INSIGHT

Improving services – using information

Introduction

Using information is about understanding how the service is performing and deciding what to change, why and how.

It needs you to have the right information, in all parts of the service, to know if performance is going in the right direction. You might not have all the information you would like on day one but even simple insight, that does not require an IT system, will help you understand performance. You need to use that insight to decide what to change and how rather than reacting to one-off issues or individual opinions.

What are the benefits of getting this right?

- You measure what matters to people using the service.
- You have an evidence base on priority problems to fix.
- The measures help you predict performance and decide in real-time how to improve performance.
- The quality and efficiency of services improves as work is done right first time more often. Less rework means better service at lower cost.
- The service for users improves over time and meets your objectives more often too.

What are the consequences of getting this wrong?

- You will not know if you are doing a good job or not.
- A reactive 'firefighting' approach to using information that responds to perceived and real performance issues in the same way.
- A reliance on checking quality rather than improving quality.
- Process explosion – fixes on top of existing processes rather than addressing root causes.
- Deciding what to change and how based on people's opinion rather than evidence of the impact.

Explore our four insights on using information:

1. **Measures that matter** – You need to measure service performance based on what matters to the people who use it.
2. **Understanding reasons for performance** – You need to understand the reasons for process performance.
3. **Skills and support for decision-making** – Giving people providing services the skills to make decisions using performance information and supporting them to do it.
4. **Using information to improve** – Using information to improve service performance rather than just reporting.

Measures that matter

Designing user measures

Measuring diverse needs

Using your people's insight

You need to measure service performance based on what matters to the people who use it

Challenge 1: Designing your measures based on understanding what users need from the service

If you get this right: you measure what is important for service users and know if you are providing what they need right first time. Users get a better, more efficient service and you have fewer complaints. You will know if you must make trade-offs or manage expectations where you cannot meet users' needs.

What works well:

- Designing and improving the service based on evidence of what people expect from it and how they use it.
- Recognising the needs of the people using the service change so understanding what they need is not a 'once and done' exercise.
- Involving those who are closest to service users in designing measures – people working with users every day will know what matters to them.
- Asking users about what matters to them but also being clear when and why you decide not to meet those expectations.

Questions to ask

- How do we know that measures assess performance against users' expectations?
- How do we create and use insight on what matters to service users as part of forming objectives for the service?
- Is it clear how each measure matters to the people using the service – if not why are we measuring it?

Think about

- What matters for your organisation is not always what is most important for your user. Make sure there is a way to challenge your assumptions and test what is important for them.
- Whether you need more measures based on what users say is important for them.

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Case study

Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) Winter Fuel: using evidence of what customers want to quickly identify issues and improve service

Problem: The Winter Fuel payment was a new annual process that was set up by DWP to deliver a service to 11.5 million customers. In the first year, it was clear that there were some issues with the process which caused problems. For example, the notification letter was unclear about several points and customers were confused, such as relating to the phone details provided and who to contact, and who the payment was for (particularly when acting as power of attorney for multiple people). The issues triggered complaints and needed a dedicated team to respond to them.

Approach: Customer feedback was picked up by the Winter Fuel team within one to two days of the first tranche of notification letters being issued. Management team meetings were held to discuss opportunities to improve, based on evidence built up by capturing detail on the prevalence of issues. Discussions were held with G4S (who deal with customer enquiries) to understand issues, with daily sessions held to get real-time insight. Customer insight was also generated from the front line – by floor walking and talking with the people doing the work. The team took an incremental approach to identifying and fixing priority problems, which included updating the letter, and also updating the Interactive Voice Response messages on their helpline to address known issues. The digital team, customer insight team and the Winter Fuel team liaised and tested the changes before implementing them.

Benefit: The team was able to take action to change the letters and get a new notification out. DWP says that although 800,000 notifications had already been issued, by using the insight it meant that around 10.5 million customers had better-quality information. Because customers were clearer about the details, the amount of follow-up contact that DWP had to deal with reduced.

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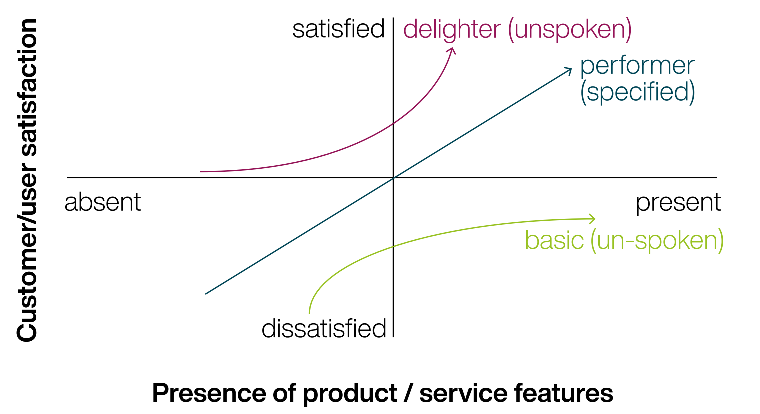
Kano analysis

Kano analysis is one of many techniques you can use for understanding and measuring what your users value in a product or service. It seeks to address the problem that what people using your service want is often unspoken. If you just ask people for general feedback on your service it is difficult to know what you can specifically do to improve it. There is a lot of important information that people will not tell you and you miss out on understanding the specific aspects that do or do not work for them.



Kano analysis helps you test a product or service's existing or potential features to understand whether people feel they are:

Basics: people just expect these features to be part of the service but will not necessarily tell you about them. If they are not present, people will be dissatisfied.

For example, it is unlikely that you would ask for a bed in a hotel room.

