

1803

ABA 96 Panel - Getting Data from Clients: What You've Tried that Worked Og Lindsley

What has worked for others

Our colleagues in Organizational Behavior Management (OBM) and Performance Management (PM) have done a fine job collecting data from the niche market of Safety. But they have been very careful to use data already collected by the client (days without accident or percent safe acts). They have used mostly data collected by their clients to demonstrate the effects of interventions derived from Behavior Analysis (incentive systems, posting of results, training in safe acts, job aids, etc.).

Our colleagues in training in the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI) have paid a heavy price for their popularity. The price is that they have almost no client data. And, what little they have are mostly client reactions to the training on Likert scales. There are almost no data on what was learned in the training, how much of this transferred to on-the-job performance, or the impact of the training on the bottom line profits,

It looks like the fewer demands you make on your clients to keep data, the more popular you are as a consultant.

What has worked for me

When you make even more data-keeping demands on clients, as I have done over the past five years trying to install Standard Celeration Charts (SCC), the task becomes more difficult. I have lost several large fortune 500 clients by showing them how their own data system (mostly quarterly recorded percents in spread sheet form) has misled them. Still I try, changing my tactic each time, and telling myself that this next tactic might work.

I found that scaring clients a bit with "The Dangers of Percent" produced some interest and got high positive reactions from presentations. However, the few customers it stirred up did not endure reassignment of my contact persons.

I've found that using more common business terms (ChangeChart™ in place of Celeration Chart) creates a little more interest, but not enough to boom sales.

What hasn't worked

Our panel might have been titled "What you've tried that didn't work." Our problem is that we can't afford to try things that don't work with our clients, because we can't afford to lose even one! It is impossible to create when you can't make errors. So, we have a very short list of what didn't work.

Calling an Standard Celeration Chart a log chart, or just a chart is a mistake. The client interrupts your presentation, tells his management information systems director to log their data and thanks you for the tip with no reimbursement or plans for further consultation.

We have much more than a log chart! We have a standard visual perception SYSTEM for processing, analyzing, and understanding change at many levels fluently. A very important part of our system is the training we provide in seeing and understanding change. The key words are SEEING and UNDERSTANDING and CHANGE and SYSTEM.

We need to try more things in attempts to solve this marketing problem

Most of us still sell system features

Our training in academia has taught us to seek the general law, the general method. Therefore we focus on features, rather than benefits. We have been taught to fill needs rather than wants

I have taught that the SCC: Straightens growth lines, Normalizes variance, Homogenizes variance, Easily locates exemplars, Speeds presentation, Is easy to learn, and is inexpensive. Eyes glaze and little happens.

We should sell system benefits specific to our client

The biggest benefit of SC system is high speed data reading and analysis. But we need to learn how to package and market that. I submitted a proposal to the International Society for Performance Improvement for a conference session titled, "How to read a spread sheet in 5 seconds." But it was rejected by the academically oriented program committee. If it got by the program committee, it may have filled a room. It may have gotten by an American Banking Association program committee.

Projecting sales rhythms for just-in-time inventory control is another niche market benefit we should try.

Doing graphical process control on line at every job with daily or weekly tracks an charts performance.

We need success stories

We need real stories of how our system helped a client solve a large problem of long duration that had immediate impact on the bottom line. It will be easier to get this kind of success with a small company, preferably one in trouble. But the catch is that troubled small companies don't have any funds for consultants. Therefore we may have to consult gratis to install our system to fish for a success story.

We should try different societies

Asian societies differ greatly on some very basic attitudes concerning data, measurement, and control. These can block or facilitate attempts to install a new measurement technology.

We Americans are notably anti-structure and Asia is notably pro-structure. For example, Statistical Process Control (SPC) was developed by Shewhart at Bell Labs in 1932 and soon applied at Western Electric (Bell's manufacturing company) by Deming and Jurand. It is amazing that as we fought WWII we resisted using SPC in our manufacturing. Horror stories describe the many incidents of defective equipment in the hands of American combat soldiers. In 1947 the Japanese welcomed SPC brought to them by Deming. The result was that fault-free imports (Toyota, Honda) soon overran our domestic auto market. SPC had been developed and paid for by AT&T, but Osaka profited more than Detroit. Was it because Asian culture welcomes standards and order. Maybe the same will be true for our Standard Change System. We certainly owe it a try

Thin yield from 5 years of effort.

This is a very thin yield of information concerning our topic, "What you've tried that works" from my five years of effort. I still feel strongly that new technology is not safely in a culture until it is part of that culture's industry. Therefore I will continue trying different things in my attempts to share our methods with our corporations. As I wish you luck, please wish me some.
