1

Reporting Results

Once the data collection and the ROI analysis are completed, the real fun begins. All the results need to be organized into a report and communicated to appropriate parties. Preparing for this final stage of the ROI process requires some thought on the following questions. Should the data be used to modify the program, change the process, show the contribution, justify new programs, gain additional support, or build goodwill? How should the data be presented, and who should present them? Where should the presentation take place? Who should hear the presentation, and who should receive a report? These and other questions are examined in this chapter. The worst course of action is to do nothing with the data. Communicating the results is as important as achieving them. This chapter explains how to present evaluation data to different audiences in both oral and written formats.

The Importance of Communication

Communicating results is a critical issue in the ROI Methodology. While it is important to communicate results to interested stakeholders after a program is complete, communication throughout the program is important as well. A regular flow of information ensures that necessary adjustments can be made and that all stakeholders are aware of the successes and issues of the program. There are at least five key reasons to be concerned about communicating results:

1. *Measurement and evaluation mean nothing without communication.* Measuring success and collecting evaluation data mean nothing unless the findings are promptly communicated to the appropriate audiences, making them aware of what is occurring and allowing them to take action if necessary. Communication is necessary so that program results can be put to use quickly and aggressively.
2. *Communication is necessary in order to make improvements.* Information is collected at different points during the program process. This allows adjustments to be made to the process along the way; however, this can happen only when the information is communicated to the appropriate audience. Therefore, the quality and timeliness of communication become critical issues when adjustments or improvements are required. Even after a program is completed, communication is necessary to make sure that the target audience fully understands the results and how the results could be used to enhance current or future programs. Communication is the key to making important adjustments at all phases of a program.
3. *Communication is needed in order to explain the contributions of a program.* Explaining the contribution of a program by means of six major types of measures can be complex. Target audiences need a thorough explanation of the results—especially business impact and ROI. The quality of a well-executed communication strategy—including the techniques, the media, and the overall process used—will determine the extent to which the audiences understand the contribution of a program. Communication must be planned and implemented with the goal of ensuring that the audiences understand the full impact of the program.

4. *Communication can be a sensitive issue*. Communication is a critical function that can cause major problems if it is mishandled. Especially when the results of a program are closely linked to the performance of others or to political issues within an organization, the communication may upset some individuals and please others. If certain individuals do not receive the information or if it is delivered inconsistently from one group to another, problems may quickly surface. It is important that the communication is properly constructed and effectively delivered to all the individuals who need the information.
5. *Different audiences need different information*. Communication must be tailored directly to the needs of different stakeholders. Planning and effort must be employed to make sure that each audience receives all the information it needs, in the proper format and at the proper time. A single report for all audiences may not be appropriate. The scope and size of the report, the media used, and even the types and levels of information included will vary significantly from one group to another. In other words, the makeup of the target audience determines which communication process is appropriate.

The preceding reasons indicate why communication is a critical issue, although its role in a program is often overlooked or underestimated. This chapter further explores this important issue and provides a variety of techniques for effective communication to any target audience.

Principles of Communicating Results

The skills required to successfully communicate program results are almost as intricate and sophisticated as those needed to obtain the results. The style is as important as the substance. Regardless of the message, audience, or medium, a few general principles apply. These general principles are important to the overall success of the communication effort and should be used as a checklist for the program team as it disseminates program results.

Timely Communication

As a rule, results should be communicated as soon as they are known. From a practical standpoint, it may be best to delay the communication until a convenient time, such as the next general management meeting or publication of the next newsletter. The timing of the communication should be consciously addressed. Is the audience ready for the results in light of other things that have happened or are currently happening? Does the audience expect the results? When is the best time to communicate in order to achieve the maximum effect on the audience? Do circumstances dictate a change in the timing of the communication?

Targeted Communication

Communication will be more effective if it is designed for a particular group. The message should be specifically tailored to the interests, needs, and expectations of the target audience.

The program results described in this chapter reflect outcomes at all levels, including the six types of data discussed in this series. Some of the data are collected early in a program and are communicated during the program. Other data are collected after implementation and communicated in a follow-up study. Thus, the program results range from early feedback in qualitative terms to ROI values in varying degrees of quantitative terms. Choices should be made up front about who needs to see the results and in how much detail.

Effective Media Selection

For particular groups, some media may be more effective than others. Face-to-face meetings may be better than special bulletins. A memo distributed exclusively to top management may be more effective than the company newsletter. The proper method of communication can help improve the effectiveness of the process.

Unbiased Communication

It is important to make sure that the communication is accurate, credible, and objective, both in fact and in appearance. Some audiences view these results with great skepticism, anticipating biased opinions. Boastful statements may turn off recipients, and as a result, most of the content is lost on them. Observable, believable facts carry far more weight than extreme or sensational claims. Although such claims may get the audience's attention, they often detract from the credibility of the results.

Consistent Communication

The timing and content of the communication should be consistent with past practices. A special communication at an unusual time may provoke suspicion. Also, if a particular group, such as top management, regularly receives communication on outcomes, it should continue receiving that communication—even if the results are not positive. If some results are omitted, it will leave the impression that only positive results are being reported.

Testimonials from Respected Individuals

Individuals' opinions are strongly influenced by other people, particularly those who are respected and trusted. Testimonials about program results from individuals who are respected by others in the organization (particularly the target audience for the communication) can positively influence the effectiveness of the message. The credibility of the individual may be related to his or her leadership ability, position, special skills, or knowledge. In contrast, a testimonial from an individual who commands little respect and has little credibility may have a negative impact on the message.

Communication Strategy Shaped by the Audience's Opinion of the Program Team

Opinions are difficult to change, and a pre-existing negative opinion of the program team may not change with a simple presentation of facts. However, communicating the facts may help strengthen the opinions held by existing supporters. It helps reinforce their position and provides a defense when they discuss the program with others. A team with a high level of credibility and respect may have an easy time communicating results. Low credibility can create problems when trying to be persuasive. Thus, the reputation of the program team should be a consideration when the overall communication strategy is being developed.

Analysis of the Need for Communication

The specific reasons for communicating program results depend on the program, the setting, and the unique needs of the sponsor. Following are the most common reasons:

- *To secure approval for a program and allocation of time and money*. The initial communication about a program presents a proposal, a projected ROI, or other data that are intended to secure approval for the program. This communication may not have much data but anticipates the data to come.
- *To gain support for a program and its objectives*. Support from a variety of groups within an organization is important to the success of a program. Often, communication is intended to build this support to allow a program to work successfully.