Performers: these features matter to people and they will tell you about them. If you provide these features it increases satisfaction with the service.

For example, you might ask for a hotel room on a high floor away from traffic.

Delighters: these are features which people do not know they want, but are delighted when the service provides them.

For example, you might not expect a free laundry service in your hotel – but you might be delighted if it is provided.

Keep in mind

- Do not assume you know the needs of all types of people using the service – what matters for one person can be different for another.
- Today's delighters and performers are tomorrow's performers and basics – this analysis is not a one-off exercise.
- Use these insights to identify natural groups and inform service design and performance measures for them.

Measures that matter

Keep in mind

- Different types of service user might find certain tasks more or less difficult.
- Identify what is important for people in how you provide the service and then measure it – use that to inform changes in how you do the work.

You need to measure service performance based on what matters to the people who use it

Challenge 1: Designing your measures based on understanding what users need from the service

Consumption mapping

Consumption mapping is one technique you can use for understanding what your users value in how you provide a product or service. It helps you identify what is good, bad, easy, frustrating or hard for them to do. Its focus is on their experience through the process rather than just whether the outcome is achieved.

Activity	Find guidance	Gather supporting documents	Complete application	Wait for decision	Receive decision
Duration for activity	1 hour	10 days	2 hours	3 weeks	5 minutes
User emotional experience	Frustrated	Unhappy	Neutral	Worried	Frustrated
Why	Difficult to find	Not clear what is needed	Simple online form	No communication – what is happening	Language and reasons for decision hard to understand

Every service requires users to complete tasks as part of the process – for example filling in an application form. Consumption mapping helps you understand users' experience of the service and the work they have to do.

A lot of the work they have to do is unseen. In consumption mapping you involve the people who use the service – it is a good way of getting to know what the service is really like for them. You get to see more than just your perspective as the provider of the service.

You can use the insight to measure what is important for the user.

In one example we discovered that the biggest frustration for people applying for a job with government is not knowing what is happening with their application. People get a bad impression of the organisation and assume their application is not successful.

The insight helped improve how people were kept informed of progress. New measures told the organisation if they were doing the things that mattered to applicants. They measured the impact of the new approach on retaining good candidates in the recruitment process.

Measures that matter

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Challenge 2: Ensuring measures are relevant to different types of users

If you get this right: you get a more rounded view of performance and you see impacts on all types of people using the service. Your measures help you identify problems and act when you are not providing a good service for specific groups of people.

What works well:

- Analysing performance data by type of user – recognising that measuring averages can hide differences in outcomes.
- Ensuring your measures help you know if new services and features work for all types of people who use the service.
- Adjusting your priority measure based on the needs of the person using the service – for example speed of service might be most important for simple requests, quality of service might be most important for more complex requests.

Questions to ask

- Do we make decisions based on knowing the actual or likely impact on different types of people using our service?
- Do our performance measures reflect how the full range of people using our services define good quality?
- Do all our people know what is important for our users and how we are measuring it?

Think about

- Some measures can mask poor performance. For example, dealing with 90% of applications in 10 days means that 10% of users miss out. This approach often adversely affects people with more complex and diverse needs as it is easier to serve people with simpler needs to meet the target.

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Case study

The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine in England (NHS England and NHS Improvement)

Problem: NHS England and NHS Improvement's (NHSE&I's) overall objective was to roll out COVID-19 vaccines safely and securely to the maximum number of eligible individuals within England. The COVID-19 vaccine rollout programme was one that had to be delivered with speed in a landscape of considerable uncertainty. The programme initially assumed that 75% of people would take up a COVID-19 vaccine offer; previous (non-COVID) vaccination programmes had shown that uptake varied for different groups and in complex ways.

Approach: NHSE&I combined pre-existing data (for example, GP and hospital patient data) with new data collected through the COVID-19 vaccination programme in real-time. It enabled daily analysis by the programme's leaders of vaccination delivery and uptake by site, region and local area, and individual characteristics such as ethnicity and priority groups for vaccination.

Benefit: Analysis of these data allowed both central and local bodies to understand quickly and in detail differences in uptake. The programme and other parts of government undertook a range of actions to try to increase uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations in different groups, such as producing a range of general and targeted material, sharing good practice between regions and local areas; and cross-government communication campaigns focused on groups that are more likely to be vaccine-resistant or hesitant. Inequalities persisted, but they could have been still greater if actions such as these had not been taken.

Source: The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination programme in England

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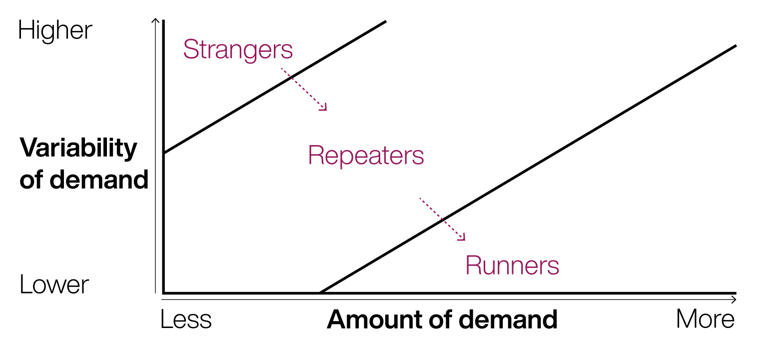
Challenge 2: Ensuring measures are relevant to different types of users

Avoid one size fits all measures

If you design your service and measures for simple cases, the **less common cases and users with more complex needs may experience poor-quality service**. You need a way to deal with variability in demand (see 'Avoid one size fits all' in our module on managing demand) and a way of measuring whether you are meeting their needs. One approach is adapting your measures for **'runners, repeaters and strangers'**.



