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Outcome Evaluation:

You Achieve Only What You Measure

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A Common Situation?



- You are working through a grant application and you get to a section called “evaluation,” and wonder:
 - What does the grant maker want this time?
 - Or worse yet, “We don’t really have any data!”

Agenda

- Today we are going to take a new look at evaluation and walk through some of the key aspects.
Specifically:
 - Why do evaluation?
 - What is evaluation?
 - What is outcome-based evaluation?
 - What are some key concepts and terms?
 - Review a few best-practices

Today's Desired Outcome

- Understand the fundamental concepts and terms used in outcome evaluation
- Distinguish between outputs and outcomes
- Develop a basic logic model to be applied to one of your programs
- Become comfortable in using outcome evaluation as a SOP

Group Discussion...

Why is Evaluation Important?

Why is Evaluation Important?

- Nonprofits are “owned” by the public
- Helps determine if nonprofits are maximizing public and private resources in their mission delivery
- To demonstrate progress and results
- Focus drives continual review and improvement of programs
- Gathers information on ways to better serve
- Facilitates accountability and communication with stakeholders
- Identifies efficient/effective and inefficient/ineffective programs and processes

What Specifically is Evaluation?

- A tool that gained popularity in the early 90's that assists organizations:
 - Counts / tracks output
 - Provides benchmarks to measure success
 - Recognize programmatic inefficiencies
 - Identify areas for improvement / reorganization
- Ultimately, evaluation helps answer this key question:
 - **Is anyone better off as a result of our services?**

So, What is Outcome Based Evaluation?

- A systematic way to assess the **extent** to which a program has achieved its **intended results**.
- A process that create focus on organizational mission, impact, and effectiveness
- Answers key questions of:
 - How do we know if we are making a difference?
 - How do I know if my donation is a worthwhile investment?

How is Outcome Based Evaluation used?

- It's a hands-on, holistic approach to looking at an organization's mission impact
- It's a way of learning and evaluating, not measuring "good or bad"
- It is based upon measuring results – so there is little room for "fuzzy goals"
- Provides the answer to the question funders ask most, *"What has changed in the lives of individuals, families, organizations or the community as a result of a specific initiative or program?"*
 - Examples: *Participants' knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, behavior, condition or status*

Internal Benefits of Outcome Evaluation

- Provide direction for staff
- Identify training needs
- Improve programs
- Provide input for strategic planning
- Guide planning and justify resource allocation
- Identify targets
- Focus board's attention on programmatic issues
- Others??

External Benefits of Outcome Evaluation

- Promote program to potential participants
- Retain and increase funding
- Identify partners for collaboration
- Enhance organization's and program's public image
- Develop new avenues of “best practice” driven revenue
- Others??

What does Evaluation Tell Us?

- Provides Accountability
 - Concrete information about the value of donor's financial investments
- Improves Programmatic Quality
 - Determines which programs are working, which are not, and which work for some recipients but not others
- Helps Allocate Resources
 - Directs resources and helps gauge whether more intensive or less intensive programs make a difference
- Markets Successful Programs
 - People like to support “winners”
 - Establishes “best practices” for repeatable success

Evaluation Terms – Inputs

- Resources a program uses to provide services to program participants
- Examples of Inputs:
 - Staff / staff time
 - Money
 - Volunteers / volunteer time
 - Facilities
 - Equipment and supplies
- These **Inputs** are used to support **Activities**

Evaluation Terms – Activities

- Methods / processes / events which are provided as a component of an organization's mission delivery
- Examples of Activities:
 - Feed and shelter homeless families
 - Provide job training
 - Educate the public about the signs of child abuse
 - Counsel those with overwhelming debt
 - Create mentoring relationships for youth
- These **Activities** result in **Outputs**

Evaluation Terms – Outputs

- Qualitative products of a program's activities.
- Usually measured by how many? How often? Over what duration?
- Examples of Outputs:
 - Number of classes taught
 - Number of counseling sessions conducted
 - Number of children treated
 - Hours of service delivered
 - Months program in service

Evaluation Terms – Outcomes

- Measurable and achievable indicators that a program is having on participants?
- Mostly identified as short-term, intermediate or longer-term impacts.
- Examples of Outcomes:
 - Decreased number of teenage pregnancies
 - Increased skills and job retention
 - Decreased homeless
 - Decreased incidences of sexual abuse
 - Increased graduation rates

Evaluation Terms – Outcome Indicators

- Specific characteristics or behaviors measured to track a program’s success in achieving desired outcomes.
- Indicators are more “observable” than Outcomes.
- For a program that states “witnessing improvement in parenting skills,” indicators may be:
 - Use of family interaction Skills
 - Reduction of conflict
- For “healthy lifestyle,” indicators may be:
 - Not smoking
 - Maintaining recommended blood pressure and cholesterol level, and so forth