- *To secure agreement on issues, solutions, and resources.* As a program begins, all who are directly involved must agree on and understand the important elements and requirements of the program.
- *To build the credibility of a program or a program team.* Early in the process of developing a program, the audience should understand the approach and reputation of the program team, the techniques that it will use, and its expected products. The audience should understand the commitments that must be made by all parties as a result of the approach that has been chosen.
- *To reinforce program processes.* Key managers must support a program and reinforce the processes used in its design, development, and delivery. Some communication is designed to facilitate those processes.
- *To drive action for program improvements.* Sometimes, communication early in the process of creating a program is designed as a process improvement tool, in order to effect changes and improvements as needs are uncovered and as individuals make suggestions.
- *To prepare participants for a program.* Those most directly involved in a program, the participants, must be prepared for the learning, the application of that learning, and the responsibilities that will be required of them in order to make the program a success.
- *To improve results and obtain quality feedback in the future.* Some communication is designed to update stakeholders on the status of a program and to influence decisions, seek support, or communicate events and expectations to key stakeholders. In addition, it will enhance both the quality and quantity of information provided in the future as stakeholders see the feedback cycle in action.

- *To show the complete results of a program.* The most important communication of the program cycle occurs after data on the results of a program have been collected and analyzed. At this time, the results from all six types of measures are communicated to the appropriate individuals so that they have a full understanding of the success or shortcomings of the program.

- *To underscore the importance of measuring results.* Some individuals need to understand or be convinced of the importance of measurement and evaluation. They must be made to see the need for having important data on the measures that matter to the organization.

- *To explain the techniques used to measure results.* The program sponsor and support staff need to understand the techniques used in measuring the results; they need to know that a sound theoretical framework has been used. In some cases, the techniques may be transferred internally and used to measure the results of other programs.

- *To stimulate participants to become involved in a program.* Ideally, participants will want to be involved in the program that is being offered. Communication is designed to pique their interest in the program and inform them of its importance.

- *To stimulate interest in the department or function that produced a program.* Some communications are designed to create interest in all the products and services offered by a unit or department, based on the results of current programs.

- *To demonstrate accountability for expenditures.* All individuals involved must understand the need for accountability and the approach that the program team uses to address that need. Communicating these points helps to ensure accountability for program expenditures.

- *To market future programs*. Building a database of successful programs is important. Past successes can be used to convince others that programs can add value.

Although the preceding list is quite comprehensive, there may be other reasons for communicating program results. The specifics of each situation should be considered when the program team is developing reports to communicate program results.

Communication Planning

Planning is also a critical part of communicating the results of major programs. Planning the communication is important in order to ensure that each audience receives the proper information at the right time and that appropriate actions are taken. Three elements are important in planning the communication of program results: general communication policies, the communication plan for the entire program, and the communication plan for the impact study.

Communication Policies

Some general policies need to be developed when planning the communication of program results. Seven questions require attention as the policies are developed.

1. *What will be communicated?* The types of information that will be communicated should be detailed. The six types of data from the ROI model should be included, and the overall progress of the program should be described.
2. *When will the data be communicated?* In all communication, timing is critical. If adjustments need to be made to the program,

the information should be communicated quickly so that swift action can be taken.

3. *How will the information be communicated?* Different audiences and different organizations prefer different communication media. For example, some managers prefer written reports, others prefer face-to-face meetings, and still others want their employees to use electronic communications whenever possible.
4. *Where will the communication take place?* Some stakeholder groups prefer that communication take place close to the program sponsor; others prefer the central offices. The location can be an important issue in terms of convenience and perception.
5. *Who will communicate the information?* Will the program team, an independent consultant, or an individual from the sponsor's office communicate the information? The person communicating must have credibility so that the information will be believed and accepted.
6. *Who is the target audience?* Target audiences that should always receive information should be identified as well as others who will receive information when appropriate.
7. *What specific actions are required or desired?* In some cases, when information is presented no action is needed. In other situations, changes are desired and sometimes required.

These seven issues should frame the policy that governs communication as a whole.

Communication Plan for the Entire Program

The communication plan for a major program is usually developed when the program is approved. This plan details how specific information will be developed and communicated to various groups, and it identifies the expected actions that will be taken on the basis of the information. In addition, the plan details how the overall results will be communicated, the time frames for communication, and the appropriate groups to receive the information. The program team and the sponsor need to agree on the extent of the detail required in the communication plan. Additional information on communication planning for an entire program is provided later in this chapter.

Communication Plan for the Impact Study

A third element in communicating program results is the plan to present the results of the specific impact study. This communication occurs when a major program is completed and the detailed results are known. Two important issues to address are who should receive the results and in what form. The communication plan for the final impact study is more specialized than the plan for the entire program. Table 1.1 shows the communication plan for the impact study of a major stress reduction program. Teams had been experiencing high levels of stress; through numerous activities and behavior changes brought about by the program, stress began to diminish among the teams.

In this case, five communication pieces were developed, each for a different audience. The complete seventy-five-page report on the ROI impact study, which served as the historical document for the program, went to the sponsor, the program team, and the manager of each of the participant teams involved in the studies. The executive summary, a much smaller document, went to high-level executives. A general interest overview and summary, without the ROI calculation, went to the participants. A general interest article was developed for company publications, and a brochure was developed to highlight the success of the program. The brochure was used to market the same program internally to other teams and served as additional marketing material for the program team. The detailed communication plan for the impact study may be

Table 1.1. Communication Plan for the Impact of a Major Program

Communication Document	Communication Targets	Distribution Method
Complete report with appendixes (75 pages)	• Program sponsor • Program team • Participants' managers	Distribute and discuss in a special meeting
Executive summary (8 pages)	• Senior management in the business units • Senior corporate management	Distribute and discuss in a routine meeting
General interest overview and summary without the ROI calculation (10 pages)	• Participants	Mail with a letter
General interest article (1 page)	• All employees	Publish in a company publication
Brochure highlighting the program, objectives, and specific results	• Team leaders with an interest in the program • Prospective sponsors of future programs	Include with other marketing materials

part of the overall communication plan for the project but may be fine-tuned as the impact study develops.

These plans underscore the importance of organizing the communication strategy for a program.

Audience Selection

Not everyone in an organization needs to see or hear the results of a program. Early in the process, the audiences should be chosen and a decision made about how much information each group should receive. This section details the selection process and the criteria for selecting each audience.

Preliminary Issues

When considering an audience, ask the following questions about the members of each group:

- Are they interested in the program?
- Do they want to receive the information?
- Has someone already made a commitment to them about receiving the communication?
- Is the timing right for communicating with this audience?
- Are they familiar with the program?
- How would they prefer to receive the results?
- Do they know the program team members?
- Are they likely to find the results threatening?
- Which medium will be most convincing to this group?