It is important to have balanced measures but you might want more emphasis on some aspects for different types of demand.

Runners is the type of demand that varies the least, and is often the biggest proportion of total demand. The amount of demand can create a high pace of work to keep on top of it. Measuring the lead time it takes to complete work is important.

Repeaters is the type of demand that you will have seen before but less often. There is more variation in the characteristics of this type of demand and you need to know how those characteristics change what you need to do. You need to think about measuring what quality means for different users as well as output.

Strangers is the type of demand that you might not have seen before or when a user has complex characteristics and needs. Getting this type wrong can cause real problems for the service user, and effort for you, so focus on quality for this type of demand.

Keep in mind

- Very few users have 'average needs'. Using averages for performance measures hides that you are not meeting the needs of most users.
- Be wary of using percentage based service measures, such as completing 90% of service requests in 10 days. 10% of users will lose out – often those with the most complex needs.

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Challenge 3: Using insight from the people providing services to design your measures

If you get this right: you understand the diversity of user needs and can reduce the amount of rework you do to meet them. The people managing services can use insight from the people who work with users to inform what they measure. The focus is quality of service from a user's perspective rather than just what you can count, such as outputs produced.

What works well:

- Using the people who provide services day-to-day to tell you regularly what good looks like for users. They know what is important and are often the ones who deal with the fallout if you get it wrong.
- Getting beyond the user's 'heat of the moment' view on a service when seeking their input – instant opinion may not give you specific detail on what matters to them.

Questions to ask

- How often do we ask people providing the service what matters to the people who use it?
- When our service works well for people with complex needs, what is it that makes the difference – how might we measure that?

Think about

- Asking the people providing the service to attend management meetings and share insight on performance. Get their input in business unit, directorate or executive sessions and use it to inform which measures to keep, add or change.

Measures that matter

You need to measure service performance based on what matters to the people who use it

Challenge 3: Using insight from the people providing services to design your measures

Problem capture templates

Front-line staff are best placed to identify those issues which directly impact on the quality of service you provide to users. They can see what causes rework, delays and dissatisfaction. By capturing information on how often problems occur, and what the effects are, you can build evidence on the things you need to measure and see if changes work. You can also overcome only working on problems that the most senior person sees, or thinks are important.

Building evidence on problems helps you spend time fixing real issues. You can understand how often they occur and what the effect is – that might be cost, or time to do a workaround, or an impact on the person using the service. You can work out the benefit of fixing problems and use that to see if your solution makes a difference.

Capturing evidence can be as simple as a tally chart of how often something does not happen right first time. You can spot problems that do not happen often but have high impact, as well as those that happen a lot, and do not have much impact. These small problems can add up and become big issues over time.

The insight helps you understand the real consequences of problems. You can decide what to fix based on evidence rather than prioritising using perception.

Process area	Issue	Impact area – cost, delivery, quality, people	Tally of occurrences	Total number of occurrences	Effect/Effort to work around
Allocation	Request not for us	Quality – 2/10 not for us Delivery – takes effort to reassign, delay in response time for user People – frustrating!	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||	17	Have to find the right organisation to send the request to. Takes about 1 hour effort per request and typically 2 days to find the answer.

Keep in mind

- You can capture data on problems immediately. You do not need a sophisticated tool or approach to understand what stops you providing good service.
- Being clear on the consequence of the problem – the effort, time, cost or impact on service users – gets senior people interested in helping you to fix problems.

Understanding reasons for performance

You need to understand the reasons for process performance

Challenge 1: Measuring quality of process performance rather than just output

If you get this right: you will have a balanced set of measures which cover quality, delivery, cost and people. A focus on quality reduces 'failure demand' by helping you get work right first time more often and reduces rework effort and cost. You can spend more time providing the service and reduce additional work.

What works well:

- Making quality and good service your focus – moving away from just looking at output numbers.
- Reviewing and updating performance measures regularly, including stopping those that do not inform decisions or help you understand 'why'.

Questions to ask

- Do our teams across all parts of the end-to-end process have measures that cover quality, delivery, cost and people?
- Which of these do we spend most time talking about in our performance discussions?

Think about

- Using balanced measures, which include the quality of what you do, not just how many, how quickly and at what cost, is important for judging performance and deciding what to change.
- Focusing on quality will lead to improvements in cost and delivery, but a primary focus on cost or delivery will not improve quality.

Understanding reasons for performance

Ensuring balanced measures

Measuring quality to improve

Predicting performance

Keep in mind

- Test how balanced your current measures are across quality, delivery, cost and people – where do you need more focus?
- Do a simple check of your current measures to see if you have the right balance between lead and lag.

You need to understand the reasons for process performance

Challenge 1: Measuring quality of process performance rather than just output

Balanced measures

Measures must be **balanced** to understand and improve process performance.

Organisations are often tempted to focus their measures on **delivery** (How many have we done, how quickly have we done it?) and **cost** (How much does it cost us to deliver the service?).

Measures of **quality** force you to think about how often you are delivering what is needed 'right first time' at every stage of a process. Counterintuitively, a focus on quality also helps you perform better against delivery and cost measures. Your people spend less time and money on rework, getting additional information, or workarounds to fix problems with quality. It also improves the overall experience for the people using the service. A focus on quality measures is a good place to start.

Quality	Delivery
Cost	People

Understanding how the **people** working in the process feel is also important. People measures can provide early warning of potential issues or help explain service performance (for example, staff absence levels, investment in learning and development).

