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Capstone Portfolio

Measuring What Matters: Performance Management and the Case of Compstat

Measuring performance within a public organization is an integral process of its operations. Leadership can use the data to account for past actions, manage current operations, and assess progress toward future goals (Holzer, 2015). As we've learned, there are many ways to collect information for program evaluation: surveys, questionnaires, checklists, interviews, documentation review, observation, focus groups, case studies, and quantitative data (Holzer, 2015). However, there are also many challenges associated with attempts to quantify performance because of the complexity and number of stakeholders involved. The collection of accurate and relevant data, timeliness of collection and dissemination of data, and appropriate involvement of stakeholders are barriers to accurately gauging the performance of public organizations.

A public organization first needs to know what its goal or purpose is before it can set performance targets and manage effectiveness. When an organization's goal is unclear, attempts at managing performance will be unsuccessful. Once a goal has been set, public organizations can identify their program's inputs, outputs, outcomes, and efficiency indicators (Holzer, 2015). This allows organizations to determine which data is relevant to collect to accurately measure performance. Data should be monitored systematically and regularly but not in a way that overburdens an organization. "Doing so affords managers a more complete understanding of what is going on in terms of performance" (Holzer, 2015). This also allows for a more timely dissemination of data to other stakeholders so that problems can be addressed as they are

recognized rather than retroactively such as in the case of only collecting data through annual reports.

Engaging multiple stakeholders such as citizens, departmental staff, and elected officials allows for collaboration and different perspectives for performance management. When performance management systems are developed solely by managers, they tend to only focus on inputs and cost efficiency (Holzer, 2015). As public organizations directly impact citizens, addressing current citizen concerns is an important factor when determining if a program is effective. By identifying the critical elements, the organization is able to develop performance measures and evaluation criteria. Due to multiple stakeholder involvement, there is more accountability for the organization to accurately and effectively manage performance.

Heavy crime was a concern for New York City residents in the early 1990s. When Mayor Giuliani was elected in 1993, he emphasized his goal to make the city safer and enlisted former Police Commissioner Bill Bratton of the New York Police Department (NYPD) to assist in this endeavor. Bratton identified several obstacles in the way of this: unreliable crime statistics, lack of organization-wide focus on preventing crime, and low morale (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013). The NYPD officers spent more time responding to crimes which had already taken place than they did trying to prevent crimes from happening in the first place. Effectiveness was measured “in terms of response times, arrest statistics, and clearance rates” (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013). As there was no real accountability in place, these crime statistics were often unreliable and untimely. Additionally, there was low morale amongst the department because employees had worked under the school of thought that there was nothing they could do to address the root issues of crime. Compstat is a crime analysis and accountability system

developed by Bratton and the NYPD in 1994 to reduce crime rates and achieve other police department goals (Mac Donald, 2010).

It includes four generally recognized core components: (1) Timely and accurate information or intelligence; (2) Rapid deployment of resources; (3) Effective tactics; and (4) Relentless follow-up. The most widely recognized element of Compstat is its regularly occurring meetings where department executives, and officers discuss and analyze crime problems and the strategies used to address those problems. (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013)

Along with the implementation of Compstat, was the implementation of a new department-wide goal on crime prevention. Compstat allowed the NYPD to start mapping crime statistics and other indicators of problems, such as the locations of arrests and victims (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013). This promoted community policing, decentralizing problem-solving within the NYPD. It allowed headquarters to better support precinct leadership in the department's goals. The implementation of Comstat improved information sharing, decision-making, and organizational culture within the department and proved to be successful in reduction of crime rates (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013).

While there are many obstacles to measure performance, Compstat is a successful example of how engaging stakeholders and redefining goals can help an organization to more accurately gauge its progress. "While Compstat can be used to measure crime reduction, it can also be used to assess overtime, budgets, use of force, citizen complaints, and other measures of police work for which the public and government leaders hold police agencies accountable" (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013). The system has been adopted by non-law enforcement agencies to develop their own performance management systems. Overall, it allows for

organizations to place a greater emphasis on establishing priorities and demonstrating their effectiveness in achieving performance goals.

References

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