For each potential target audience, three actions are needed:

1. To the greatest extent possible, the program team should know and understand the target audience.
2. The program team should find out what information is needed and why. Each group will have its own needs in relation to the information desired. Some will want detailed information, while others will want brief information. Input from others should be used to help determine what the audience needs and wants.
3. The program team should try to understand audience biases. Some audiences will tend toward a particular bias or opinion, while other audiences will represent a variety of different opinions. Some will quickly support the results, whereas others may be against them or be neutral. The staff should be empathetic and try to understand differing views. With this understanding, communications can be tailored to each group. Understanding the biases of an audience is especially critical when an audience may react negatively to the results.

Basis for Selecting the Audience

The audiences targeted to receive information on results are likely to be varied in terms of job levels and responsibilities. Determining which groups will receive a particular communication piece deserves careful thought, for problems can arise when a group receives inappropriate information or when a group is omitted altogether. A sound basis for audience selection is analysis of the reason for the communication. Table 1.2 shows common target audiences and the basis for selecting them.

Perhaps the most important audience is the sponsor—the individual or team supporting the ROI study. This individual (or group) initiates the program, reviews data, and weighs the final assessment of the effectiveness of the program.

Table 1.2. Common Target Audiences for Communication of Program Results

Reason for Communication	Target Audiences
To secure approval for a program	Sponsor, top executives
To gain support for a program	Immediate managers, team leaders
To secure agreement on the issues	Participants, team leaders
To build the credibility of a program	Top executives
To reinforce program processes	Immediate managers
To drive action for improvement	Sponsor, program team
To prepare participants for a program	Team leaders
To improve results and the quality of future feedback	Participants
To show the complete results of a program	Sponsor
To underscore the importance of measuring results	Sponsor, program team
To explain the techniques used to measure results	Sponsor, support staff
To stimulate participant involvement	Participants' team leaders
To stimulate interest in the functional unit that produced a program	Top executives
To demonstrate accountability for expenditures	All employees
To market future programs	Prospective sponsors

Another important target audience is the senior management group. This group is responsible for allocating resources to the program and needs information to help justify expenditures and gauge the effectiveness of the efforts.

Selected groups of managers (or all managers) are also important target audiences. Management's support and involvement in the process and the department's credibility are important to success. Effectively communicating program results to management can increase both support and credibility.

Communicating with the participants' team leaders or immediate managers is essential. In many cases, they must encourage the participants to implement the program. Also, they often support and reinforce the objectives of the program.

Occasionally, results are communicated in order to encourage participation in a program, especially if participation is voluntary. In such cases, potential participants are important targets for communication.

Participants need feedback on the overall success of the program effort. Some individuals may not have been as successful as others in achieving the desired results. Communicating the results puts additional pressure on participants to effectively implement the program and improve future results. For those who are already achieving excellent results, the communication will serve as a reinforcement of the program. Communicating results to participants is often overlooked; it is sometimes assumed that once the program is complete, there is no point in informing them of its success.

The program team must receive information about program results. Those who have designed, developed, facilitated, or implemented a program must be given information on its effectiveness, whether it is a small program on which the program team receives a brief update or a large program on which a complete program team needs detailed feedback. Evaluation information is necessary so that adjustments can be made if a program is not as effective as it could be.

An organization's support staff should receive detailed information about the measurement and evaluation process. This group provides support services to the program team, usually as part of the same department.

Company employees and stockholders may be less likely targets. General interest news stories may increase employee respect for a

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program. Goodwill and positive attitudes toward an organization may also be by-products of communicating program results. Stockholders, on the other hand, are more interested in the return on their investment.

While Table 1.2 shows the most common target audiences, there may be others within an organization. For instance, management or employees could be subdivided into different departments, divisions, or even subsidiaries of the organization that may have different reasons to be interested in program results. In a complex organization, the number of audiences can be large. At a minimum, we recommend that program results be communicated to four target audiences: the senior management group, the participants' immediate manager or team leader, the participants, and the program team.

Development of the Information: The Impact Study

The decision on the type of formal evaluation report to be prepared will depend on how much detail should be presented to the target audiences. Brief summaries of results with appropriate charts may be sufficient for some communication efforts. In other situations, particularly when significant programs with extensive funding are involved, the amount of detail in the evaluation report is more crucial. A complete and comprehensive report on the impact study may be necessary. This report can then be abridged and tailored for specific audiences and for different media. The full impact study should include the major components discussed in this section.

Executive Summary

The executive summary is a brief overview of the entire report, explaining the basis for the evaluation and the significant conclusions and recommendations. It is designed for individuals who are too busy to read a detailed report. It is usually written last but appears first in the report for easy access.

Background Information

The background information provides a general description of the program. If applicable, the needs assessment that led to implementation of the program is summarized. The program is fully described, including the events that led to the intervention. Other specific items necessary to provide a full description of the program are included. The extent of detailed information depends on the amount of information that the audience needs.

Objectives

The objectives for both the impact study and the program are outlined. Sometimes, they are the same, but they may be different. The report details the objectives of the study itself so that the reader can clearly understand the rationale for the study and how the data will be used. In addition, specific program objectives are detailed because they form the basis for collecting the different levels of data.

Evaluation Strategy or Methodology

The evaluation strategy outlines all the components that make up the total evaluation process. The specific purposes of evaluation are outlined, and the evaluation design and methodology are explained. The instruments used in data collection are described and presented as exhibits. Any unusual issues or other useful information related to the design, timing, and execution of the evaluation are also included.

Data Collection and Analysis

This section explains the methods used to collect the data. Such methods were detailed in *Data Collection,* book two of this series. The data collected are usually summarized in the report, and then the methods used to analyze the data are presented, along with any interpretations that have been made. Among other issues covered, isolation and data conversion techniques are presented in this section.

Program Costs

Program costs are presented in this section of the report. A summary of the costs, by category, is included. For example, analysis, development, implementation, and evaluation costs are recommended categories for cost presentation. The assumptions made in developing and classifying the costs are also discussed in this section.

Reaction and Planned Action

This section details the data collected from key stakeholders, particularly the participants of the program, to measure their reaction to the program and to determine what actions they planned to take following the program. Other input from the sponsor or managers may be included in order to show their reactions and their satisfaction with the program.

Learning and Confidence

This section contains a brief summary of the formal and informal methods that were used to measure learning. The results of those measurements explain how participants have learned the new processes, skills, tasks, procedures, and practices presented in the program and describe participants' confidence in their ability to use or apply this new knowledge.