As well as backward-looking **lag measures** to report performance, balanced measures also need to include **lead measures** that help you predict, and do something about performance ahead of time. How many applications you processed last week is a lag measure. Measuring if you receive all the information you need to process an application is a lead measure that tells you whether you are likely to meet a deadline.

Use the structure below to check if your current measures are balanced:

Measure category	Lead (tells you if you are likely to achieve your goal)	Lag (tells you if you have achieved your goal)	Total
Quality	Number of measures?	Number of measures?	
Delivery	Number of measures?	Number of measures?	
Cost	Number of measures?	Number of measures?	
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Total			

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Challenge 2: Measuring quality throughout the end-to-end process

If you get this right: you will understand whether you are meeting expectations of service quality for people within and outside your organisation. You can track and act on problems in the process as they occur and provide a better service at lower cost.

What works well:

- Using an approach to quality that spots issues when they happen throughout the process rather than checking outputs at the end.
- Ensuring that what good looks like is clear for everyone working in the end-to-end service. Guidance, requirements and checklists should help people spot, investigate and fix any deviations.
- Tracking the quality of inputs from users – what is it telling you if customers are not giving you the information that you need?
- Collecting data on rework, including responding to complaints, to identify and fix the causes.

Questions to ask

- Do we know who else is involved in providing the end-to-end service and what they need from us to do a good job?
- How quickly do we need to know there is a problem with quality?
- Do data flow in real-time so everyone can identify service problems quickly enough?

Think about

- Defining what you require in each part of the service (what, when, where, how often, to what standard) and then measuring the quality of hand-offs between different people. Assuming what people need, and getting it wrong, can cause rework, backlogs and cost elsewhere.

Understanding reasons for performance

You need to understand the reasons for process performance

Challenge 2: Measuring quality throughout the end-to-end process

Quality of input, process and output

Measuring performance at the end of a process tells you whether or not something has been achieved – but not why or where there are problems. By measuring the quality of input, quality of process and quality of output, all the way through, at each process step, rather than just at the end of the process, you get more detailed information on where there are issues and what needs to change.

Measure quality at each step of the end-to-end process. You will identify where and how often problems occur, and where and how the impact of that is felt. You can then prioritise fixing those that are causing you the most pain. You might measure:

1) Quality of input:

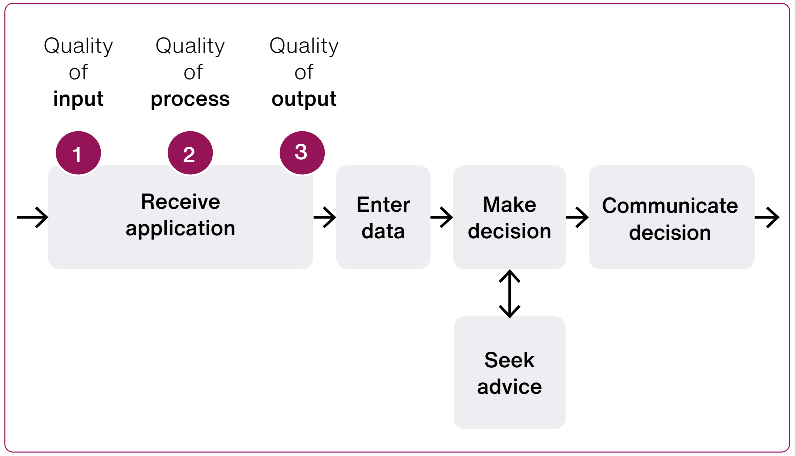
- Is it clear what I need to carry out my part of the process and when?
- How often do I get what I need in order to carry out my part of the process right first time?

2) Quality of process:

- Are we following the expected process?
- Is it producing the expected outputs?

3) Quality of output:

- Is it clear what the next person in the process needs from me, and when?
- How often do I give the next person in the process what they need in order to do their part right first time?



Keep in mind

- You do not need an IT system to measure quality – a simple approach can reveal if there are issues to investigate.
- It is easier to measure quality if you agree what good looks like in the first place – particularly between process steps done by different teams or across organisation boundaries.

Understanding reasons for performance

You need to understand the reasons for process performance

Challenge 3: Designing measures and using insight to help you predict service performance

If you get this right: you can act ahead of time to meet performance expectations rather than reacting to problems after they occur. Your data help you meet performance expectations, or know why you missed them, reducing the need for 'deep dive' investigations to tell you why things went wrong.

What works well:

- Building measures to track progress through the process to predict if you will meet service objectives, such as completing work in a certain number of days.
- Understanding if changes in policy, ways of working or external factors might impact future performance by working with other teams in the end-to-end service.
- Ensuring you understand what impacts your capacity and capability to provide the service, such as changes in demand, and the number of people who know how to do the work.
- Using insights from analysing trends over time to decide if you need to respond to changes in performance – not just comparing day to day, week to week, or this month versus last month.

Questions to ask

- What data do we need to identify emerging problems – and what is the consequence if we do not have it?
- Can everyone working in the service see how we are performing so they can do something about it?

Think about

- How often you need to talk to people in other parts of your organisation so that you know how their changes affect what you need to do.

Understanding reasons for performance

You need to understand the reasons for process performance

Challenge 3: Designing measures and using insight to help you predict service performance

Case study

Department for Education (DfE): expected timeliness

Problem: Delays in the Parliamentary Questions (PQs) process were reducing the amount of time that ministers had to clear responses before the deadline. Approximately 10–20% of PQs were going up to ministers later than the DfE's processes specified, especially named-day PQs.

