take to address these considerations is to employ the performance-based rubric,

TABLE 2 HOLISTIC RUBRIC EXAMPLE: THE GLOBAL ASSESSMENT SCALE

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
5	<p>Most members of the community are contributing to the group and recognize they play an integral part in achieving holistic, long-term, and agreed community objectives. The group has its own identity and strives for excellence. They are able to identify and implement innovating solutions to problems with little or no government support. Members are willing to accept leadership, responsibilities, and different roles. All members are implementing on-ground works and attending regular meetings. The group is exceeding salinity tree and pasture establishment targets and will be able to halt salinity within 30 days.</p>
4	<p>Most members of the community have an interest in the group and are working toward a shared long-term strategy. Most members have a holistic and regional vision, but others are still grappling with the concept. All activities are planned carefully by the group and attract significant interest. Government specialists may be invited to provide technical advice. There is a strong committee commitment and other subcommittees are completing specialized roles. The group is meeting salinity targets every year and will significantly slow the spread of salinity in the next 30 years.</p>
3	<p>The group shares common medium-term goals and is developing a team culture and cohesion. There is a commitment from about 40% of the community to attend meetings regularly and complete on-ground works. New members are encouraged, and there is an effort to conduct interesting meetings and activities. Government agencies assist with technical advice and organizing activities at the group's initiation. Salinity targets may or may not be met, but there is a significant amount of on-ground works completed each year.</p>
2	<p>The group looks to government to set directions and activities. A small group of dedicated members have held leadership roles for long periods and are experiencing burnout. The group may compete with other organizations for membership, or members may consist of people with specific agendas. There is no long-term planning to assist direction setting and goals are strictly short term and self-centered. On-ground works are completed by a small, dedicated core through government funding. Salinity targets are not being met although small areas of salinity may be mediated with time.</p>
1	<p>The group is totally dependent on government for funding, support, and leadership. There is a reluctance of members to assume any leadership roles or responsibilities, and there is apathy toward attracting new members. Meetings are irregular with few core members present, or meetings are nonexistent. There are no agreed goals, and members may not share common problems to bring them closer together. There is little or no evidence of on-ground works occurring. The salinity problem will continue.</p>

Source: Dart et al. (1988, p. 63).

TABLE 3 ANALYTIC RUBRIC EXAMPLE: THE DELTA MODEL OF ANALYTICAL CAPABILITY

SUCCESS FACTOR	STAGE 1 ANALYTICALLY IMPAIRED	STAGE 2 LOCALIZED ANALYTICS	STAGE 3 ANALYTICAL ASPIRATIONS	STAGE 4 ANALYTICAL COMPANIES	STAGE 5 ANALYTICAL COMPETITORS
Data	Inconsistent; poor quality and organization; difficult to do substantial analysis; no groups with strong data orientation	Much data useable, but in functional or process silos; senior executives don't discuss data management	Identifying key data domains and creating central data repositories	Integrated, accurate, common data in central warehouse; data still mainly an IT matter; little unique data	Relentless search for new metrics; organization separate from IT oversees information; data viewed as strategic asset
Enterprise	No enterprise perspective on data or analytics; poorly integrated systems	Islands of data, technology, and expertise deliver local value	Process or business unit focus for analytics; infrastructure for analytics beginning to coalesce	Key data, technology, and analysts are managed from an enterprise perspective	Key analytical resources focused on enterprise priorities and differentiation
Leadership	Little awareness of or interest in analytics	Local leaders emerge, but have little connection	Senior leaders recognize importance of analytics and developing capabilities	Senior leaders develop analytical plans and build analytical capabilities	Strong leaders behave analytically and show passion for analytical competition
Targets	No targeting of opportunities	Multiple disconnected targets, typically not of strategic importance	Analytical efforts coalescing behind a small set of important targets	Analytics centered on few key business domains with explicit and ambitious outcomes	Analytics integral to the company's distinctive capability and strategy
Analysts	Few skills, and those attached to specific functions	Unconnected pockets of analysts; unmanaged mix of skills	Analysts recognized as key talent and focused on important business areas	Highly capable analysts explicitly recruited, deployed, and engaged	World-class professional analysts; cultivation of analytical amateurs across the enterprise

Source: Davenport (2010, p. 33).

an evaluation instrument that contains two key components: criteria and gradations of quality (Andrade, 2000). Performance-based rubrics can be either holistic (which consists of a single scale with all the criteria evaluated and considered together) or analytic (which involves the evaluation of multiple criteria along a separate scale or continuum). Tables 2 and 3 show examples of these rubrics. The holistic rubric in Table 2, called the Global Assessment Scale (Dart, Petheram, & Straw, 1998), is used to evaluate the construct of performance and interaction of community groups. The analytic rubric in Table 3 is the DELTA model presented by Davenport (2010), which is used to categorize and evaluate the analytical capabilities of an organization along the five key criteria of data, enterprise, leadership, targets, and analysts. Both of these rubrics articulate desired and undesired behaviors along a continuum for multiple key success factors, or criteria, of complex constructs.