Application and Implementation

This section details how the program was implemented and the success that the participants experienced in applying their new skills and knowledge. Implementation issues are addressed, including any major success or lack of success.

Business Impact

This section explains the business impact measures that were used, which represent the business needs that initially drove the program. The data from these measures show the extent to which performance changed during implementation of the program.

Return on Investment

This section shows the ROI calculation, along with the benefit-cost ratio. It compares the value to what was expected and provides an interpretation of the calculation.

Intangible Measures

This section describes the intangible measures that are directly linked to the program. Intangible measures are measures that are not converted to monetary values or included in the ROI calculation.

Barriers and Enablers

Barriers to implementation—the problems and obstacles that affect the success of the program—are detailed. In addition, enablers—factors or influences that positively affect the program—are described. Barriers and enablers provide insight into what might hinder or enhance programs in the future.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This section presents conclusions based on all the results. If appropriate, brief explanations of how each conclusion was reached are presented. A list of recommendations or changes in the program, if appropriate, is provided, along with brief explanations of each recommendation. The conclusions and recommendations must be consistent with one another and with the findings described in the previous sections of the report.

Report Development

Exhibit 1.1 shows the table of contents of a typical report on an ROI evaluation. This format represents an effective, professional way to present ROI data.

Potential trouble spots need to be observed. This document reports on the success of a group of employees; therefore, credit for the success must actually be given to the participants and their immediate managers. Their performance generated the success, and that should be made clear in the report.

Another important caution: avoid boasting about the results. Although the ROI Methodology may be an accurate and credible process, it still has some subjective issues. Huge claims of success may quickly turn off an audience and interfere with the delivery of the desired message.

A final issue concerns the structure of the report. The methodology should be clearly explained, along with any assumptions made in the analysis. The reader should be able to readily see how the values were developed and how specific steps were followed to make the process more conservative, credible, and accurate. Detailed statistical analyses should be placed in the appendixes.

Selection of Communication Media

Many options are available to communicate program results. In addition to the impact study report and macro-level scorecard (discussed later in this chapter), the most frequently used media are meetings, interim and progress reports, the organization's publications, e-mail, brochures, and case studies. Exhibit 1.2 provides a summary of the various media used to communicate results.

Meetings

Meetings are fertile ground for communicating program results. All organizations have meetings. But it is important to choose the

Exhibit 1.1. Format of an Impact Study Report

I. Executive Summary
II. General Information
- Background
- Objectives of the Study

III. Methodology for the Impact Study
- Evaluation Framework
- The ROI Methodology
- Data Collection Strategy
- ROI Analysis Strategy
  - Isolating the Effects of the Program
  - Converting Data to Monetary Values
  - Program Costs

This section builds credibility for the process.

IV. Results: General Information
- Response Profile
- Success with Objectives

V. Results: Reaction and Planned
- Data Sources
- Data Summary
- Key Issues

VI. Results: Learning and Confidence
- Data Sources
- Data Summary
- Key Issues

VII. Results: Application and Implementation
- Data Sources
- Data Summary
- Barriers to Application
- Enablers of Application
- Key Issues

VIII. Results: Business Impact
- General Comments
- Linkage with Business Measures
- Key Issues

IX. Results: ROI and Its Meaning
X. Results: Intangible Measures

The results from six measures: Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and intangibles tell the complete story of program success.

XI. Conclusions and Recommendations
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

XII. Appendixes

Exhibit 1.2. Options for Communicating Program Results

Meetings	Detailed Reports	Brief Reports	Electronic Reporting	Mass Publications
Executives	Impact study	Executive summary	Web site	Announcements
Managers	Case study (internal)	Slide overview	E-mail	Bulletins
Stakeholders	Case study (external)	One-page summary	Blog	Newsletters
Staff	Major articles	Brochure	Video	Brief articles

proper context for reporting results. A few examples illustrate the variety of meetings, including some that are listed in Exhibit 1.2, and indicate how program results can be worked into the format of each.

Staff Meetings

Throughout the chain of command, staff meetings are held to review progress, discuss current problems, and distribute information. These meetings can be an excellent forum for discussing the results achieved in a major program when it relates to the group's activities. Program results can be sent to executives for use in staff meetings, or a member of the program team can attend the meeting to make the presentation.

Manager Meetings

Regular meetings of frontline managers are quite common. Typically, ways to help their work units are discussed. Thus, discussion of a program and its results can be integrated into the regular meeting format.

Best-Practice Meetings

Some organizations have best-practice meetings or videoconferences in order to discuss recent successes and best practices. These present excellent opportunities to learn about methodologies (such as those addressed in programs) and to share results.

Business Update Meetings

Some organizations hold a periodic meeting for all members of management in which the CEO reviews progress and discusses plans for the coming year. A few highlights of major program results can be integrated into the CEO's speech, indicating top executive interest, commitment, and support. Results are mentioned along with operating profit, new facilities and equipment, new company acquisitions, and the coming year's sales forecast.

Progress Reports

A highly visible way to communicate results is through routine memos and progress reports. This method is usually used only for large programs. Published or disseminated via the intranet on a periodic basis, they usually have several purposes:

- To inform management about the status of a program
- To communicate periodic results achieved in a program
- To activate needed changes and improvements

A more subtle reason for progress reports may be to gain additional support and commitment from the management group and thus keep a program intact. Progress reports are produced by the program team and distributed to a select group of managers in the organization. Format and scope vary considerably. Common topics include the following:

- *Schedule of activities*. A schedule of planned steps or activities should be an integral part of this report. A brief description of the activities should also be presented.

- *Reactions from participants.* A brief summary of reaction evaluations in order to report initial success may be appropriate. Also, brief interviews with participants might be included.
- *Results.* A key focus of a progress report is the results achieved from the program. Significant results that can be documented should be presented in an easy-to-understand format. The method (or methods) of evaluation should be briefly outlined, along with the measurement data.
- *Changes in responsibilities.* Occasionally, people involved in planning, developing, implementing, or evaluating a program are reassigned, transferred, or promoted. How these changes affect responsibilities and the program must be communicated.
- *Participant spotlight.* A section that highlights a participant can focus additional attention on results. This section provides an opportunity to recognize outstanding participants who are responsible for excellent results and bring attention to unusual achievements.

While the items on the preceding list may not be suitable for every report, they represent topics that should be presented to the management group. When produced in a professional manner, progress reports can improve management support and commitment to the effort.

Organizational Publications and Standard Communication Tools

To reach a wide audience, the program team can use in-house publications. Whether a newsletter, magazine, newspaper, or electronic file, these media usually reach all employees. The information can be quite effective if communicated appropriately. The scope should be limited to general interest articles, announcements, and interviews. Following are the types of issues that should be covered in these publications.