This had a significant impact – if PQs were sent to ministers after the time specified by the internal targets, it greatly increased the chances of those PQs missing the deadline. It also had an impact on the relationship with Private Office, who had to reprioritise the minister's workload to try to get timely clearance. Private Office was citing this as an issue causing lower timeliness, and DfE was keen to identify management information that could give a clearer indication of exactly where the delays in the process were occurring.

Approach: One of the team looked at the data in DfE's case management system to see if they could spot patterns as to at what stage a PQ was being delayed. They looked at what percentage of cases hit their particular stage gates through the process on time, notably the draft receipt deadlines. Most illustratively, they also developed an internal metric called 'expected timeliness'. This meant that if a draft went to a minister by a particular time, they could track whether it would be expected to be returned on time, and could track performance internally against this.

Benefit: The stage gate measures meant that the team could identify particular policy teams that were not getting drafts back on time and use this to target training, which included emphasis on the importance of timeliness. The expected timeliness measure is also used internally by the team to identify any ministers or Private Offices that it may want to offer any assistance to in order to improve timeliness. The team says this also provided additional strength to its ability to report and hold to account by highlighting gaps between actual and potential performance levels.

Understanding reasons for performance

You need to understand the reasons for process performance

Challenge 3: Designing measures and using insight to help you predict service performance

Case study

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC): using information to predict customer contact levels

Problem: When HMRC makes certain announcements or undertakes certain activities it will lead to an increase in customer contacts – for example, when tax codes are changed. This can result in peaks of demand, and if the capacity is not there to meet it, there will be an increase in how long service users have to wait to speak to someone to resolve an issue.

Approach: HMRC has come up with a mechanism for understanding the relationship between its change announcements and level of customer contacts, based on its understanding of its customer base and behaviour. It uses this 'customer contact ratio' model to make resource allocation decisions. HMRC's operational decisions about, for example, how many tax codes to release, the types of code to release and at what time of the year, are based on its understanding of the different characteristics of its customer base and how each group is likely to interact with its call centre.

Benefit: HMRC says that without using information in this way, it would be unable to plan its resources to meet demand, and to ensure that available resources are prioritised appropriately. The customer contact ratio forecast enables HMRC to better handle customer contact demand peaks by spreading them out over time. HMRC says this provides staff with a more manageable workload and thereby increases morale, and also improves customer satisfaction in the contact centre due to lower call waiting times.

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Challenge 3: Designing measures and using insight to help you predict service performance

Lead versus lag

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Skills and support for decision-making

Skills for using data

Supporting people

Tools and ways of working

Giving people the skills to make decisions using performance information and supporting them to do it

Challenge 1: Giving people the skills they need to use data and performance information

If you get this right: people managing services have the skills to analyse service performance. They can identify and respond to different types of problems effectively, reducing effort by not reacting to every change in performance. You will know what skills people in different roles need to use data effectively and have ways to plug gaps.

What works well:

- Helping people use data to decide whether and how to respond to changes in service performance.
- Using a skills matrix to spot who needs support or training, or where there are gaps to fill.
- Being clear about who is best placed to analyse performance data, and ensuring no duplication of effort.
- Making sure people can get help quickly if they do not have the capability to analyse data themselves.

Questions to ask

- Are we giving our people managing services the capabilities they need – including how to design effective measures, manipulate data and understand variation in performance?
- Is capability to use performance information given the same importance in the organisation as capability to process user requests?

Think about

- Not everyone needs all analytical capabilities but think about what everyone needs to know so they can have conversations about what the performance information is telling them.

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Skills and support for decision-making

Skills for using data

Supporting people

Tools and ways of working

Keep in mind

- You need reliable, quality data to give you meaningful insights on process variation – is your process measurement approach up to the job?

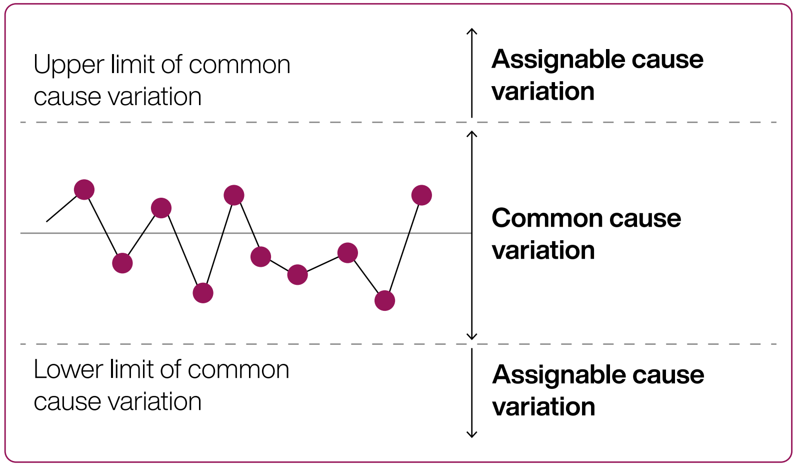
Giving people the skills to make decisions using performance information and supporting them to do it

Challenge 1: Giving people the skills they need to use data and performance information

Statistical process control

Statistical process control is one way of taking an evidenced approach to understanding and improving service performance. It uses data to track variation in process performance, and a set of rules to identify the likely reasons. It helps you understand what type of change is needed for different causes of variation in process performance, and whether your changes make a difference. Organisations that get this right spend less time reacting to unimportant variation in performance – who in your team needs this skill?

At its simplest, statistical process control will tell you whether variation in performance is due to **common causes** or **assignable causes**.



Common cause variation in process performance is natural variation between calculated upper and lower limits. Improving performance for this type of variation typically requires you to change what you do or how you do it.

