

## **PerformanceXpress**

### *Tales from the Field: Using the SAM for Cause Analysis in County Community and Family Services*

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“Tales from the Field” are reports of evidence-based performance improvement practice and advice, presented by graduate students, alumni and faculty of Boise State University’s Instructional and Performance Technology department.

#### **The Field**

Children and Family Services is the typical social services organization found in many city, county, and state governments. Their charter is to protect a child's welfare and to promote family and proper parenting skills. In doing so, there are times that children are removed from the home and placed into protective care homes, usually with relatives or foster parents. During this time, parental rights of visitation must be upheld according to court jurisdiction. Children must also attend all court mandated appointments. The unit of Children and Family Services that accommodates the parental visits and transportation to all court mandated appearances is the Community Worker unit.

#### **The Performance Issue(s)**

Community workers were failing to transport all involved children and/or parents to and from court-ordered appointments. The desired level of provided service was 100% of visits and appointments. The actual performance was 76%. Therefore, the gap was 24%. This gap manifested itself in several very real human impacts including 1) increased loads on social workers, 2) legal and morale implications parents and children, and 3) issues of motivation and well being that impacted both social workers and community workers.

#### **Approach: Framing the System**

The Synchronized Analysis Model (SAM) (Marker, 2007) expands Gilberts BEM to accommodate multiple levels of environmental data. Symptoms can then be traced back between levels to locate root causes. In this situation, with multiple levels in the organization and with both internal and external impacts, the SAM provided a tool that would allow HPT practitioner to match the identified causes to the proper level where those causes occurred in the organization. It also allowed the HPT practitioner to look beyond symptoms and map those back to where the cause started. The SAM provided a fuller understanding of systematic and systemic issues; other tools alone could not

have clearly defined root cause and the environmental levels associated with them.

### **Analysis: Documenting the Dynamics**

Collected environmental data about causes were plugged into the SAM as shown below.

<INSERT FIGURE HERE>

### **Solutions**

- Creating an Electronic Performance Support System to aid scheduling.
- Creating a confirmation process based on Self-Directed-Work-Team concepts to allow the community workers to adjust schedules and plan the weekly and daily activities.
- Re-engineering the current work requirements for community workers to enable them to start and stop their workdays in flexible locations.
- Implementing a real-time Statistical Process Control program in the social worker unit to increase:
  - Management communication
  - Worker communication
  - Continuous improvement

### **HPT-Grounded Advice**

- With dispersed offices and departments, Perception Analysis is important to ensure all views and opinions are addressed.
- Use a well developed data acquisition plan to ensure thorough gathering of all environmental and organizational data.
- Other tools such as the Group Nominal Technique and Affinity Diagramming add significant value to sorting through the mass of data acquired.
- Use the SAM as a Change Management Communication tool. It provides an organized view of all the issues that can be communicated to the organization.

### **References**

Marker, A. (2007). Synchronized Analysis Model (SAM): Linking Gilbert's Behavior Engineering Model with Environmental Analysis Models *Performance Improvement*, 46(1), 26-32.

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