



Workplace Satisfaction Project Efficiency Tools

Efficiency is directly related to performance. In order to be successful, effort must be aligned with usefulness; effort must be commensurate with value. A high-performing organization continuously seeks ways to develop smarter, sharper practices and processes.

Business organizations seek efficiency because they must be competitive, or they will cease to exist because another organization will undercut their bottom line. Government organizations do not have that issue. However, in a time of reduced resources and unprecedented levels of commitment and complexity, the NPS is well served by promoting efficiency at all levels.

- The first step in seeking greater efficiency is an objective assessment of operational obligations and commitments. Some may be vital, some may be useful, but some may be of questionable value. Each team, park, or office can list and prioritize perceived work commitments, and collaboratively identify what the obligations truly are, listed from most important to least. Then it can be a matter of identifying what resources the workgroup has to dedicate to the obligations and planning accordingly. There will be a line beyond which the resources are inadequate to deal with additional obligations; this line can mark the boundary of effective and efficient resource allocation.
- Employee time and energy are our nonrenewable resources for accomplishing work; they must be committed wisely.
- Complexity and divided attention erode efficiency. In an environment where possible obligations of time and energy appear constantly, a good workgroup manager will seek to keep employees focused on the task at hand rather than constantly reacting to new stimuli.
- Efficiency – and employee engagement – can be significantly enhanced by soliciting the opinion and input of others as to strategies for addressing (or choosing not to address) the problem. Collaboration, when used wisely, will create solutions, while collaboration managed poorly will create additional steps and barriers.
- Recognizing employees' individual and specific strengths, and assigning work accordingly, can help boost efficiency.
- In an atmosphere of trust, good managers can increase efficiency by empowering employees to make more independent choices and decisions. The fewer bureaucratic steps involved in a process, and the less time spent waiting for approval, the better.
- Embracing innovation is how most fast-moving organizations add efficiency. Approaching existing processes, procedures, and conventional thought with a mindset of figuring out a new way to do it often results in discovered efficiencies of time and energy.
- Flexibility is a fundamental of efficiency; maximizing it without compromising values or policies will enhance performance.
- In an organization where 'work silos' (hierarchical competing work groups such as divisions and branches) can slow productivity, it is good practice to seek to overcome internal organizational barriers and silos, and work across administrative lines easily and quickly. This is done by building trust and open communication lines.
- A good manager will observe issues that are causing 'roadblocks' to maximized employee performance, and work to remove or mitigate them.

- In an organization with frequent transfers, a team, park, or office is often well served by investing the time in creating a new employee handbook or other similar tool. This allows expectations and information to be quickly and efficiently transferred to a new employee.
- Job aids and procedural checklists can be excellent means for successfully performing low-frequency tasks with which an employee may not be intimately familiar.

