Strategic Help for Hounds

By DeAnn Allen, Wendy Hocken, Kim Lesh, & Kelly Palmer

Tales from the Field, a monthly column, consists of 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 Organization

Since the 1970s, the North Texas Basset Hound Rescue (NTBHR) has been dedicated to sheltering and saving at-risk basset hounds. Run completely by volunteers, their mission includes the prevention of cruelty to animals by locating and caring for homeless or mistreated basset hounds, providing them with medical care, and placing them in permanent loving homes.

The Strategic Needs Assessment

In the fall of 2009, a team of graduate students at Boise State University conducted a strategic needs assessment (NA) for NTBHR after it was revealed they had no formal organizational goals. The NA Team used Rummler and Brache's Nine Performance Variables Model (Rummler & Brache, 1995) as a practical guide for analyzing performance throughout all levels of the organization, including the organizational, process and job/performer levels.

NTBHR executives initially identified an opportunity to better manage the volume of basset hounds that need rescuing in hopes of rescuing as many hounds as their resources allow. Since organizational goals had not been clearly defined, the NA Team began at the organizational level to provide a structural framework from which the other levels of performance could be managed. NTBHR executives helped pinpoint the performance priorities of the organization.

Data Collection and Analysis

The NA Team collected existing data, obtained benchmark information from similar organizations throughout the country, and observed adoption events. Additionally, they surveyed NTBHR volunteers and interviewed the NTBHR Board of Directors.

After the data was collected, the NA Team organized the information into the Nine Boxes Model based on key questions asked in Rummler and Brache's (1995) expanded Nine Performance Variables. A brief review of the most identifiable factors is in Table 1.

	Goals	Design	Management
Organization	No formal goals exist. The NTBHR has a clear mission to lead future-goal setting endeavors.	The NTBHR has clearly defined purposes and functions. However, the flow of inputs and outputs between functions needs updating.	A definitive management culture exists, but no steps are being taken for performance review other than annual hound adoption numbers.
Process	No process goals exist. The NA Team discovered multiple opportunities for goals to be linked to both organizational goals and customer requirements.	Multiple processes exist; however, there are few documented processes. Developing formal processes will aid in goal attainment.	Processes are not being managed. Process management creates an opportunity to modify processes as needs arise.
Performer	Limited job descriptions were available and job performance metrics are not linked to process requirements.	Adequate information and tools have been supplied to the NTBHR's support workers and volunteers.	There is no formal incentive plan or feedback given to volunteers.

Table 1. The Nine Boxes Model

Findings & Recommendations

Rummler and Brache's model dictates that having clear goals at each level ensures alignment with desired results. It is clear that goals, design, and management at each level serve as a foundational guide for an organization. Therefore, the findings and recommendations are presented by level.

	Findings	Recommendations
Organization	• Formal goals have not been set or communicated throughout the organization. • Although there are fundraising goals and annual adoption predictions, the NTBHR is not measuring all indicators that support the operations of the organization.	• Formalize organizational goals and the mission and vision for the NTBHR in a way that aligns all three. • Develop goals to track relevant areas of operation.

Process	• There is an organizational perception that dogs overstay their welcome in rescue. Not having objective data to either support or deny the perception is limiting any opportunities for adoption improvement. • Information is not kept current nor is there a tracking system in place to monitor how many fosters are available at any time. • Benchmark data showed significant variation in both operational data collected by rescues and their individual operational processes.	• Develop a classification and tracking system for the anticipated time hounds will remain in rescue, as well as tracking of time in rescue. • Develop a system to track available fosters and to review data to determine if additional foster homes would be beneficial. • Consider networking with high performing rescues and review these organizations' processes for possible adoption by NTBHR.
Job/Performer	• Important work groups, including volunteers and fosters, feel supported by NTBHR in their roles; however, gaps exist that link process goals to job and performer goals, design, and management, as well as to processes and the organization's mission and values.	• Conducting a Job and Task Analysis once the NTBHR has successfully aligned organizational goals and processes with their redefined mission and vision.

Table 2: Findings and Recommendations

Many factors affect performance within an organization, from environment and society, to management and goal attainment. If an organization such as NTBHR does not maintain strategic alignment throughout, these factors may contribute to a need for identification of organizational performance and business strategy gaps. A strategic needs assessment was useful in guiding the NTBHR toward clear, strategic business practices and organizational goals.

References

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