- *Program results*. Results communicated through these media must be significant enough to arouse general interest. For example, a story with the headline "Safety Training Program Helps Produce One Million Hours Without a Lost-Time Accident" will catch the attention of many people because they may have participated in the program and can appreciate the significance of the results. Reports on the accomplishments of a small group of participants may not create interest unless the audience can relate to the accomplishments.

For many program implementations, results are achieved weeks or even months after the program is completed. Participants need reinforcement from many sources. If results are communicated to a general audience, including a participant's subordinates or peers, additional pressure to continue with the program or similar ones in the future occurs.

- *Participant recognition*. General audience communication can bring recognition to participants, particularly those who excel in some aspect of a program. When participants deliver unusual performance, public recognition can enhance their self-esteem.
- *Human interest stories*. Many human interest stories can come out of major programs. A rigorous program with

> difficult requirements can provide the basis for an interesting story on participants who implement the program. In one organization, the editor of the company newsletter participated in a demanding program and wrote a stimulating article about what being a participant was like. The article gave the reader a tour of the entire program and its effectiveness in terms of the results achieved. It was an interesting and effective way to provide information about a challenging activity.

The benefits are many and the opportunities endless for a program team to use in-house publications and company-wide intranets to let others know about successful programs.

E-Mail and Electronic Media

Internal and external Web pages on the Internet, company-wide intranets, and e-mail are excellent vehicles for releasing results, promoting ideas, and informing employees and other target groups about results. E-mail, in particular, provides a virtually instantaneous method of communicating with and soliciting responses from large numbers of people.

Brochures

A brochure might be appropriate for programs that are conducted on a continuing basis and in which participants have produced excellent results. A brochure should be attractive and should present a complete description of a program, with a major section devoted to results obtained by previous participants, if available. Measurable results, reactions from participants, or direct quotes from other individuals can add spice.

Case Studies

Case studies are an effective way to communicate the results of a program; thus, it may be useful to develop a few program evaluations in a case study format. A typical case study provides background information (including the situation or events that led to the intervention), presents the techniques and strategies used to develop the study, and highlights the key issues in the program. Case studies tell an interesting story of how an evaluation was developed and the problems and concerns identified along the way.

Case studies have many additional useful applications within an organization. First, they can be used in group discussions, during which interested individuals can react to the material, offer different perspectives, and draw conclusions about approaches or techniques. Second, the case study can serve as a self-teaching guide for individuals who are trying to understand how evaluations are developed and used within the organization. Finally, case studies provide appropriate recognition for those who were involved in the evaluation. They recognize the participants who achieved the results, as well as the managers who allowed the participants to be involved in the program. The case study format has become one of the most effective ways to learn about program evaluation. Exhibit 1.3 shows the ways in which case studies can be used.

Exhibit 1.3. Uses of Case Studies

Internal Uses of Case Studies	External Publication of Case Studies
Communicate results	Provide recognition to participants
Teach others	Improve image of functional unit
Build a history	Enhance brand of department
Serve as a template	Enhance image of organization
Make an impression	

A Case Example

Methods for communicating program results can be creatively combined to fit any situation. Here is an example that uses three approaches: case study, management meeting, and brochure.

The production unit of a major manufacturing company had achieved outstanding results through the efforts of a team of two supervisors. The results consisted of improvements in key measures such as absenteeism, turnover, lost-time accidents, grievances, scrap rate, and unit hour. The unit hour was a basic measure of individual productivity.

These results had been achieved through the efforts of the supervisors in applying the basic skills that they had been taught in a supervisor program—a fact that was mentioned at the beginning of a presentation made by the supervisors at a monthly meeting for all supervisors. In a panel discussion format with a moderator, the two supervisors outlined how they had achieved their results and answered questions. The comments were published in a brochure and distributed to all supervisors through their department managers. The title of the publication was "Getting Results: A Success Story." On the inside cover, specific results were detailed, along with additional information on the supervisors. A close-up photograph of each supervisor, taken during the panel discussion, was included on this page. The next two pages presented a summary of the techniques used to secure the results. The brochure was used in staff meetings as a discussion guide in order to cover the points from the panel discussion. Top executives were also sent copies of the brochure. In addition, the discussion was videotaped and used in subsequent programs as a model of how to apply skills. The brochure was used as a handout in those sessions.

The communication effort was a success. Favorable responses were received from all levels of management. Top executives asked the human resources development department to prepare and conduct similar meetings. Other supervisors began to use more of the skills and techniques presented by the two supervisors.

Process of Communication

Perhaps the greatest challenge of communication is the actual delivery of the message. Information can be communicated in a variety of ways and in many settings, depending on the target audience and the media selected for the message. Three practices deserve additional coverage. The first is relaying feedback data throughout a program so that necessary changes can be made. The second is presenting an impact study to a senior management team, which is one of the most challenging tasks for evaluators. The third is communicating regularly with the executive management group.

Providing Continual Feedback

One of the most important reasons for collecting reaction and learning data is to provide feedback so that adjustments or changes can be made throughout a program. In most programs, data are routinely collected and quickly communicated to the groups who need to know. Table 1.3 shows a feedback action plan designed to provide information to several feedback audiences, using a variety of media.

As the plan shows, data are collected during the program at four specific time intervals and communicated to at least four audiences: participants, team leaders, program team members, and the program sponsor. Some of these feedback sessions result in identification of specific actions that need to be taken. This process becomes wide-ranging and needs to be managed in a proactive way. We recommend the following guidelines for providing feedback and managing the feedback process (Block, 2000).

- *Communicate quickly*. Whether the news is good or bad, letting individuals involved in the program have the

Table 1.3. Feedback Action Plan

Data Collection Item	Timing	Feedback Audience	Media	Timing of Feedback	Action Required
1. Pre-program survey	Beginning of the program	Participants	Meeting	1 week	None
• Climate, environment		Team leaders	Survey summary	2 weeks	None
• Issue identification		Program team	Survey summary	2 weeks	Communicate feedback
		Sponsor	Meeting	1 week	Adjust approach
2. Implementation survey	Beginning of implementation	Participants	Meeting	1 week	None
• Reaction to plans		Team leaders	Study summary	2 weeks	None
• Issue identification		Program team	Study summary	2 weeks	Communicate feedback
		Sponsor	Meeting	1 week	Adjust approach
3. Implementation reaction survey or interviews	1 month into implementation	Participants	Meeting	1 week	Comments
		Support staff	Survey summary	2 weeks	None
• Reaction to solution		Team leaders	Survey summary	2 weeks	None
• Suggested changes		Immediate managers	Study summary	2 weeks	Support changes
		Program team	Study summary	3 weeks	Support changes
		Sponsor	Meeting	3 days	Adjust approach
4. Implementation feedback questionnaire	End of implementation	Participants	Meeting	1 week	Comments
		Support staff	Study summary	2 weeks	None
• Reaction (planned action)		Team leaders	Study summary	2 weeks	None
• Barriers		Immediate managers	Study summary	2 weeks	Support changes
• Projected success		Program team	Study summary	3 weeks	Support changes
		Sponsor	Meeting	3 days	Adjust approach

information as soon as possible is important. The recommended time for providing feedback is usually a matter of days, certainly no longer than a week or two after the results are known.