> For example, the time it takes you to cycle to work will vary day-to-day based on the weather and traffic. Improving the time it takes you to cycle to work (the 'process performance') requires a redesign of how you do the process – perhaps the route that you cycle.

Assignable cause variation in process performance is often due to a specific unexpected factor. One example of assignable cause variation is process performance that is outside the upper or lower limits of common cause variation. When you spot an assignable cause you can investigate and remove it to bring performance back to common cause variation.

> For example, a puncture in your tyre could be a special cause that increases the time it takes you to cycle to work. You might remove that special cause by deciding to use a different type of tyre that does not puncture.

The NHS has a number of good resources on applying statistical process control. You can read more here.

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Skills and support for decision-making

Skills for using data

Supporting people

Tools and ways of working

Giving people the skills to make decisions using performance information and supporting them to do it

Challenge 2: Supporting people to use data effectively

If you get this right: you create a working environment that encourages openness, curiosity, innovation, and challenges current thinking. People see problems with the service as opportunities to learn, rather than something to hide or use to blame others.

What works well:

- Giving people the time to design, review and use performance information as part of their daily work.
- Using insights from complaints as a way to learn at all levels of the organisation.
- Making it the norm that people point out problems and discuss performance.
- Encouraging people to ask users what is and is not going well for them.

Questions to ask

- How many of our conversations are about changes that will affect future service performance?
- Is it easy for us to get the information we need about performance from people in other parts of the service?
- Do the development and appraisal conversations in our team align with the goal of learning and improving service performance?

Think about

- Encouraging people to think about quality of service, learning, or the end users' perspectives. Team discussions and requests for information need to be about more than just the amount of work done.

Skills and support for decision-making

Giving people the skills to make decisions using performance information and supporting them to do it

Challenge 2: Supporting people to use data effectively

Service performance discussions

It is easy to say that what matters most is our users' needs. But is that backed up by the way in which you measure service performance and the discussions that you have every day about how things are going? If what people say is important is different to what they do, value or reward day-to-day, it will be the daily behaviours that inform how the service is provided and the experience of users.

w/c 10/7	Projected intake	Actual intake	Cleared	Work on hand
Monday	7	13	6	220
Tuesday	7	7	0	227
Wednesday	7	6	3	230
Thursday	7	5	4	231
Friday	7	4	4	231
Saturday	7	2	0	233
Total	**42**	**37**	**17**	**233**

Think about the measures that you use in your team. What impact do they have on what people talk about with each other and your improvements to services?

The example in the picture is common in government organisations – team performance boards that track how much work was expected to come in, how much was done, and how much is being worked on.

The consequence? People talk about output produced. They ask why performance is better or worse than the previous day and provide guesses or opinions at best rather than having evidence and data. Discussions focus on what has happened.

A more forward-looking approach encourages discussion on what you can improve. For example, discussing quality through the process helps you understand what is happening that will affect future service performance. You can talk as a team about ideas for change.

See our practical tips on balanced measures, lead versus lag, and quality of input, process and output for ideas on how to build better data to support forward-looking conversations.

Keep in mind

Check your next discussion about service performance. How much time do you spend on the following:

- Talking about outputs produced versus discussing quality?
- Hearing opinions about problems versus discussing data and reasons for process performance?
- Agreeing what your priority issues are to fix and why?

Skills and support for decision-making

Skills for using data

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Tools and ways of working

Giving people the skills to make decisions using performance information and supporting them to do it

Challenge 3: Ensuring ways of working provide the performance information you need

If you get this right: your ways of working provide the information you need to run the end-to-end service. You will think about the tools you can use, and how to spot problems and identify improvements. You know what is happening elsewhere in the end-to-end service and can make decisions that benefit end users.

What works well:

- Aiming for one version of the truth – all teams involved in providing the service can access and update IT systems to produce a shared view on performance and next steps.
- Having the ability to cut and interrogate data in different ways to identify themes and new insights.
- Using process analysis tools to identify blockages in the end-to-end service that cause delays and rework.

Questions to ask

- What can we do to help data flow transparently and in real-time across the organisation to allow all to identify service problems quickly enough?

Think about

- Sophisticated tools and data analysis will not always tell you the ‘why’ behind service performance. You need to delve deeper and understand ‘what cannot be counted’, such as the specific challenges for people with diverse or complex service needs if you are to know how to help them.

Skills and support for decision-making

Keep in mind

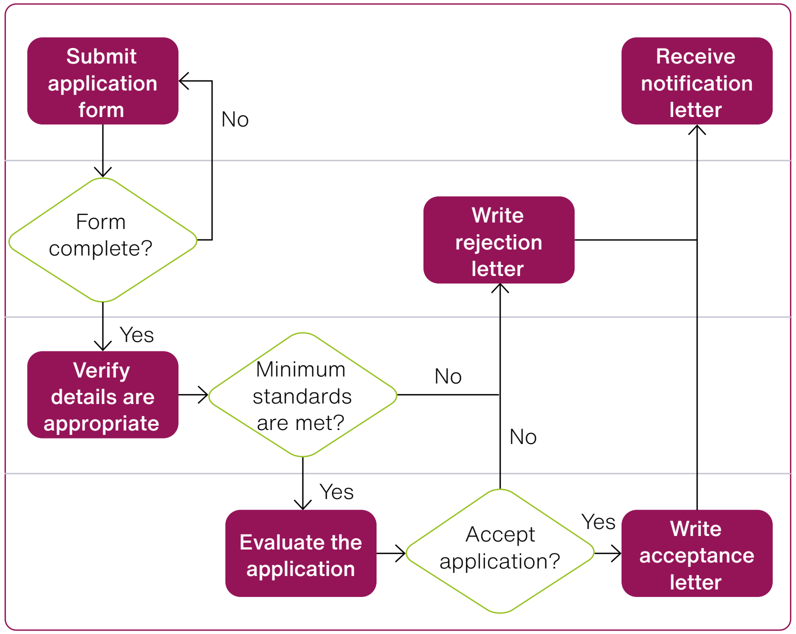
- You may not be able to do process mining yourself – but you can ask if someone in your organisation has the capability to do it.

