

Evaluating Logistics Outcomes

Controls are normally put in place to monitor weaknesses, poor designs in projects and improper implementation of programs. Based on the evaluation of outcomes, these weaknesses or shortfalls against targets or objectives set can be corrected or revised in order to continually improve performance.

Each evaluation must be carried out against a pre-established goal that defines not only what is the desired outcome of an intervention, but also the process and needs to achieve it. An evaluation exercise consists of defining the degree of achievement and examining how well or poorly the activities performed have led to those results.

Logistics Strategy

To ensure planned objectives are accomplished, a logistics unit or team should come up with a strategy that will address challenges and guide the teams towards their goals. Organizations should always seek to optimize use of resources to ensure efficient implementation of activities.

Based on analysis and aligned with the general goals of the project, a logistics team or unit should establish its own ultimate goal or goals that will prioritize operational tasks.

Objectives and Key Results

Objectives and key results function as a “road map” to guide the teams to a defined goal. Objectives should be formulated as the desired concrete outcomes, expressed as a positive change expected to be achieved after a defined period and in response to identified challenges. The objectives are reached through the combination of the results that are the effects of the activities.

An objective usually has two to three key results for the same reasons that a GPS device needs two to three satellites to accurately pinpoint a location. Each key result is designed to positively impact a certain metric, remove ambiguity by clarifying and quantifying what success for any given objective looks like, and help measure progress towards that objective.

The composition of a key result looks similar to a KPI, except that a key result includes a timeframe as a starting and target point.

A key result consists of the following components:

- **Identified Metric and Ongoing Value** - Anything the organization measures is a metric and the ongoing value is simply the value that the metric is measuring at any given time.
- **Starting and Target Value** - The results must have a timeframe to demonstrate achievement. The starting value is the original baseline, while the target value is the desired goal at the end of that timeframe.
- **Unit of Measure** - The unit of measure needs to be understandable, and as should what the results itself is trying to achieve. A unit of measure should contain all the components of the key result. For instance, in a key objective to “decrease lead-time from 7 to 5 days” the identified metric is “the lead-time” in days, the start value “7 days,” and the target value “5 days.”

Action Plan

Results are the outcomes of different activities measured together as a whole that lead to the achievement of an overall objective. On a day-to-day basis, these activities are the most basic steps to focus on. If well designed, performing every activity will lead to achieving a goal.

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To properly define each of these steps it is necessary to create a clear action plan. An action plan will establish a time frame, indicators, persons responsible, and costs of each activity, and should be shared with all persons involved.

Logistics Reports

A report is used to analyse facts and information to inform the steps towards reaching an objective and possible problems faced, while an evaluation will take this data and establish the degree of achievement and evaluate how a defined strategy and/or plan have worked.

It is important to create a reporting system that will follow the progress of strategic plans, and give feedback on activities of a specific location over a specific time frame. Reports in general should be as concise as possible whilst ensuring all important information is recorded.

The objectives of a report are:

- To provide supervisors/managers with the necessary information to be able to monitor the activities.
- To keep a record of the history of logistics activities.
- To provide an overview of how logistics activities are arranged in the programme or field location, what the key responsibilities are, and how well operations are managed.
- To clearly identify what the current problems are and what pending activities are yet to be implemented.
- To follow up and keep records on KPIs.

The better the report structure, the easier and more accurate a performance evaluation will be.

Best Practices

An inherent part of monitoring and evaluation relies on data collection. However, a good collection of data does not guarantee the goals and objectives will be achieved. Frequently collected data is only used to respond to and understand past events, instead of being used to drive future actions. To make the most of the monitoring and evaluation efforts, a proper performance monitoring plan needs to be in place for short-term, mid-term, and long-term activities.

Having a measurement process in place ensures frequent, constructive reviews of defined metrics, and creates a culture of measurement and improvement. Staff should be able to see how their performance affects the achievement of the overall goals.

Tracking the progress of KPIs over a period of time means an organization and its teams have clear visibility on the priorities of the organization or project, and enables team members to easily identify trends, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Having this information at hand gives the planners the opportunity to make better, calculated decisions.

KPIs should be carefully picked by closely reflecting on the organization's strategy and priorities. KPIs transparently communicate what is expected, what should be kept top of mind and how they should carry out their day-to-day activities.