- *Simplify the data.* Condense the data into a concise, understandable presentation. This is not the time for detailed explanations and analysis.
- *Examine the role of the program team and the sponsor in the feedback situation.* On the one hand, sometimes the program team is the judge, jury, prosecutor, defendant, or witness. On the other hand, sometimes the sponsor is the judge, jury, prosecutor, defendant, or witness. The respective roles of the team and sponsor, in terms of their likely reactions to the data and the actions that need to be taken, should be examined.
- *Use negative data in a constructive way.* Some of the data will show that things are not going well, and the fault may rest with the program team or the sponsor. In either case, the story basically changes from "Let's look at the success we've had" to "Now we know which areas to change."
- *Use positive data in a conservative way.* Positive data can be misleading, and if they are communicated too enthusiastically, they may create expectations beyond what may materialize later. Positive data should be presented conservatively—with constraints and qualifiers outlined in detail.
- *Choose the language of the communication carefully.* Use language that is descriptive, focused, specific, short, and simple. Avoid language that is too judgmental, general, stereotypical, lengthy, or complex.

- *Ask the sponsor for reactions to the data.* After all, the sponsor is the customer, and the sponsor's reaction is critical.

- *Ask the sponsor for recommendations.* The sponsor may have some good recommendations about what needs to be changed to keep a program on track or to get it back on track if it has derailed.

- *Use support and confrontation carefully.* These two elements are not mutually exclusive. At times, support and confrontation may be needed for the same group. The sponsor may be confronted about lack of improvement or lack of active sponsorship yet may need support on those issues. Similarly, the program team may be confronted about problem areas but may require support as well.

- *React and act on the data.* Different alternatives and possibilities should be considered in order to arrive at the adjustments and changes to be made.

- *Secure agreement from all key stakeholders.* It is essential to ensure that everyone is willing to make the adjustments and changes that seem necessary.

- *Keep the feedback process short.* Don't let it become bogged down in long, drawn-out meetings or lengthy documents. If this occurs, stakeholders will avoid the process instead of being willing to participate in the future.

Following these guidelines will help you move your program forward and provide important feedback, often ensuring that adjustments are supported and made.

Presenting Impact Study Data to Senior Management

Perhaps one of the most challenging and stressful types of communication is the presentation of an impact study to the senior management team, which often is the sponsor of a program. The challenge is convincing this highly skeptical and critical group that outstanding results have been achieved (assuming that they have). The presenter needs to address the salient points and make sure the managers understand the evaluation process. Figure 1.1 shows our approach to presenting an impact study.

Two issues in particular can create challenges. First, if the results are impressive, convincing the managers to believe the data may be difficult. At the other extreme, if the data are negative, ensuring

Figure 1.1. Presenting an Impact Study to Executive Sponsors

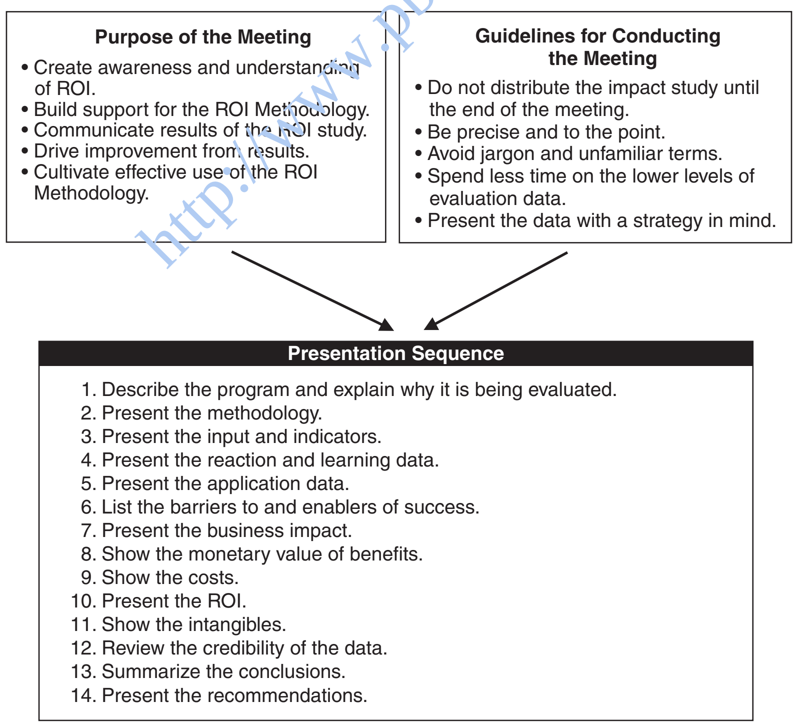


Figure 1.2. Streamlining Communication with Executives

First 2 ROI Studies	Detailed Study	Meeting
3–5 ROI Studies	Executive Summary	No Meeting
6 ROI Studies or More	One-Page Summary	No Meeting

that the managers don't overreact to the negative results and look for someone to blame can be a challenge.

The following guidelines can help you ensure that your presentation is planned and executed properly.

- Plan a face-to-face meeting with senior team members for the first one or two major impact studies, as shown in Figure 1.2. If the audience is unfamiliar with the ROI Methodology, a face-to-face meeting is necessary to make sure that they understand the process. The good news is that they will probably attend the meeting because they have not seen ROI data developed for programs or projects before. The bad news is that it takes a lot of time, usually an hour, for this presentation.
- After a group has had a face-to-face meeting for a couple of presentations, an executive summary may be all that is necessary for the next three to five studies. At this point, they understand the process, so a shortened version may be appropriate.
- After the target audience is familiar with the process, an even briefer version may be all that is needed; perhaps

you can use a one- to two-page summary with charts or graphs showing all six types of measures. Exhibit 1.4 shows a one-page summary.

- During the initial face-to-face presentation, the results of the evaluation should not be distributed until the end of the session. This will allow the presenter to explain the evaluation process and obtain reactions to it before the target audience sees the actual ROI number.

