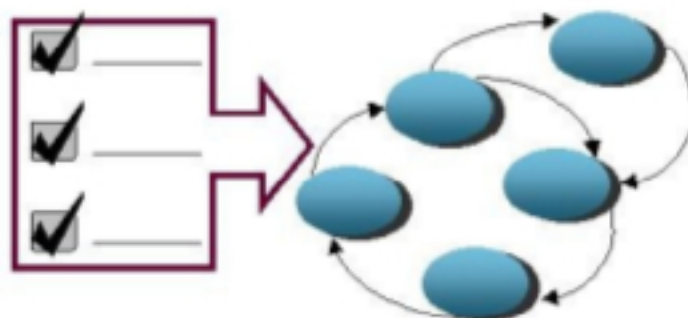


Beyond Balanced Scorecards

*You can't use a golf scorecard for a tennis match.
Understand the game you're playing before you fix on key measures.*



[Steve Montague](#)

Performance Management Network Inc.

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A not-for-profit employment agency I know was recently quite frustrated. It had spent more than a million dollars with a large international consulting firm developing its one-page (one table really) scorecard of numbers to assess organizational performance. The problem was that it wasn't sure what to make of the results. Costs, processing times, job placement rates . . . the table had more than forty measures - with the ability to disaggregate by region and by business unit. The problem was that senior management didn't know what to make of the numbers. Not surprisingly, employees quickly grew to mistrust the initiative, a work stoppage ensued, and the system fell into disrepute.

A Problematic Pathology

Several efforts at balanced scorecard¹¹ implementation have suffered a similar fate. It seems that all too often senior managers decide that a scorecard a.k.a. 'dashboard' will provide the answers they need for accountability and key decisions. Once approved, the effort is delegated (sometimes abdicated?) to a team of specialists - often led by outside consultants - to implement the initiative.

Using Kaplan and Norton's book, *The Balanced Scorecard*, and other general texts as a guide, the team proceeds to investigate and consult with managers and staff. Unfortunately, in the "hurry-up" 90s, this can often mean a perfunctory effort - more designed to sell staff on the idea of a balanced scorecard than to truly solicit their input.

The need to keep things simple, with a few key measures rolled up to the corporate level, means that the implementing team usually can't tolerate too much diversity and therefore cannot truly