


# Focus on Accountability: Who Owns Performance?

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In today's world of distributed project teams, online meetings, and virtual stakeholders, project teams need effective performance measures more than ever. The need for performance and accountability just became more acute with the implementation of the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-292). This act empowers federal agencies to seek viable solutions to enable federal employees to work from home. Although telework has many benefits, including reduced real estate requirements, fewer greenhouse emissions, eased traffic congestion in Washington D.C., and improved recruitment, such policies can have the potential to profoundly disrupt projects if implemented poorly.

By one account, more than 30 percent of all federal workers telecommute today. Consider the vagaries of meetings if 30 percent or more of the team work from home. Will they be able to participate using residential internet connections? Will the meetings be effective? Fortunately, performance measurement is coming back into vogue around the beltway. Many federal agencies are struggling with implementing performance measurement systems that are effective and realistic. The most efficient performance measurement programs rely on passive updates—transactional data that automatically feed the performance management system.

For example, when individual time management data can feed project status reporting, projects have one of the key components for an Earned Value Management System. Current enterprise project management systems are becoming very good at linking individual performance with project performance. This idea of passive, transaction-based processes is essential to performance management, but does not address the need for accountability.

In distributed project environments, accountability is often very difficult to establish and maintain simply because of the low touch factor—there is little or no face-to-face time. Projects often involve resources that report across different lines of authority, and accountability for specific measures must be assigned to the individual. Accountability involves taking personal responsibility for actions and results. As with telework, project work often involves a measure of trust—that the individual will act with integrity and complete his or her assignments. While trust is often the core of a project, accountability is the glue that facilitates regular feedback and performance correction.

The table below discusses some basic measures and who owns them, from the

individual layer to the enterprise layer.

<b>Organizational Layer</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Owner</b>
<b>Enterprise</b>	Strategic goals and objectives achieved Real cost savings More effective/efficient government	Agency Director or Directorate Chief
<b>Portfolio</b>	Value of Portfolio Business benefits realized	Portfolio Manager or Division Head
<b>Program</b>	Program milestones Repeatable successes across program	Program Sponsor
<b>Project</b>	Milestone completion Time , Cost, Schedule, Quality	Project Sponsor
<b>Individual</b>	Accomplishments Hours against tasks	Individual contributors Managers

While simplistic, this table conjures the idea that accountability can exist at all levels of a projectized environment. Consider these rules of thumb in defining measures of accountability:

1. As yourself: Who is losing sleep over this measure? One individual should have the responsibility for meeting the target. You can count on this person to work late and come in early at least once in the service of this measure.
2. Make it Passive! Performance measures that require a lot of massaging of data tend to be forgotten after a while. Seek out transactional systems that naturally feed higher-level performance measures.

As it happens, the success of both telework and federal projects lies in effective performance measurement and accountability. Speaking on the telework implementation recently, longtime telework advocate Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA) said: "I am pleased we are seeing progress. While there is still room for improvement, it is good to see that telework is catching on. There are no downsides to teleworking. Everyone benefits." Let's hope that "everyone" includes project managers.