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# The "Different Perspectives" Newsletter

It can be fun to step back and look at the world from a different angle. Here, we step back and look at commonly used words in business and life, ask a provocative question, and see what others are doing differently by applying a different lens on life. I hope you enjoy "Different Perspectives" and that you begin to step back when needed and observing what else is possible.

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## Word Choices

**Metrics** /me-trik/, noun, adj. Def - a standard for measuring or evaluating something, especially one that uses figures or statistics.

Metrics, or sometimes called KPI's or Key Performance Indicators, are used in business all the time and many books have been written about creating, measuring, and achieving metrics and goals stated in metrics. Metrics are essentially just numbers. A single metric is a single data point and when viewed by itself without any reference point, means absolutely nothing! It could be good, or bad, but without a comparison to another data point, or preferably several data points, it holds no meaning. Metrics need to be studied in trends, or data points in sequence of 3 consecutive time periods to mean anything. Is the trend going up or down? Is up a good thing? Can a down trend be a bad thing? It all depends on the meaning behind the number.

Numbers are numbers and many employees get freaked out by being held to a metric. My feeling is that they consider the metric simply as a grade of their performance. That may be true if they are the one who has full control over it and no one else, not a co-worker or customer, can alter that metric. I also feel that many younger employees have grown up with such a strong focus on grades and success being determined by

their GPA or SAT/ACT score or MCAT score so metrics can be sensitive topics.

The important thing to consider with a metric is "what does the metric represent, what is its meaning to an overall goal or higher purpose?" This is often never really clarified for ones being measured by a metric so a metric can be a pass/fail measurement. Don't get me wrong about metrics, they are absolutely critical to the successful management of a business. Much like the instruments in a cockpit give the pilot critical information about the plane they are flying, metrics in business are the instruments of your businesses health. Don't know your numbers? My guess is your business is pretty sick.

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## Question of the Week

1. What metrics, if any, are you tracking in your business?
  2. What do those metrics measure and how are they important to the success or growth of your business?
  3. If you are not tracking metrics, why not? Pick one or two to measure and start tracking them over time.
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## Lessons from the Camino

Metrics on the Camino were basically time, distance, elevation change, and temperature. Time to sunrise, sunset, walking pace, time of day, and length of distance and time walked all meant something to me. 8:00am may mean sunrise, or it may be pitch black out, depending on the time of year. Time of day can relate to meal stops, and also relate to temperature. If the day's hike was going to get to 90 deg F, I wanted to know by when in the day it would reach that peak so I would leave early or if was going to be freezing in the morning, I would delay my start to avoid having to wear more layers of clothes. A simple walk had metrics. Measuring the total trip distance helped me know when I had completed certain milestones. When you are solo in a foreign country, you have no awareness of when you are halfway to the destination. Without that frame of reference, my mental status could be affected and motivation could be stunted. Metrics are everywhere and can be measured with about any activity. They just have to mean something to you. If you are interested in my trek and the metrics for the journey, [click here](#) for my Find Penguins posts.

# Thinking Outside the Box

When I work with clients, I always like to encourage them that when they track metrics, pick ones that are meaningful and that measure the predictability of the future results they wanted to get. Metrics can be lead or lag indicators. Lead indicators are ones that can reasonably predict future results. Lag measures are ones that have happened in the past and you can't do any about them once they have been measured and often don't predict the future. A favorite quote from one of my mentors, Todd Smith, is "if you are measuring lag metrics in your company, congratulations on being mediocre". You focus on metrics should be 90% on lead metrics.

Finally, metrics aren't just numbers, they tell a story if you know how to read them. Trends up or down mean something. Several metrics trending in the same direction definitely point to something either needing to be celebrated and replicated or handled immediately. For example, one my long time best producers in my company almost always had great metrics. Suddenly, over a period of about 4 weeks, the numbers began to decline and not just one, all of the ones that related to this person. I decided that I needed to step in and see what was going on. Turns out that this person and their spouse were separating and heading for a divorce and this person was devastated. We were able to turn the metrics around by addressing the person, not the metric. The power of a story.

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