Managing By Metrics

Charlie Armstrong
Chief Information Officer (retired)
US Customs & Border Protection
Department of Homeland Security

In what seems like the long ago pre-pandemic past — when your staff was able to get together physically — you could actually do a lot of "sausage making" in these meetings because you were together, you had more time and you were able to read the room's body language.

Contrast that with today's very different operating environment where the reality is 30-60 minute intervals on Zoom rather than being in person. The importance of being clear and concise is paramount.

The reality of today's remote Zoom environment is there is a time crunch. Leaders need to be more organized than ever about what they really want to convey and focus on with their leadership when making decisions.

Plus leaders need to do all that in the context of being a good listener while getting feedback from their management. Then they take that information and build their strategy before talking with their off-premise customers — once again remotely. In some cases, for example at CBP, management must reach officers and agents who are out their with "boots on the ground" doing the day-to-day work.

So, the in-person morning shift meeting to disseminate the information of the day is now done through electronic media (Zoom) instead of doing an in-person stand up in the morning at the beginning of the shift.

And that is the real challenge especially for CIOs and those in technology leadership. How do you really stay in lock step with what their needs are? How do they they align with their leadership? How do they move the workforce forward on delivering on what those expectations are?

The reality is there is going to be a lot more of managing by metrics because you are not going to be able to talk to people and find out "how did it go?".

With more focus on metrics and results, budgets will be affected going forward. The better the metrics, the better the results, the more likely you will be able to get or retain budget in the future.

Management by metrics could also affect an agencies ability to get TMF (Technology Management Fund) funding for modernization projects, which is based on past performance and what they were able to deliver.

No one wants to give $30 million to an agency that under performs and doesn't have a lot of chance of delivering. So agency IT leaders want to make sure their performance scores are up to par so they qualify for funding.

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The Workforce Mental State

It's unfortunate, but a lot of techies would rather interact with a machine than a person. But that doesn't mean that everyone is happy and healthy.

Use the annual employee surveys to take the pulse of the workforce in real time. Learn not only how the work is going, but how is their mental state. Employee assistance — through counseling and other services — is critical to fostering a good environment outside of work. Outside issues impact the ability to do the work. So make sure those kinds of programs are in place and you are reaching out to people if they

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need counseling or other assistance.

Shifting Priorities

With every change in administrations there are some shifts in priorities. For this administration healthcare and stimulus are the first priorities. So we need to make sure that agencies and companies that are part of these efforts are funded. Then we need to track what these entities are doing to make sure they are doing what they are supposed too. That way as audits occur downstream, leaders will be able to measure how well those initiatives did and it also will help inform future leaders in their decision making. Concurrently, leaders are really going to have to pay attention to cybersecurity. Bake cybersecurity policies and tools into the core planning, strategic processes and product purchases. Don't bolt cybersecurity on afterwards; that leads to vulnerabilities and the dreaded hack. ■