Hurdles Between Measuring Performance And Using Data For Performance-oriented Public Management

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Introduction To This Study

Well-acknowledged benefit of public performance measurement & widespread practice of collecting performance measures

Discrepancy between having a performance measurement system and effectively using performance information toward the improved public management

A need to identify issues that create such a gap between measuring performance and actually enjoying its benefit

Use of “open-ended survey” to find challenges commonly recognized by public officials
Well-embraced Idea

Well-acknowledged benefit of public performance measurement & widespread practice of collecting performance measures

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Use of “open-ended survey” to find challenges commonly recognized by public officials

- Extant studies show that **performance measurement has been widely embraced** by state and local governments (Sanger, 2008; Melkers & Willoughby; 2005, Julnes & Holzer; 2001, Berman & Wang; 2000, Poister & Streib; 1999).

- Behn (2003) identifies the diverse purposes of measuring performance; to “**evaluate, control, budget, motivate, promote, celebrate, learn, and improve**” public performance.

- Executives and managers are accountable and thus benefit the public with the **effective & efficient** provision of public service and management (Julnes & Holzer, 2001; Behn, 2003; Ammons, 1997) ->>> **restore citizen trust** (Yang & Holzer, 2006).
Discrepancy

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- **Strong and sustained leadership** (Sanger, 2008; Melkers & Willoughby, 2005)
- **Support from top management** (Julnes & Holzer; 2001)
- **Presence of bureaucratic competence and expertise** (Bourdeaux & Chikoto, 2008)
- **Politically adept public organizations** (Berman & Wang; 2000)
- **Political context of performance measurement** (Jennings & Haist; 2004)
Discrepancy

- **Well-acknowledged benefit of public performance measurement & widespread practice of collecting performance measures**
- **Discrepancy between having a performance measurement system and effectively using performance information toward the improved public management**
- **A need to identify issues that create such a gap between measuring performance and actually enjoying its benefit**
- **Use of “open-ended survey” to find challenges commonly recognized by public officials**

- **Adequate resources for the purposeful use of performance data** (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2009; Sanger, 2008; Julnes & Holzer, 2001)
- **Size and the level of government** (Bourdeauz & Chikoto, 2008; Moynihan & Ingraham, 2004; Julnes & Holzer, 2001)
- **Formal procedure for employee learning** (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2009)
- **Internal requirement for the use** (Julnes & Holzer, 2001)
- **Inclusion of organizational members in the process of performance measurement system** (Melkers & Willoughby, 2005)
A Need for This Study

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Use of “open-ended survey” to find challenges commonly recognized by public officials
Data and Methodology

- **Data:** Online survey (by the National Center for Public Performance/School of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers, in collaboration with GovPerformance)

- **Survey Instrument:** 2 closed-ended questions & 4 open-ended questions, using online survey tool: SurveyMonkey™

- **Sample:**
  - City, township, and county managers and clerks in the state of New Jersey + Public Performance Measurement and Reporting Network (PPMRN) members (4,175 individuals)
  - Invitation sent via email in April 2012, 258 individuals participated for 16 days

- **Pros and Cons of “Online & Open-ended questionnaire”:**
  - The survey data innately require more intensive and thorough review on each answer. Yet, it is expected to render the closer & holistic reflection of the real world challenging issues. The survey data endorse the superiority in terms of its breadth as well as depth of the responses.
Survey Questions

**Open-ended questions**
1. The real-world effect(s) from using performance information
2. Difficulty in using performance information that program managers, administrators, policy makers, and elected officials experience at their government
3. Difficulty to sustain performance information system
4. Significant opposition to the use of performance information
Results: Difficulty in Using Data Into Management

Rational/Technocratic Factors
- Lack Of Knowledge/Capacity
- Measurement Challenge
- Data Reliability
- Challenge Of Comparable Data
- Resource Scarcity

Cultural/Political Factors
- Lack Of Understanding
- Political Circumstances And Elected Officials’ Turnover
- Absence Of Champion
- Perverse Effects Of Resource Allocation
- Resistance To Change
- Other Cultural Issues
Cultural/Political Factors

- The value of “buy-in” from each level of constituents
- Perspective that views PM as an “additional” duty that does not contribute to getting the “real jobs” done
- “Legacy programs” are not subject to results-based evaluation
- “Doing what seems right or most effective” given political considerations
- Politicization or cherry-picking data corroborates the skepticism and resistance
- Half-hearted leadership or absence of strong manpower encouraging the use of the system into management

“Data often does not trump culture (we’ve always done it that way) or instinct (I just feel this is the right way to go). Change is very difficult.”
Rational/Technocratic Factors

- “Our state agencies have very little capacity for data analysis or even data collection.”

- “Most people do not even understand how performance is being measured and trying to communicate this simply and directly is difficult. So, in the end, there is no clarity about what is being measured.”

- “Metrics are flawed or not believed and people rely on instinct when data conflicts with decisions. Thus, performance measurement system is more window dressing than an actual management tool, overly complex and too bureaucratic.”
Rational/Technocratic Factors

- “Developing and tracking meaningful performance measures without significantly increasing workload is a challenge.”
- “Time spent gathering and understanding results data means less for service delivery and related paperwork to meet federal and state funding requirements.”
- A big challenge recently expressed by our management team was that too much information is collected diluting the impact of the necessary or critical information.”
“We've tried to use performance measures that compare us to other cities around the nation, but found that there are too many variables to get a true picture of how our community stacks up against neighboring cities.”

“Not everyone speak this language, and we don’t have a standard set of tools to collect, analyze and present the data.”

“The biggest concern is the data used to provide/comprise performance information is often non-uniform/unstandardized to compare to similar data from other agencies/organizations.”
Sustainability of Results-based Performance System

**Q. If the government you have been associated/familiar with has established a results-based performance information system, has it been difficult to sustain? If so, why?**

“I would say it is less opposition and more like fatigue, a desire for more common expectations, a set of useful and practical tools. People want to support the performance management agenda in my government but the goal posts keep moving and they don't feel that we are stable long enough to track and improve upon a set of key metrics,” said one survey respondent.
**Status of Results-oriented Performance Measurement**

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<td>Internal &amp; External requirements</td>
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Limitations of This Study

- **Self-reported survey** responses

- **Self-selected group** of participants with motivations and distinct characteristics and each belonging to various governments

- **Open-ended questions**: responses were relatively lengthy and participants often went into great detail—require rigorous examination and coding process.
Next Steps

- **Educate** public employees about the value of measuring performance and using the data
- **Train** public employees on how to use performance measurement systems
- **Address the skepticism** toward the reliability of data
- **Have accurate and up-to-date measurement criteria** that closely reflect the actual performance
- **Cultivate culture** that embraces risks and well-conceived failures
- **Build administrative stability** for performance measurement
- **Create innovative ways** of acquiring necessary financial and human resources
Thank you!

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