Evaluation Terms – Miscellaneous

- **Outcome Targets** – Numerical objectives for a program’s future level of achievement...usually based on prior year’s Outcomes / results
- **Outcome Measurement** – The process of regular, systematic tracking of the extent to which program participants experience intended benefits or changes
- **Goals** – Broad, visionary statements that outline the ultimate impact expected to occur through the long-term adoption of programmatic activities.
 - Examples may be:
 - Violence prevention
 - Public safety

Evaluation Terms – Logic Model

- It is a tool or diagram that is used to visually show the relationship between the Activities and Outcomes.
- Specifically, it:
 - Identifies the process and outcome portions of a program
 - Shows the relationship between inputs and expected outcomes
 - Provides a graphical summary of how program components relate to the whole

Leadership Development – Logic Model

Process			Outcome	
Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Goals
Program Inputs	Program Methods	Service Units	S / I / L-term Changes	Expected Impacts
<div style="border: 2px dashed black; padding: 20px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> If </div>			<div style="border: 2px dashed black; padding: 20px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> Then </div>	

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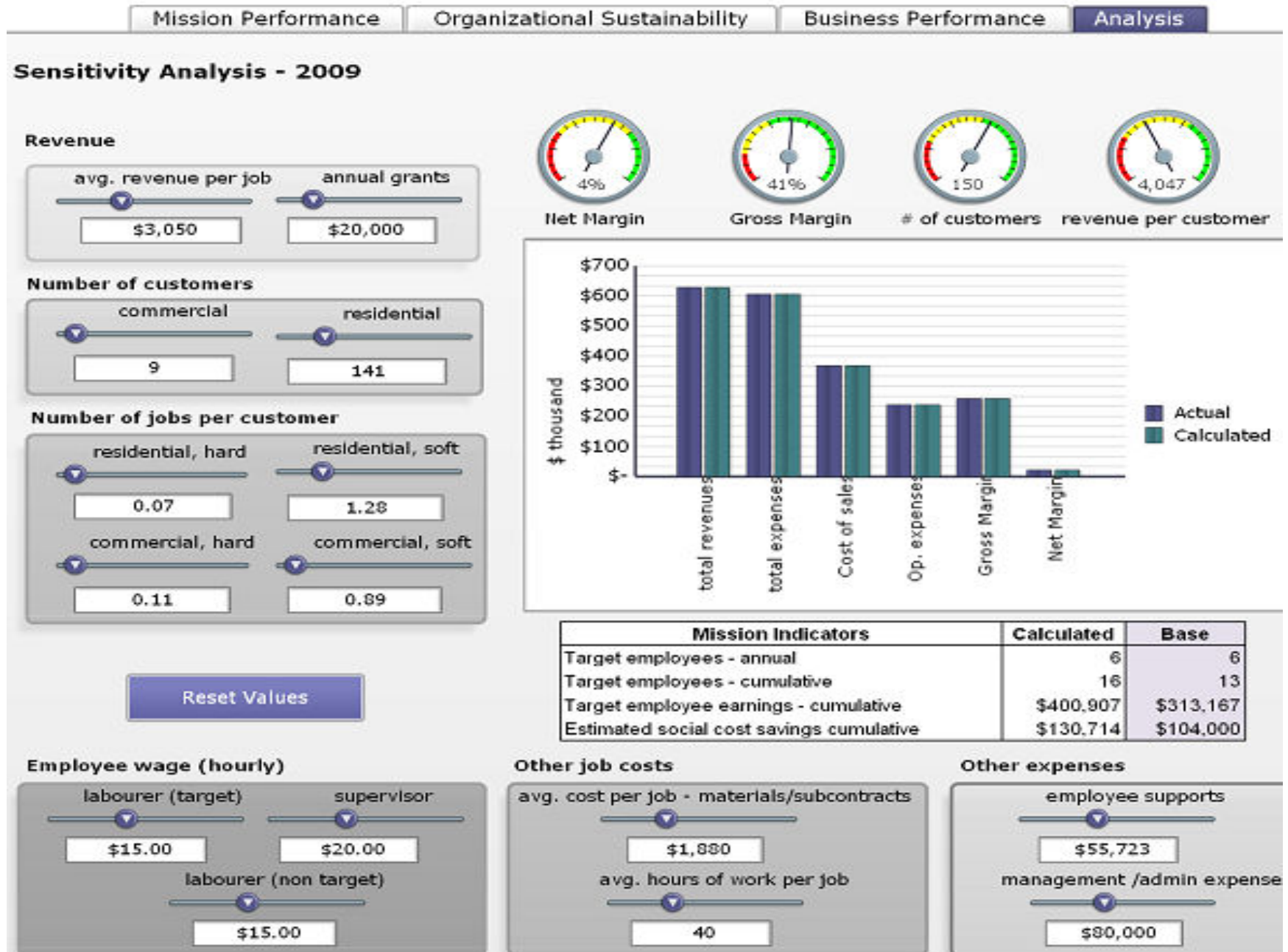
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Sample Dashboard



Evaluation Best Practices

- Analyze outcomes by reviewing information from more than one data source
- Document your interpretation of the outcome data for future reference and repurposing
- Examine outcome data for:
 - Time trends
 - Differences among categories of clients (age, gender, etc.)
 - Differences among similar services / procedures
 - Differences among like-mission organizations
 - Differences from targeted values

Evaluation Best Practices cont'd.

