"How am I Doing, Boss?" – Management Metrics Improve Team Performance

In [recent blog posts](#)we have been examining how to establish the appropriate strategic objectives to meet the company's needs. Part of the formula for success is sharing those strategic objectives with members of the corporate team, and then giving them the tools they need to achieve them. Many managers are good at delegating critical tasks, but they often fail in promoting an environment where team members can perform at their best.

There are a number of ways to measure success in promoting team performance. As [James Slavet](#) of [Greylock Partners](#) writes in a [recent Forbes guest article](#):

> "If you can measure it, you can manage it" is a business saying that goes way back. Maybe it was Henry Ford who said that, or [Peter Drucker](#)? Regardless, most managers only measure outputs, not inputs, which is like telling a Little League team to score more runs, rather than actually explaining how to swing a bat and make contact with the ball. Similarly, most companies measure traffic, revenue or earnings, without considering how to improve the company at an atomic level: how to make a meeting better, or an engineer more productive.

Here is a synopsis of five metrics that Slavet suggests managers can use to measure great team performance:

1. **Flow State Percentage**– Great work requires uninterrupted concentration. We all have experienced that feeling of being "in the zone" or finding "the flow" needed to complete a set task. Unfortunately, most work environments don't promote uninterrupted concentration. There are phone calls, emails, meetings, water cooler conversations, and other disruptions that disrupt concentration. Once interrupted, it can take 15 minutes or longer to get back to a more productive state. Improve performance by promoting an environment where work can proceed without interruption, i.e., increase the flow state percentage. Minimize email usage. Create one meeting-free workday each week. Use other approaches to minimize disruption, and measure improvements in productivity.

2. **The Anxiety-Boredom Continuum**– Strive to create a state where the team operates between boredom and anxiety, and promote a little anxiety to provide an edge. Don't create overwhelming tasks that make the team want to throw up their hands in despair, but create a workload and

rhythm with enough tempo to keep them interested and challenged. Remember that star performers get bored easily, and they often perform better with greater challenges. Watch for telltales that team members may be bored, such as leaving work early, calling in sick, or arriving late. Also watch for frustration and other signs that they are being pushed too hard.

3. **Meeting Promoter Score**– Meetings can be a huge waste of time and, because time is money, inefficient meetings are costly. Reassess meeting policies. Can a junior staff member call a meeting to tie up senior management to debate the color of the new paint in the break room? Ask meeting participants to rate the effectiveness of meetings, and ask what they would do to improve them. The higher the meeting promoter score, the more productive the meetings.

4. **Compound Weekly Learning Rate**– Adding to the pool of company knowledge promotes growth. Employees who have a natural curiosity and a desire to learn will eventually surpass their peers. Promote that curiosity and adding new knowledge to the company. Ask each team member how to make things 1 percent better by adding new knowledge each week. Did they learn something from a customer? From a supplier? Make learning and adding to the pool of knowledge part of the corporate culture and review the progress. Adding a little new knowledge at a time adds up.

5. **Positive Feedback Ratio** – Famed psychologist John Gottmannotes that marriages succeed where there are five times as many positive interactions as negative ones. The same is true in business relationships. Don't use too much negative feedback. Praise team members for their accomplishments so they don't become too wary of criticism. Positive feedback encourages them to give their best. Try to say something nice, even if it seems silly or unnatural. Try to maintain that 5:1 ratio.

Every aspect of company management can and should be measured. Aligning management practices with overarching strategic objectives, managing the process, and measuring the outcome are the necessary steps toward success.