Giving people the skills to make decisions using performance information and supporting them to do it

Challenge 3: Ensuring ways of working provide the performance information you need

Process mining

Process mining is an analytical technique that can help provide performance information to identify potential improvements. It gives you an evidence-based view of what is happening within a process, based on data collected by your IT system. It enables you to see how pieces of work flow through the service, and identify problems and bottlenecks.



There are three minimum data requirements to enable process mining:

- **Case identifiers:** A unique label which identifies each time someone used the service – for example, an application number.
- **Time stamps:** A way of recording when an action has taken place.
- **Activity markers:** Markers associated with recognisable process steps. Using the example on this page, 'Verify details are appropriate' would be one of the activities for this service.

Process mining can help you answer a range of questions:

- Does the service really flow as we expect it to?
- Are there bottlenecks or single points of failure?
- How long does the service take to complete, or to reach a specific stage?
- How much complexity and variability is there in terms of how requests flow through the service?
- How long do requests remain between stages –that is, where it has finished one stage but not yet started another?
- How often do cases return to earlier stages – for example, following quality assurance?

Overview

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Using information to improve

Use information to improve service performance rather than just reporting

Challenge 1: Getting the right information to the right people at the right time

If you get this right: people have the information they need to do their jobs and it is relevant to their role. People managing a service day-to-day have different information to those responsible for a business unit or organisation. Everyone knows when their information shows that they need to escalate a service problem.

What works well:

- Monitoring trends and managing service performance at different levels – from teams to business units.
- Collecting data through the process rather than after you have completed it so all new work benefits from that insight.
- Adjusting frequency of reporting based on the amount of work done and the effect on users if you get it wrong – from real-time through to daily, weekly, or monthly cycles.
- Putting in place a way for people to raise problems so that everyone can see them, and get help from senior people when it is needed.

Questions to ask

- How do measures link between different levels of the organisation?
- Does everyone know how to get problems about services to the people that need to know?

Think about

- Do you have the information you need to understand the performance of your part of the service?
- Deciding how often to report performance based on the impact on users of getting the service wrong. Do not report just for reporting's sake.

Using information to improve

Use information to improve service performance rather than just reporting

Challenge 1: Getting the right information to the right people at the right time

Right information for the purpose at different levels

The information you need to understand and manage a service is not the same information you need to manage an organisation. The information needs to be appropriate for the service and work you do. Think about and use what is right for you – just copying what another service, team or organisation uses might not give you the information you need to understand where things are working or where there are problems with your service.

What might you want insight on to understand how you and your team are doing?

Think about the kind of information you need to improve the service and how you might generate that insight routinely. For example, how to understand...

Keep in mind

- Are you collecting the information to manage the service or just to report upwards?
- How many of your measures are based on your knowledge of what your user needs from the service?

Using information to improve

Right information, right time

Adjusting measures

Sharing insight

Forward look

Use information to improve service performance rather than just reporting

Challenge 2: Adjusting performance measures for different circumstances

If you get this right: you measure what is important for the current service context and your users. You stop measures that encourage you to work in a way that has a negative impact on users. You revisit measures such as service level agreements, measuring what matters most for users rather than what you first agreed to or can measure.

What works well:

- Reviewing performance measures regularly. Stop using measures if they do not inform decision-making.
- Users' needs can change. Review targets and measures so they remain relevant to what users want.

Questions to ask

- When did we last check our understanding of what matters for our users?
- Are we clear on why we use each measure – do they trigger conscious decisions on why, what and how to change the service?
- How easy is it to change what we measure?

Think about

- Look at your performance packs from one, two and three years ago. How similar or different are they? If they have not changed, think about why and how you know that your measures are still important for users.

Using information to improve

Right information, right time

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Sharing insight

Forward look

Use information to improve service performance rather than just reporting

Challenge 2: Adjusting performance measures for different circumstances

Keeping your measures relevant

Reviewing and updating your measures regularly helps ensure you are looking at what matters to your users. You will be able to decide how to change the service in ways that will make a difference for them. It is easy to create a performance report and produce it every week without questioning why or how each measure helps you decide what to do differently. Spend time checking which of your measures you use.

Check your measures:

1) How many tell you about what is important for users?

Focus	Coverage
User need	Number of measures?
Organisation interest	Number of measures?
Wider stakeholder	Number of measures?

2) Do you know why the measure is important for service users?

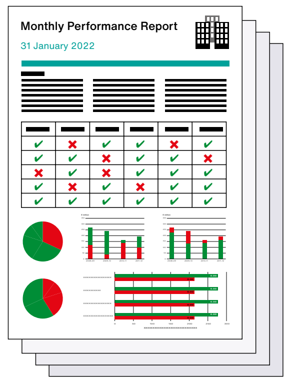
This year's targets:

Must achieve
90% in 10 days

Why does 10 days matter to service users?

Why is meeting 10% of users' needs not important?

3) Clarity – large performance packs that measure everything create noise and effort



Keep in mind

- If your measures have not changed in a while, do you know they still reflect what your users need?
- How many of your measures are for one-off requests that you still produce routinely but never use?
- The effort to produce your measures needs to be worth the type of decisions you make with them.