Using Performance-Based Rubrics to Evaluate Organizational Strategy and Program Implementation

Patton and Patrizi (2010) have advocated for the analysis of the strategy, both the intended strategy and the executed strategy, as the evaluation and unit of analysis itself. Before a strategy or program can be evaluated, it must be determined exactly what it is that is to be evaluated (Patton, 2012). Phillips et al. (2012) recommended the use of a scale to measure project quality, for example, and demonstrated how to combine tangibles with intangibles to reflect the continuum of performance along multiple indicators. While this approach has begun to gain momentum in public and higher education (Milanowski, 2011), as well as in the human resources function in the form of workforce competency models (US Department of Labor, 2013), the practice has hardly begun in other sectors. While it may not be considered the sole tool organizational leaders use outside the context of rigorous evaluative frameworks, it is proposed that performance-based rubrics be considered as an option to the existing family of measures used to measure and evaluate organizational strategy and program implementation.

One of the most heavily cited evaluation models is Kirkpatrick's four levels model, which describes the importance of collecting and reporting data in the areas of reaction, learning, behavior, and impact (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2009). Phillips et al. (2012) expanded this model and presented six critical categories of data that should be collected to evaluate large projects, which increase in complexity and importance to the organization's key objectives: inputs, reaction and perception, learning and confidence, application and implementation, impact and consequences, and return on investment (financial). Patton (2011) also introduced ideas of complexity and the importance of the inquiry framework of "being descriptive," which involves the continual asking of basic descriptive

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questions of critical stakeholders, such as What? Why? When? How? Where? and Who? Patton (2012) also contributed the importance of engaging the intended users of the measurement system as those who should get to decide how a strategy will be evaluated—all as a means to “generate credible findings that support intended use by intended users” (p. 13). What these frameworks have in common is the importance of the fidelity of implementation: the extent to which the users of the strategy or program implement or deploy the initiative as intended or designed.

Scholars have begun to converse about the similarities, differences, and overlap among formal performance measurement systems, program evaluation frameworks, and other performance management methods (Hatry, 2013; Hunter & Nielsen, 2013) and have identified that performance measurement systems have focused more on outcomes, while program evaluation methods have investigated issues related to implementation, or the causes, of those outcomes. Rather than spend time and costs in assumptions about a program’s worth by solely relying on outcomes, organizational leaders should take the time to conduct an analysis to determine what exactly the program is, identify whether theory or implementation failure occurred, determine information that can be used for action and decision, and investigate other issues related to adaptation of strategies and methods (Patton, 2012; Scriven, 1991). Performance-based rubrics are one tool that can be used to help organizational decision makers identify the key elements of a program that theoretically contribute to desirable performance; stratify those behaviors into a continuum of high, medium, and low levels of quality; use the rubric as a tool to communicate those desired behaviors to relevant users and stakeholders; and inform exactly which behaviors, deployment areas, or other factors promote or inhibit successful outcomes.

The process to design a holistic or analytic rubric cannot be divorced from the process of the design of the strategy or program itself. Light, Singer, and Willet (1990) asserted that “you can’t fix by analysis what you bungled by design” (p. viii). Therefore it is recommended that the design of a performance-based rubric be integrated with the original process of the identification of strategic objectives, measures or indicators of success, and the selection of the strategy described. The process used to analyze, design, implement, and evaluate the use of a performance-based rubric is shown in Table 4. Organizational leaders can use the performance-based rubric to stratify the multiple critical components of a successful strategy or program (the criteria) into examples of high, medium, and low levels of performance (the gradation of quality) (Andrade, 2000). This tool can enable leaders to heed Patton’s (2012) recommendation to evaluate the extent to which the strategy or program was implemented as intended and then correlate the differing levels of performance within the organization to relevant outcomes.