- Present the process step by step, showing how the data were collected, when they were collected, who provided the data, how the data were isolated from other influences, and how they were converted to monetary values. Any assumptions, adjustments, and conservative approaches should be presented. Fully loaded costs should be presented so that the target audience will begin to buy into the process of developing the ROI.

- When the data are presented, the results should be presented step by step, beginning with Level 1, moving through Level 5, and ending with the intangibles. This sequence allows the audience to see the chain of impact from reaction and planned action to learning and confidence, application and implementation, business impact, and ROI. After some discussion of the meaning of the ROI, the intangible measures should be presented. Allocate time to each level as appropriate for the audience. This progression will help overcome potential negative reactions to a very positive or negative ROI.

- Show the consequences of additional accuracy, if it is an issue. The trade-off for more accuracy and validity is often more expense. Address this issue whenever necessary, agreeing to add more data if required.

Exhibit 1.4. Sample Streamlined Report

ROI Impact Study

Program Title: Preventing Sexual Harassment at Healthcare, Inc.

Target Audience: First- and second-level managers (655); secondary audience: all employees, through group meetings (6,844)

Duration: 1 day; 17 sessions

Techniques for Isolating the Effects of the Program: Trend line analysis; participant estimation

Techniques for Converting Data to Monetary Values: Historical costs; internal experts

Fully Loaded Program Costs: $277,987

Results

Level 1: Reaction	Level 2: Learning	Level 3: Application	Level 4: Impact	Level 5: ROI	Intangible Benefits
• 93% provided action items	• 65% increase in scores from pretest to posttest	• 96% conducted meetings and completed meeting record	• Turnover reduction: $2,840,632	• 1,051%	• Job satisfaction
	• Skill practice demonstration	• 4.1 out of 5 overall average on behavior change survey	• Complaint reduction: $360,276		• Reduced absenteeism
		• 68% report all action items complete	• Total improvement: $3,200,908		• Stress reduction
		• 92% report some action items complete			• Better recruiting

- Collect concerns, reactions, and issues with the process, and then make appropriate adjustments for the next presentation.

These steps will help you prepare and present your impact study, which is a critical step in the ROI Methodology.

Communicating with Executives and Sponsors

When you are communicating results, no group is more important than the top executives. In many situations, this group is also the sponsor. Improving communication with them requires developing an overall strategy, which may include some or all of the actions outlined in this section.

Strengthen the Relationship with Executives

An informal and productive relationship should be established between the manager responsible for the program evaluation and the top executive at the location where the program is being implemented. Each should feel comfortable with discussing needs and program results. One approach is to hold frequent informal meetings with the executive in order to review problems with current programs and discuss other performance problems or opportunities within the organization. Frank and open discussions may provide the executive with insight that is not available from any other source. Such discussions may also be very helpful to the program manager in determining the direction of the program.

Distribute Program Results

When a program has achieved significant results, inform the appropriate top executives by sending them a brief memo or summary outlining what the program was supposed to accomplish, when it was implemented, who was involved, and the results that were achieved. Use a for-your-information format that consists of facts rather than opinions. Keep it brief; a full report may be presented later. All significant communications on evaluation programs, plans, activities, and results should include the executive group. Frequent information on programs, as long as it is not boastful, can reinforce credibility and highlight accomplishments.

Ask Executives to Participate in Program Review

An effective way to increase commitment from top executives is to ask one or more of them to serve on a program review committee. A review committee provides input and advice to the program staff on a variety of issues, including needs, problems with current programs, and program evaluation issues. A program committee can be helpful in letting executives know about what programs are achieving.

Analysis of Reactions to Communication

The best indicator of how effectively the results of a program have been communicated is the level of commitment and support from the management group. Allocation of requested resources and strong commitment from top management are tangible evidence that management's perception of the results is positive. In addition to observing this macro-level reaction, the program team can use a few techniques to measure the effectiveness of its communication efforts.

Whenever results are communicated, the target audiences' reactions can be monitored. Their reactions may include nonverbal gestures, oral remarks, written comments, or indirect actions that reveal how the communication was received. Usually, when results are presented during a meeting, the presenter will have some indication of how the results were received by the group. The interest and attitudes of the audience can usually be quickly evaluated.

During the presentation, questions may be asked or, in some cases, the information may be challenged. A tabulation of these challenges and questions can be useful when the program team is evaluating the type of information to include in future communications. When positive comments about the results are made, formally or informally, they should also be noted and tabulated.

Staff meetings are an excellent arena for discussing the reaction to communications of results. Comments can come from many sources, depending on the target audience. Input from different members of the staff can be summarized to help judge the overall effectiveness of communications.

When major program results are communicated, a feedback questionnaire may be distributed to the audience or a sample of the audience. The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the extent to which the audience understood or believed the information presented. Such a survey is practical only when the effectiveness of the communication will have a significant impact on future programs or actions.

Another approach is to survey the management group in order to determine its perceptions of the program results. Specific questions should be asked about the results. What does the management group know about the results? How believable are the results? What additional information is desired about the program? This type of survey can provide guidance for tailoring future communications.

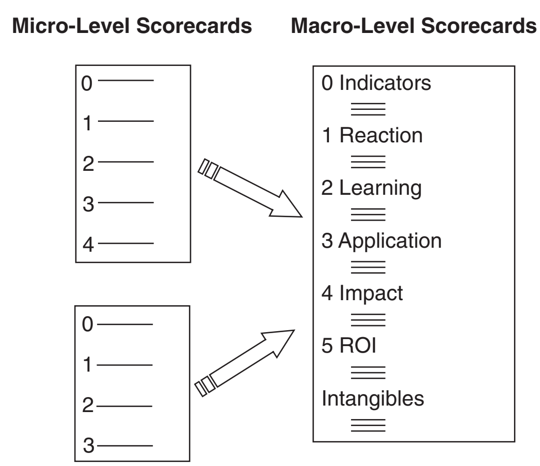
The purpose of analyzing reactions is to make adjustments in the communication process—if adjustments are necessary. Although analyzing the reactions may involve intuitive assessments, a more sophisticated analysis will provide more accurate information, so that better adjustments can be made. The net result should be a more effective communication process.

Creating a Macro-Level Scorecard

In the last decade, organizations have shown growing interest in building a scorecard of the contributions of all programs within a function or organization. Sometimes, this is referred to as the *balanced scorecard* (Kaplan and Norton, 1996). A balanced scorecard includes data that represent a macro view and are balanced between qualitative and quantitative, customer and noncustomer, and financial and nonfinancial. Essentially, a scorecard is a group of measures that are important to the management team, and the management team takes action when the measures indicate a problem. Scorecards are a way to report the overall results of all programs within a function or all programs directed at a particular audience of executives and senior management.