Using information to improve

Right information, right time

Adjusting measures

Sharing insight

Forward look

Use information to improve service performance rather than just reporting

Challenge 3: Sharing information to identify and fix service problems

If you get this right: you address the root causes of service problems. Your fixes address the reasons why problems occur, wherever that is in the end-to-end service, rather than just dealing with the symptoms in your part.

What works well:

- Talking to people in other parts of the service about what is working and is not. Start to explore the 'why' behind performance and learn from each other.
- Having ways to share data on service problems with other parts of your organisation – or with other organisations – so that problems are fixed where they happen.
- Valuing the insight from complaints – tell people providing services how complaints have been used to improve so they are seen as something to share rather than hide.

Questions to ask

- Does everyone across our organisation see the data they need on real-time performance so they can spot problems and act on it?
- Do our ways of working help us escalate problems quickly to the people that can decide what to do about them?

Think about

- People providing services know most about day-to-day problems. Make sure they know what problems they can fix themselves and when to involve other people.
- Sharing data with people in other parts of the end-to-end service to see how your work has an impact on others and make informed choices about what to change.

Using information to improve

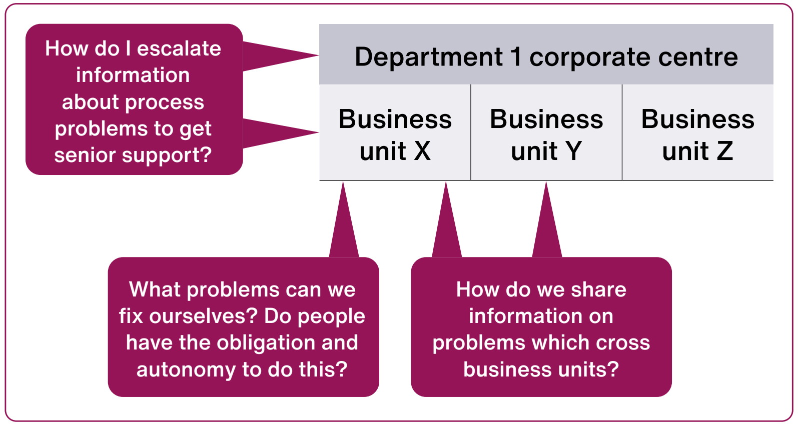
Use information to improve service performance rather than just reporting

Challenge 3: Sharing information to identify and fix service problems

Whose job is it to fix problems?

Providing clarity on 'how problems are solved round here' makes it more likely that people will do it. Ensure people know the boundaries for what they can fix themselves, and who they need to collaborate with on wider issues or when they need to escalate problems. For example, just get on with fixing problems that have no knock-on impact outside your team. Ensure that mechanisms exist for them to share information on process problems with those who need to be aware of them – whether through regular dialogue or established communication channels.

In this example, staff working in Business unit X are considering how they can fix their process problems.



Keep in mind

- Be clear on what people can just get on and do when it comes to fixing problems.
- Well known routes need to exist to share information with other parts of the end-to-end process, and for escalating problems.

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Challenge 4: Using performance information to identify improvement opportunities

If you get this right: you think about how to fix problems and improve future performance, rather than simply reporting or justifying past performance. Everyone is clear about your priorities for improving and people use that to change how they provide services.

What works well:

- Ensuring people have the time to review and discuss service performance. Make sure people are given time to work on improvements for the issues they identify.
- Everyone knows what the priorities are for improving performance.

Questions to ask

- Do we talk openly and regularly about how we are doing on the measures that matter for our service users?

Think about

- Get people talking in team meetings about how to improve quality and share learning. Focus on what matters for service users.
- How much time do you spend in performance meetings talking about what you did and why compared with the time you spend on what you will do and how?

Using information to improve

Right information, right time

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Forward look

Keep in mind

- Understand the relationship between your objectives. Improvement activity targeted at one objective may have an impact on the others – positive or negative.

Use information to improve service performance rather than just reporting

Challenge 4: Using performance information to identify improvement opportunities

Clear priorities for improvement

Capturing information on process problems and their impact is a great start, but without everyone having clarity around how to prioritise them you may not improve as much or as quickly as you want.

Having information on which problems are having the biggest effect on your key priorities for improvement will ensure the time you set aside for process improvement activity will have the most impact.

What are your priority problems to fix?

Issue logs

Do people have a way of routinely capturing problems as they occur?

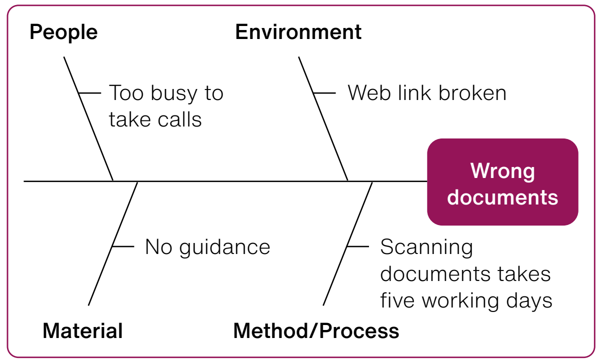
Issue	Effect	Number of occurences
Application arrives without correct supporting documents	**Quality:** Have to contact customer and explain, which annoys them **Delivery:** Can take another few days	4 this week
System crashes when uploading documents	**Delivery:** Takes five minutes to reboot **People:** Frustrating!	10 this week

Key priority for improvement

Are people clear on what the priority problems are to fix?

Problem-solving activity

Are people trained in problem-solving approaches relevant to their role?



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