Application

It is well known in the field of evaluation that performance-based rubrics have been used in the public K–12 and higher education sectors

TABLE 4 PROCESS TO DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A PERFORMANCE-BASED RUBRIC FOR AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

PROCESS STEP	DESCRIPTION
1. Identify strategic objectives	Clearly identify the strategic objectives the organization seeks to accomplish.
2. Identify key performance measure/ indicator	Describe the key measures, both outcomes and in-process/behavioral, that will be used to measure the extent to which the strategic objective has been achieved.
3. Identify key strategies that will be used to increase performance on objectives	Document the strategy that will be used to increase performance. This might include the continuation, modification, abandonment, or development of a new program, system, process, procedure, tool, or other initiative.
4. Identify the key measures of the strategies	Develop a performance-based rubric to measure the evidence of the implementation or deployment of the strategy, or the final, desired state of its implementation. Research best practices to determine what high, medium, and low levels of quality, implementation, usage, completion, or improvement look like. Also consult with relevant stakeholders who understand the program, as well as the relevant literature, to determine desirable and undesirable attributes of its implementation/deployment. List those attributes along a continuum of quality. Select attributes or descriptors that will guide behaviors and/or actions toward the overarching strategic objective.
5. Pilot and calibrate the strategic measure	Communicate the rubric to relevant users and stakeholders. Conduct calibration exercises to ensure consistent use of the tool throughout the organization. Use the rubric (through self-assessment, peer review, or external/supervisor assessment) to evaluate performance.
6. Report results of the strategic measure	Summarize and report performance to relevant stakeholders to facilitate improvement. Identify performance differences among entities, work units, supervisory levels, or other workforce segments. Report results for each criterion (if an analytic rubric was used).
7. Validate the strategic measure	Use statistical methods to validate and improve the accuracy and utility of each item or criterion on the tool for the organization. Correlate work units with differing levels of performance on the strategy measure (for total rubric performance and by item or criterion) to their respective work unit outcome performance to assess predictive validity. Use feedback from users and stakeholders to make improvements to the rubric's content.
8. Use the results to inform the extent of programmatic attribution	Continue to report results for the performance or implementation of the strategy by relevant work units on a formative basis. Use strategic results to make decisions about continued action to improve overall outcomes.

(Milanowski, 2011) to evaluate organizational strategy. For example, in public K–12 education, performance-based rubrics have been applied to classroom walk-through forms to evaluate and report the extent to which classroom teachers exhibit specific behaviors or actions identified in district-level strategic plans. Performance-based rubrics have also been used to measure strategy when the particular organizational strategy identified is a training or development program, along with many other tools to assess the application or transfer of that learning to on-the-job environments (Brinkerhoff, 2003; Kirkpatrick, 1959). However, less known is the extent to which performance-based rubrics have been applied to other industries or in areas where the strategy involves a set of behaviors or processes that may not have been the result of specific training and development efforts.

Recall the examples shown in Table 1 where an anonymous health care organization identified for its focus area of *workforce* the strategic objective of *increase employee and leadership engagement*, as measured by the *percent of employees engaged and retained*. The example also shows that the strategy this organization identified and designed to ensure it reaches its intended strategic objective was to implement *leadership engagement processes*. At this point in its strategic measurement identification process, the organization has completed steps 1 to 3 in the process described in Table 4 and has an opportunity to also complete steps 4 to 8 in the process to use a performance-based rubric to measure its strategy.

Table 5 illustrates an example of a performance-based rubric that could be developed to measure the implementation or deployment of its leadership engagement processes. The performance-based rubric in the table lists each of the desired components that the organization might theorize that most contribute to desired results in the areas of leadership engagement: vision and mission, leadership skill development, communication, focus on action, and performance evaluation. Once the strategy is defined and articulated, the action plans to accomplish this strategy are deployed (such as training, communication, modification or scaling of existing approaches or pilots), and data are collected and reported. Organizational leaders can now compose a meaningful KPI for the accomplishment of the *strategy*: the percent of leaders who successfully achieve the advanced level on the Leadership Engagement Rubric.

The quantification of such complex phenomena allows leaders to conduct research and other tests to determine the effect of leadership performance, as measured by the performance-based rubric, on employee engagement, for example, and on other critical organizational results. Some of these inquiries may include the following: (1) an investigation to determine the extent to which the processes were implemented and deployed as designed; (2) an analysis of progress achieved in the improvement of leadership processes; (3) a comparison of departments or units in overall employee engagement with higher scores in leadership processes to those with lower scores; (4) an investigation of other critical differences

TABLE 5 EXAMPLE ANALYTIC RUBRIC TO EVALUATE STRATEGY: LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

CRITERIA	NOT EVIDENT	PROGRESSING	PROFICIENT	ADVANCED
Leaders communicate the vision and mission of the organization, communicate effectively with all employees, and create an environment for learning and improvement.				
Vision and mission	Leaders have yet to develop or refine the vision and mission of the work unit(s).	Leaders involve employees annually in the revision of the vision and mission of the work unit(s).	Leaders guide employees to revisit the vision, mission, and norms for the work unit. Leaders create specific methods to communicate the vision, mission, and norms to all stakeholder groups.	Leaders celebrate and reward evidence of employee and stakeholder support of the vision, mission, and values of the work unit(s).
Leadership skill development	Leaders do not develop their own personal leadership skills.	Leaders participate in required organizational professional development sessions.	Leaders find frequent opportunities for their own personal learning and development, such as through participation in professional organizations.	Leaders formally apply principles learned from professional development opportunities and collect evidence to determine the effectiveness of the principles.
Communication	Leaders have yet to define procedures for two-way communication throughout the work unit(s).	Leaders have procedures in place to ensure open, two-way communication throughout the work unit(s).	Leaders use formal methods, such as surveys and other tools, to evaluate communication methods. Action plans are developed to address gaps.	Leaders use results from assessments of communication methods to document best practices in improving communication. Best practices for communication are identified and shared.

