

White Paper

March 2006



Authors:

Richard A. Pierce, Ph.D.
Co-Founder &
Executive Director
Rising Sun Consultants

Solution Focus Areas:

Leadership / Supervision
Engagement/Morale
Turnover/Retention
Productivity

For more information about Rising Sun Consultants, contact Lynn

Lehman at:

717-512-7531

or

Lynn@RisingSunConsultants.com

Visit our website at

www.RisingSunConsultants.com

Program Evaluation



PROGRAM EVALUATION RESEARCH

At an organizational level, evaluation is often conducted as a way to measure key indicators of success. The primary purpose of program evaluation is typically to provide information (both formative and/or summative) for future decision-making. By first defining the outcomes, and then outlining the programs and services (process) for accomplishing the outcomes, an organization can evaluate the cost effectiveness of their programs and services and their aggregated value for both the organization and their clients/customers.

While focus on research is good, what is most important is that both the research itself, as well as the results, must be open to outside scrutiny. Ideology and research do not always go well together and plans need to be in place to ensure there is a process of policy and practice development that responds to research findings as they become available. Ultimately, therefore, it is in evaluating the development, implementation, and impact of programs/services that an organization holds itself accountable to its vision, mission, and guiding principles.

Program Evaluation

As the name implies, program evaluation focuses on the effectiveness of individual programs/services, rather than on the effectiveness of the organization as a whole. From a technical perspective, in order to ensure both validity and reliability of the data collected, it is important to:

- ensure adequate clarity and definition of the desired outcomes,
- use multiple measures from multiple sources, and
- incorporate an assessment of any possible extenuating factors which might influence the outcome. (Kluger & Alexander, 1996)

Naturally, no single form of assessment/evaluation alone will provide us with "the answer" to our program/quality improvement questions or concerns. Most effective evaluation research uses a number of concurrent assessments. One example of a major form of multi-use program evaluation is referred to as "consumer satisfaction" or "group climate" surveys. The purpose of such surveys is to measure the perception of client/customer regarding the quality of the products and services. The

surveys themselves are designed to provide an opportunity to anonymously provide feedback, as well as share issues and concerns. All consumer surveys are done for the purpose of improving the quality of program/services being provided.

Perhaps the most important aspect of using consumer surveys as part of a comprehensive program evaluation is that the information must be shared and actions must be taken, when appropriate. For example, it is possible that from time to time a serious issue may come up as part of a consumer survey. It must always be kept in mind that the primary purpose of all this effort is to improve client/customer satisfaction.