

Measuring What Matters

Chief's Corner
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For the last many months several members of the Redlands Police Department have been diligently working on a set of organizational performance measurements in an attempt to help the department become more effective and responsive to Redlands' public safety needs. We call this initiative *Measuring What Matters*. Shortly, we will be asking the people of our great town to assist us in crafting these measurements.

What exactly do we mean when we say we're going to "measure what matters?" In government, one question almost never asked is "how do we know what we are doing is effective?" Perhaps a better question would be "how do we know we are serving the taxpayers in the way they want?"

I truly believe our city employees are some of the most dedicated and hardworking public servants you can find in local government. I also think their bosses believe their operations are serving Redlands in an effective and responsive manner. However, gauging governmental effectiveness and responsiveness can be challenging and replete with qualifications.

If I take a poll about the Police Department's effectiveness in our downtown, and what issues we should be focusing on, the responses may vary drastically depending on whether I'm asking a business owner or a Police Department employee. A business owner, for instance, may indicate that "quality of life" problems such as skateboarders or transients should be the department's primary focus most of the time. A police officer, on the other hand, might say we should focus on bank robbers and burglars (fortunately we don't have many of these downtown). To whom the question is posed frequently dictates the nature of the answer.

Just ask my wife.

On a recent Saturday, I had to make a very difficult decision regarding the most effective use of my time. I thought a brief nap was a critical component of my personal strategy for crime fighting and community service (OK, maybe that wasn't what I was really thinking). My beautiful bride, on the other hand, believed that accomplishing her list (for me) of household chores was more critical. How should my limited time be utilized? To whom the question is posed frequently dictates the nature of the answer.

I did the chores.

Effectiveness in the private sector is more clearly defined. It's called the "bottom line!" Business success is usually clear cut and allows you to enjoy the fruits of your labors. Failure to effectively serve your customers forces you to close your doors. In the private sector, failure is brutal and unequivocal.

Governmental services such as policing are an entirely different manner. Whether the police do a good job or not, the Police Department survives. Since there is no profit motive in policing, how do we: 1) know what we are doing matters?; and, 2) measure what matters?

Jeremy Travis, the former director of the U.S. National Institute of Justice and current president of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, and Joseph Brann, the first director of the U.S. Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), and both good friends of mine, posed these questions about police effectiveness in a seminal article they wrote in 1997 entitled *Measuring What Matters: Developing Measures of What the Police Do*. This

publication has formed the basis for what we hope is a blueprint for the RPD in terms of meeting the needs of Redlands in the future.

We have completed one set of performance measurements already. On our website you can review the indicators we are using to answer the question “has the RPD plane effectively enhanced the department’s ability to serve Redlands?” In 18 months we will complete the evaluation of the RPD Air Support Unit’s performance. The analysis will determine whether I recommend to the City Council the program’s termination or continuance.

In order for us to create an organizational “measuring stick” I think it is imperative to ask the “owners” of the Police Department – Redlands taxpayers – what they think is important for us to focus on. We will do this soon in a series of public focus groups held at different times and places so a wide breadth of community members can share their perspectives with us.

We will also be asking the members of the City Council, other city departments and our own department members what they think matters in Redlands policing.

Measuring crime and disorder and the public’s “fear of crime” is equally important in helping us determine what matters. Citizens can assist us in measuring the public’s perception of crime in Redlands by filling out one of our *Neighborhood Surveys*. These can be obtained from any of our substations or on-line at the *Public Information* section of our website.

The notion of performance measurements in Redlands City government will get more attention soon. Newly appointed City Manager Enrique Martinez has directed all city departments to develop initial performance measurements to help answer the question “how do we know City operations are effective?” These should be complete by this summer.

Providing governmental services to the people of Redlands is not cheap. And it takes a lot of work. I believe that if the City is to be a good steward of the taxpayers’ investment in City operations – such as the police – then we better ask you what type of services you want and develop a report card so you can determine if we have achieved our goal of providing excellent, value-added service.

If you have any comments or suggestions regarding police performance measurements please contact me at 909-335-4744 or at chief@redlandspolice.org.