



THE METRICS MONSTER WHITE PAPER

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PUBLISHED: MAY 30, 2008
VERSION: 1.1

The monster lurking in the corridors is a problem. This is not your garden-variety type of problem; something a well implemented Problem Management process could deal with and eliminate. No, this creature is of mythical scale. This monster even has a name: *Metrics*. Now calm down. I know this sounds blasphemous, taking the M-word in vain and all. I am not trying to diminish the importance of metrics. The problem is one of perspective. The crux of the matter is that the buzz around metrics at many organizations seems to leave out the most important characteristic of doing IT Service Management well. That factor is the customer. In other words, IT Service Management is all about WHO and not WHAT. When people talk about metrics, they have an unfortunate habit of focusing on the *what* of metrics and processes, rather than focusing on the *who* of the customer. If organizations are going to make IT Service Management really work successfully, they need to start seeing things through the eyes of the customer and not through metric, process and technology colored glasses.

You are probably saying to yourself: Has he lost his mind? We work in IT, we have to have technology, processes and metrics or our world collapses. No doubt it just may. It is not metrics as an idea that is causing difficulties. It is the *focus* on metrics, processes, and technology to the *exclusion* of all other things, in particular the customers, that has short-circuited some attempts to make IT Service Management work. In academia, it would be like publishing research that was all statistics and conclusions. Where is the hypothesis? Where is the focus? Why are we doing the research in the first place? The same kinds of questions apply to IT.

So we come to our problem—how do we conquer the *Metrics Monster*? IT has the unsurpassed capability to collect reams of data and statistics, create mounds of reports, and generate tons of *metrics*. Why? Of course we want to provide answers to questions such as those listed. We want to resolve the garden-variety Incidents and find permanent solutions and root causes to Problems. We want to institute continuous improvement. We want to be responsible and accountable; but accountable to whom or what? IT? Metrics? No, accountable to the customer. In other words, without the customer the metrics are just a set of numbers with no context or meaning. The numbers are just raw data, not information or knowledge. IT Service Management at its core is designed to help turn data into meaningful, useful information and then into more useful knowledge. But information and knowledge need a context. The context for IT data, information and knowledge is the customer.

But how do you go about turning data into information? How can we slay the Metrics Monster? There are a set of steps you can follow:

1. Identify your customer or market segments
2. Gather customer requirements for services they desire

3. Identify quantifiable aspects of the requirements by breaking down the requirements into more granular pieces. Eventually you will get down to technical specifications.
4. Build measurements and metrics based on the most granular pieces and aggregate together to find meaningful measurements
5. Validate the measurements and the metrics with the customers—ask your customer what they will do with the information and knowledge you will provide to them.
6. Gather only the data needed to fulfill the measurements from various outputs
7. Analyze the information using proven statistical, analysis and critical thinking methods and techniques
8. Translate the analysis into meaningful pieces of information and knowledge for your customers to use in the way they described to you (in other words use their language)
9. Be willing to throw out measurements and metrics if the customer sees no value in them
10. Repeat as necessary

As I stated, many organizations have a problem. They have focused on metrics, measurements, processes, automation and all sorts of other ways of telling how good they are doing. The problem is that we have gone through a lot of effort and time to find out how good we are, but we have lost sight of the key reason for the existence of IT. We have lost sight of the customer. Your organization will need to ask itself a question. Are we doing metrics for the sake of metrics, not for the sake of improving the quality of our products and services, not for meeting the needs of our users, not for improving the experience of our customers? We have become accountable to a set of figures and printed text. Where are the people in the equation? Sadly, in some organizations, the customers may have virtually disappeared in favor of data, procedures and systems.

Many of us in the IT industry have worked for the several years to foster a consistent focus on the most important part of delivering services: the customer. I am talking about living, breathing organisms to which you and I should feel accountable. Everything else is supporting material. Metrics are enablers and tools, not the goal. The goal is customer satisfaction. Without the customer, there are no products and services. Without the customer IT has no purpose. If we start with the customer, IT Service Management takes on a new life, a sharp focus and can produce great benefits.

If we fail the customer, what is the point of doing IT?