

Background

Most organisations use some form of measures or KPIs to monitor and encourage performance. Just like a top athlete, it's critical for a company to have visibility around its performance in order to improve and react to changes. However, while measures are important, it's not uncommon to see them contradict or block each other. This especially happens when notionally (structurally) separate functions whose KPIs are monitored need to work together – cross functionally - on a project or activity.

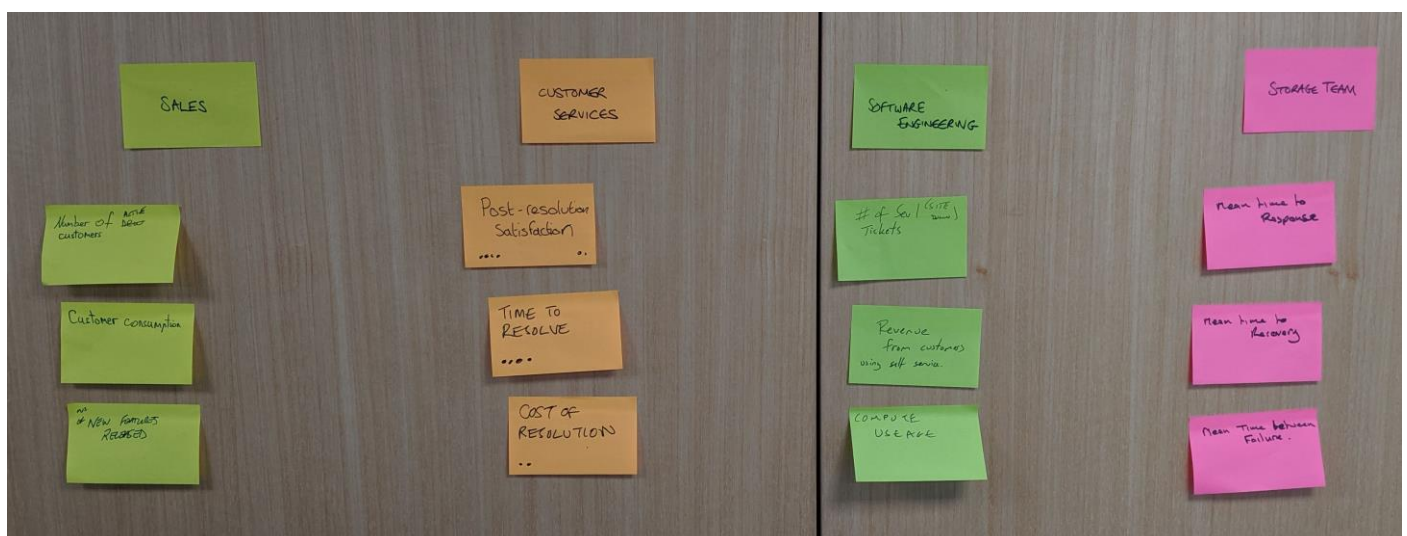
This short exercise is designed to highlight and engage conversation around this problem. The sample content here can be used for a mixed group, or the exercise can be used with actual team KPIs within a business.

What you'll need

- Post-it notes, ideally in different colours (one for each team)
- Pens / Sharpies
- Printed scenario pages (pages 3-6 of this document, or your own)
- A room or space with a wall that people can see

Facilitators Guide

1. Split the group into 3 – 5 teams with at least 3 people on each team
2. Give each team one of the scenario pages representing a business function
3. Allow the teams 10 or 15 minutes to:
 - a. Discuss the measurements for their function based on their given scenario
 - b. Agree on the 3 most important measures for their function
 - c. Write those measures on post-its (one per post-it)
4. Once complete, gather in each of the teams' top-3 measures
5. Add a post-it for the function name, and put that along with their post-its on a wall (read out each and clarify if necessary)
6. Do the same for all the teams until you have something like this:



7. Next, provide some typical scenarios that could occur within the business and see how the team generated KPIs would either support or hinder that situation. For example:

Scenario 1

A Customer is struggling with a problem on the platform and they need help. The cause might be in the infrastructure or software and needs urgent diagnosis.

Scenario 2

There's a significant storage platform outage impacting around 50% of our Customers.

Scenario 3

Sales are frustrated that it takes too long to on-board new Customers.

Discuss with the group whether they see any challenges occurring. Would teams correctly prioritise that scenario, or would their existing work get in the way?

Discussion Points

The exercise should illustrate that a strong focus on own-function KPIs is OK if there isn't a need for cross-functional support, as per example scenario 2 above.

However, when collaboration is necessary, as per scenarios 1 and 3, there is a risk that the separate goals of the functions will impede progress. When this occurs in real life, the resolution may finally only come from the personal relationships between people (that transcend these boundaries), or through an 'intervention' by management.

Even though this is a forced scenario with teams generating their own measures in isolation, this often mirrors reality with little discussion about overall goals.

If own-function measures are essential for inspection and improvement within a group, what would people do instead or to complement these measures?

Team 1: Storage Engineering

Company Background

Our company, The Cat's Meow Co. provide a highly available and commercially successful PaaS (Platform-as-a-Service) cloud development platform.

Functional Purpose

You lead the Storage Engineering function.

Your team engineers, monitors and maintains the tiered storage estate that supplies all other systems.

Instructions

Discuss what metrics or KPIs you would use to measure your function's performance:

- What are the metrics you would use?
- Write the 2-3 most important measures on post-its (one per post-it)
- Be ready to describe what you've chosen with the wider group

You will have no more than 15 minutes.

Team 2: Customer Services

Company Background

Our company, The Cat's Meow Co. provide a highly available and commercially successful PaaS (Platform-as-a-Service) cloud development platform.

Functional Purpose

You lead the Customer Services function.

Your team responds to Customer incidents and requests via phone and chat services.

The team is organised traditionally into 1st and 2nd line teams and makes use of other 3rd line teams (specialists outside of the team) when needed.

Instructions

Discuss what metrics or KPIs you would use to measure your function's performance:

- What are the metrics you would use?
- Write the 2-3 most important measures on post-its (one per post-it)
- Be ready to describe what you've chosen with the wider group

You will have no more than 15 minutes.

Team 3: Software Engineering

Company Background

Our company, The Cat's Meow Co. provide a highly available and commercially successful PaaS (Platform-as-a-Service) cloud development platform.

Functional Purpose

You lead the Software Engineering function.

Your team is primarily responsible for the Java-based web portal where your Customers can carry out self-service actions like creating users, managing resources or viewing reports.

Instructions

Discuss what metrics or KPIs you would use to measure your function's performance:

- What are the metrics you would use?
- Write the 2-3 most important measures on post-its (one per post-it)
- Be ready to describe what you've chosen with the wider group

You will have no more than 15 minutes.

Team 4: Sales

Company Background

Our company, The Cat's Meow Co. provide a highly available and commercially successful PaaS (Platform-as-a-Service) cloud development platform.

Functional Purpose

You lead the Sales function.

Customers only pay for what they use, and your team are responsible for getting new Customers to join the platform and encouraging existing Customers to consume more.

Instructions

Discuss what metrics or KPIs you would use to measure your function's performance:

- What are the metrics you would use?
- Write the 2-3 most important measures on post-its (one per post-it)
- Be ready to describe what you've chosen with the wider group

You will have no more than 15 minutes.