Focus on action	Leaders do not attempt to align work to strategic objectives.	Leaders attempt to align work to strategic objectives.	Leaders deploy organizational strategic objectives and involve employees in the identification of needed actions.	Leaders deploy organizational strategic objectives, involve employees in the identification of needed actions, and create a system for the identification of innovation.
Performance evaluation	Leaders frequently round and visit work units for annual evaluations.	Leaders frequently round and visit work units a few times a year to evaluate performance.	Leaders frequently round and visit work units in order to effectively evaluate performance, listen, and provide positive feedback.	Leaders frequently round and visit work units in order to evaluate performance, listen, and provide accurate and timely feedback to all employees throughout the year. Rounding results are used to celebrate strong performance.

that are present between leaders with higher scores than those with lower scores; and (5) the determination of opportunities for improvement that exist for leaders who seek to improve their performance in any of the five components.

Implications

The proposed method for the design and measurement of organizational strategy, the performance-based rubric, requires a thoughtful examination of the existing practices organizational leaders use to develop and select strategic objectives and corresponding measures, and the extent to which traditional methods provide the level of information needed to make informed strategic and tactical decisions. Multiple implications present themselves for both organizational leaders and those interested in conducting further research.

Implications for Organizational Leaders

An opportunity exists for organizational leaders to develop and deploy an approach for the design of a strategic measurement system, also called “an action plan measurement system” (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2013a). The development of such a system may involve investigation into the measurement of constructs that have typically been considered “intangible” (Hubbard, 2010). Organizational leaders may choose to employ the process of decomposing that construct into observable things, classifying those things into a useful framework, creating and testing an instrument to affirm the causal model, and using the results to make critical decisions. By taking the time to identify the key components of the construct of interest, leaders may be better able to understand the actual strategy they are implementing (Patton, 2012), which may help avoid large logic leaps and contribute to better strategic decision making (Hatry, 2013).

When designing a new strategy, program, initiative, or other process, organizational leaders must consider developing better tools to enable them to measure the construct of the organizational strategy or program they are seeking to deploy. To do this, they may aggregate information from an internal stakeholder analysis, best practices in the field, and the literature to articulate the desired components of the program (such as the criteria that will serve as indicators of its proper deployment), and communicate these components to all relevant stakeholders who will use or make decisions about the sufficiency or effectiveness of the program or strategy (Andrade, 2000). Leaders can extend the rigor of this approach through the design and use of the performance-based rubric as a powerful tool to communicate, measure, and inform next steps the organization may need to take to reach its intended outcomes (Andrade, 2000; Dart et al., 1998; Davenport et al., 2010; White, 2005).

Implications for Further Research

Further research is needed in the investigation of the performance-based rubric as a useful tool for the measurement of programs and strategies. Researchers from all industries or sectors may partner with organizations to employ the performance-based rubric as part of their strategic measurement system, describe how those results are collected and used, and discuss what those results informed within and beyond the organization. Special descriptive studies may examine the usefulness, practicality, cost-efficiency, and feasibility of the performance-based rubric in informing and predicting overall outcomes. By developing case studies and exemplars of organizations that have employed the strategic measurement approach in their respective fields, academics may be able to support leaders in their efforts to select key performance measures that provide the greatest amount of information needed to manage and improve their organizations.

Conclusion

The purpose of this conceptual article is twofold: to discuss the current practices of organizational practitioners in the use of outcome results to inform strategic decisions and propose the use of the performance-based rubric as an alternative tool to measure the effectiveness, implementation, or deployment of the strategy or program intended to reach those outcomes. Analysis of the scholarly and scholar-practitioner literature revealed that it has been long understood that a reliance on outcomes alone to inform strategic decisions has been insufficient to support organizational leaders in their efforts to understand the antecedents to excellence (White, 2005) and those organizational actions that contribute to desirable or undesirable performance. By employing the performance-based rubric to clarify the critical components of organizational strategy, communicate those components to the workforce, and report results by each of those components, leaders may find it easier to demonstrate a connection between strategies and programs provided and overall organizational outcomes. Further research is needed to describe the impact of the use of the performance-based rubric on organizational thinking and decision making.

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