

# Eight Effective Ways to Communicate Your Total Solution Consulting Results to Clients



BY MARK HORDES

Success alone is insufficient if the results of your consulting efforts are not effectively communicated. The challenge has become to integrate, maintain, and zero in on programs that demonstrate results. Overlapping strategies, duplicative task forces, increased costs, and long implementation time frames have left many executives suspicious about the true results that service improvements can achieve. Consequently, many efforts are discontinued, inappropriately merged, or segmented away to remote locations of the organization.

Many of these discontinued efforts, however, are successful. Why don't they expand? Because they die due to key managers failing to analyze, plan, and communicate results effectively. Service delivery improvement efforts need the right publicity—tailored to pre-determined objectives and themes, and prepared and presented to appropriate audiences.

## Pre-planning

Before deciding on a communications approach, you must set aside time for pre-planning. Ask yourself three critical questions:

### 1 What is the anticipated outcome of the presentation?

Depending on your audience your answer may be to:

- Establish channels of communication about the program with other departments.
- Justify staff involvement and time.
- Build a “critical mass” of support.
- Establish the program as an ongoing, formal process in the company.

### 2 Why am I presenting this information?

Your purpose may be to:

- Inform or instruct.
- Promote or “sell” productivity and quality.
- Attract interest.
- Inspire or initiate action.
- Evaluate, interpret, or clarify.

- Set the stage for further action.
- Gather ideas and explore alternatives.

### 3 Which principal factors most interest my audience?

As a general rule, you will probably find groups concerned about:

- Reducing costs of services.
- Improving quality and delivery.
- Shortening schedules to support the customer base.
- Increasing performance of consulting.
- Improving effectiveness of marketing.
- Enhancing quality of work life.
- Increasing participation in client decisions.
- Improving service flow.
- Developing and tracking service measures.
- Enhancing individual and group ability to execute.

Your answers should point you in the right direction. It is important, however, for you to develop your own list of questions and to tailor your message to the factors

and priorities unique to your own environment.

## Eight Approaches

After pre-planning is complete and you have analyzed the program's results, consider these eight approaches to communicate results.

**1 Descriptive Approach.** Answer questions about the productivity improvement program such as "What is it?", "What does it do?", and "How does it do it?" This approach is most effective when presenting a proposal for a new undertaking based on the success of a previous effort.

**2 Critical-Events Approach.** This approach focuses on the tasks and processes that affected the program. The emphasis in this approach is on answering such questions as "What happened?", "Why did it happen?", and "So what?" A critical-events approach is most effective when some dramatic improvement occurred as a result of a services improvement effort.

**3 Status Approach.** This approach highlights what was planned, what was accomplished, and what will happen next. Its purpose is to present a program update. It is useful in sustaining momentum, documenting past successes, and getting buy-in for a program's continuation.

**4 Analytical-Scientific Approach.** This approach is best

utilized when management has identified a specific problem from the beginning of the process. Your purpose in using this approach is to communicate how the productivity improvement program is addressing or has overcome that problem.

**5 Needs-Satisfaction Approach.** If one particular method for service improvement has been selected over another, a needs-satisfaction approach can be useful in demonstrating why that method was chosen. Using this approach, you acknowledge the validity of other methods, thereby establishing that a comprehensive, thoughtful analysis took place.

**6 Reflective Approach.** This approach is simply the old military adage, "Tell them what you are going to tell them; tell them; then explain what you've told them." This is a general, catch-all approach to communicating your service results. It is adaptable for any audience and can take the form of a report or an update.

**7 Human Interest-Affective Approach.** This approach utilizes testimonials from individuals who have experienced the services improvement process. Both first- and third-person accounts of changes and results are effective. The human interest-affective approach to communication is also an important recognition tool.

**8 Total Evaluation Approach (TEA).** The TEA approach is the most complete and detailed method of communicating the results of consulting efforts. It is generally used at the completion of a project or at the end of a particular phase of a project. Generally, a total evaluation includes combinations of all the approaches mentioned above. There are seven useful sections in the TEA approach:

- Summary.
- Background information.
- Description of the evaluation process.
- List of results.
- Discussion of the results.
- Cost-and-benefit analysis.
- Set of conclusions and recommendations.

## Conclusion

Your communication strategy and approach can mean the difference between stagnation or proliferation of your service improvement program. Success breeds success, so accept the challenge and communicate effectively the results of your efforts in maximizing your services and solutions. ▼

Mark Hordes is a partner with Alexander Consulting, LLC, a management consultancy that creates and implements strategies for professional services organizations. Contact him at 239-283-7400 or visit [www.alexanderconsultingbiz.com](http://www.alexanderconsultingbiz.com).