- Experiment to find methods to improve outcomes
- Ensure you maintain organizational transparency – the new “trustworthiness”
- Ensure that you collect data regularly, not just prior to a funders request
- Client feedback should be a key component of your evaluation
 - Feedback from clients that are non-responsive or drop outs can be even MORE enlightening
- Remember KISS – *not the band*
 - Keep your evaluations and questionnaires simple

Evaluation Best Practices cont'd.

- Confidentiality is key
- Use time horizons for post-service data gathering
 - Three, Six, Nine months...
- Don't be afraid to test new data collection methods
 - Social Media – Facebook, Twitter, on-line communities...
 - Interactive Video
- Collaboration is not only for programs delivery
 - Collaborative evaluation processes will help you gain key insights and learnings
- Information is power – ensure open, accurate data sources and platforms

New Thinking

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
 - Developed a four-stage Lifecycle of Giving Strategy that focuses on constant learning
 - Conducted a recent study entitled – *Measuring and/or estimating Social Value Creation: Insights Into Eight Integrated Cost Approaches*
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 - Less concerned about “effectiveness” and more about learning how to best improve program or create social change
 - Developed an “Impact Framework” to help organizations evaluate their programs

Potential Pitfalls

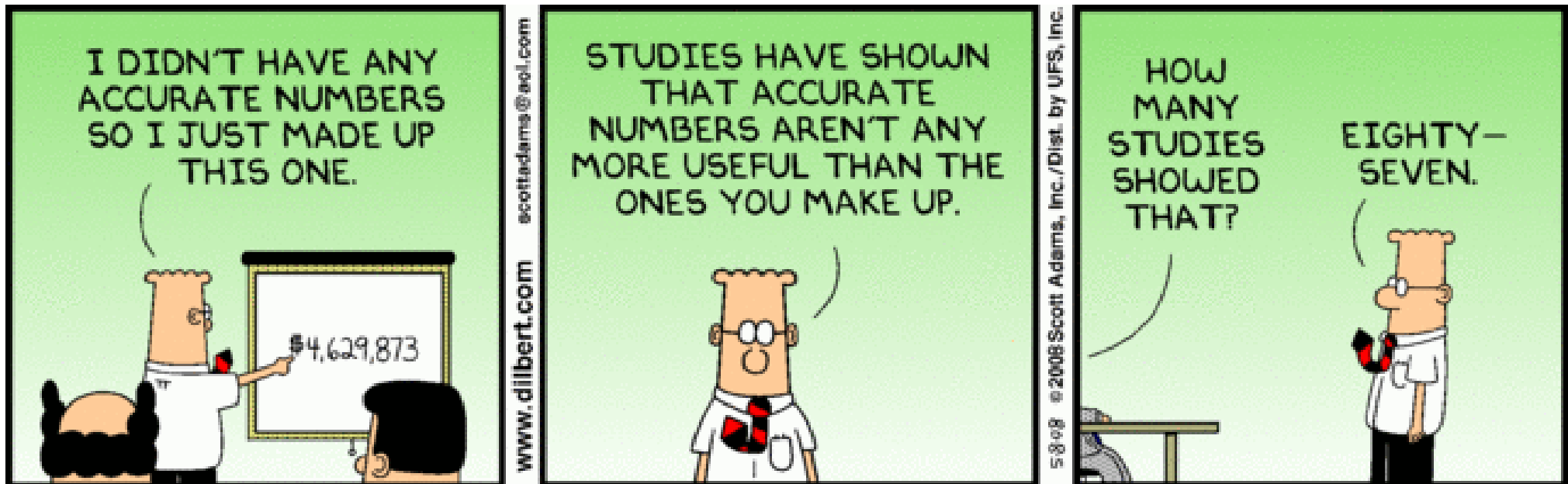
- Programmatic silos get developed within an organization
- Language becomes program-speak and difficult to disseminate
- Wide-range of audiences causes multiple rework of message and results
- Tensions develops between feasibility and credibility/validity
- The desire to track output and outcomes causes the temptation to compare apples to oranges
- Those who pay may wish to be involved...

Today's Outcome Evaluation

- ▲ Understand the fundamental concepts and terms used in outcome evaluation
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- ▲ Become comfortable in using outcome evaluation as a standard operating procedure (SOP)

Parting Thoughts...

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted”



“You can't manage what you can't measure”

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Reference Material

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