Using the ROI Methodology, evaluations can be taken all the way to Level 5 (ROI), generating a scorecard of performance with seven types of data (including intangibles) for a program or project. A program scorecard is a micro-level scorecard (see Figure 1.3). To create a macro-level scorecard, micro-level scorecards are developed for all programs within a function or organization; every program usually has Level 0 (Inputs and Indicators) data and Level 1 (Reaction and Planned Action) data. Then, the micro-level evaluation data that were collected for each program are integrated into a macro-level scorecard, as illustrated in Figure 1.3. However, to keep the process effective and meaningful, only a few measures collected at Levels 0, 1, and 2 and data important to the management

Figure 1.3. Creating a Macro-Level Scorecard



team are used at the macro level. For example, if a typical reaction questionnaire contains fifteen or twenty items, only four or five critical measures that are meaningful to the management group are chosen for each program. These critical measures are integrated into the macro-level scorecard. As each program is evaluated, measures are added to the overall scorecard.

Advantages of a Macro-Level Scorecard

A macro-level scorecard has several advantages. First, it provides a high-level view of a process or organizational function. For example, a macro-level scorecard for learning and development offers an overview of the activities, results, and contributions of the whole functional unit. Second, a macro-level scorecard provides a brief report on how the department is performing without the audience having to review detailed studies. Most executives prefer this type of report so they can have a bird's-eye view of how things are going overall. It is important to remember, however, that reviews of impact studies—or summaries of impact studies—of major programs and projects are also important. A simple scorecard won't do the trick in those cases.

Because some of the macro-level measures are linked to the business, a macro-level scorecard shows how programs connect to business objectives. A macro-level scorecard also provides a balanced perspective, offering activity, perception, qualitative, quantitative, application, and financial contribution measures. When used properly, this type of scorecard can indicate the alignment between an organization and a function. Thus, the macro-level scorecard can be an important tool for reporting results.

Example

Exhibit 1.5 shows a macro-level scorecard for a corporate university. In this example, thirty measures were collected, reflecting seven

Exhibit 1.5. An Example of a Corporate University Scorecard

First University

0. Indicators
   1. Number of Employees Involved
   2. Total Hours of Involvement
   3. Hours per Employee
   4. Training Investment as a Percentage of Payroll
   5. Cost per Participant

I. Reaction and Planned Action
   1. Percentage of Programs Evaluated at This Level
   2. Ratings on Seven Items Versus Targets
   3. Percentage with Action Plans
   4. Percentage with ROI Forecast

II. Learning
   1. Percentage of Programs Evaluated at This Level
   2. Types of Measurements
   3. Self-Assessment Ratings on Three Items Versus Targets
   4. Average Differences Between Pretest and Posttest Scores

III. Application
   1. Percentage of Programs Evaluated at This Level
   2. Ratings on Three Items Versus Targets
   3. Percentage of Action Plans Completed
   4. Barriers (List of Top Ten)
   5. Enablers (List of Top Ten)
   6. Management Support Profile

IV. Business Impact
   1. Percentage of Programs Evaluated at This Level
   2. Linkage with Measures (List of Top Ten)
   3. Types of Measurement Techniques
   4. Types of Methods to Isolate the Effects of Programs
   5. Investment Perception

V. ROI
   1. Percentage of Programs Evaluated at This Level
   2. ROI Summary for Each Study
   3. Methods of Converting Data to Monetary Values
   4. Fully Loaded Cost per Participant

Intangibles
   1. List of Intangibles (Top Ten)
   2. How Intangibles Were Captured

levels of data: the six levels described in this series of books plus intangibles. Some of these measures need additional explanation. For example, at Level 1 (Reaction and Planned Action), for item 2, Ratings on Seven Items Versus Targets, seven specific measures were collected in every program. In practice, this firm used several Level 1 instruments (consisting of seven to twenty-one items). However, the seven measures on the macro scorecard were collected for every program. The seven measures included items such as relevance, importance, usefulness, and the amount of new material.

At Level 2 (Learning), self-assessments were administered to determine the participants' assessment of the learning that had taken place. The three metrics in item 3, Self-Assessment Ratings, involved the following items: "the extent to which I have learned the objectives of the program," "the extent to which I have learned all the materials presented during the program," and "the extent to which I have learned the skills and knowledge taught in the program." These measures can be taken for each program and integrated into the macro-level scorecard. When these data were collected each time, Level 2 measures were captured 100 percent of the time (item 1). In practice, some Level 2 measurements were much more detailed. There were objective tests, simulations, skill practices, and a variety of other measurement processes. The data from these detailed measurements were used to make adjustments in each program's design, development, and delivery; however, it would be difficult to integrate such detailed data into a macro-level scorecard. Therefore, some measurements were taken only for use in making adjustments in the program at the micro level, while other measurements were integrated into the macro-level scorecard.

Level 3 (Application) represents a rich source of data. Item 2, Ratings on Three Items Versus Targets, reflects the extent to which participants used the material, their success in the use of the material, and the frequency of use of the material. These three items can be collected in any type of program and therefore were collected as part of the follow-up process for all programs at this corporate university, then integrated into the macro-level scorecard. The top ten barriers and the top ten enablers were taken directly from participants' forced-choice responses, providing evaluators with important information about which overall factors are helping and which are inhibiting success.

At Level 4 (Business Impact), item 2 requires explanation. As part of the follow-up evaluation for each program, the measures that matter to the organization were listed, and participants were given an opportunity to indicate the extent to which the program influenced each measure. Some integration rules were used on the data in order to determine the top ten measures that were influenced by the programs during a particular time frame. When these data were compared with the management team's priorities for the measures, the relationship between the programs and the overall business objectives was revealed.

At Level 5 (ROI) the data integration into the scorecard is relatively straightforward. ROIs on those programs evaluated to this level are reported. Methods for data conversion are listed and the fully loaded costs per participant. To complete the scorecard, intangible benefits are also listed. Additional information on developing a macro-level scorecard can be found at www.roiinstitute.net.

Final Thoughts

This chapter presents the final step in the ROI Methodology: communicating program results. Communicating results is a crucial step in the evaluation process. If this step is not taken seriously, the full impact of the results will not be realized.

This chapter covers some general principles for communicating program results and provides a framework of seven issues that should be addressed in any significant communication effort. Target audiences are discussed; the executive group is emphasized because it is the most important audience. A recommended format for a detailed evaluation report is provided. The chapter also presents details on the most commonly used media for communicating program results, including meetings, publications, electronic media, and macro-level scorecards.

References

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