

*Benchmarking and Metrics for
Ombuds Programs
or
Of what use are we, anyway?*

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Cost Effectiveness Equation

$$\frac{\text{Value Added} + \text{Cost Control} - \text{Mistakes}}{\text{Costs of the Ombuds Function}}$$

Compliance Functions

- HR
- EO/AA
- Ethics
- Quality Assurance
- Inspection/IG
- Safety
- Audit
- Security
- Fitness for duty
- Waste/ environmental hazard
- Human subjects
- Animal care
- Intellectual property/patents
- Mortality and morbidity

Stakeholders

- Shareholders
- Directors
- Senior management
- Managers
- Employees
- Former employees
- Compliance officers
- Customers
- Trainees
- Students
- Families
- Society
- Neighbors
- The Organizational Ombuds

Evidence for Stakeholders

- Federal Sentencing Guidelines
- Statistics: issues
- Any general analyses
- Fewer problems which escape the organization
- Evidence of referrals to compliance offices
- Managerial time saved
- General attitude surveys
- Visitor satisfaction evaluations
- Unsolicited feedback
- Use rates and demographics
- Committee review

Evidence cont.

- Changes in policies, procedures, structures, morale
- Gifts, recruits, customers
- Public recognition
- Service to managers as selves and supervisors
- Self evaluation
- Self scrutiny
- Professional recognition
- Writing articles for others
- Teaching/training

Value Added

- Providing a confidential channel
 - The value of listening
 - For every member of the organization
 - Zero barriers, so zero tolerance will work
 - It is simply important that the office exist

Value Added cont.

- Helping People Help Themselves
 - Some people prefer this option - control
 - May be only reasonable option - lack of evidence
 - May be most effective - direct, timing
 - May be most fair - prevents mistakes

Value Added cont.

- HPHS cont.
 - May be least likely to provoke reprisal
 - May save time and money - most efficient
 - Wide variety of next steps
 - Teaches skills and methods
 - Preserves privacy and saves face

Value Added cont.

- Providing supplemental MIS
 - Focus on small work groups
 - Broad sweep across organizations
 - Continuous, informal feedback
 - Available on flexible, instant basis
- Surfacing emerging issues
- Contributing to the image of the company (FSG, H/D laws require safe & credible place to go)

Value Added cont.

- Catching new opportunities
- Providing information to management about things going well
 - Helps spread innovation
 - Helps surface good ideas
 - Helps inform others about new best practices
 - Helps communicate internal information

Value Added cont.

- Helping especially good people get recognition and reward
- Supplementing mentoring programs
- Attracting gifts, customers, recruits
- Teaching negotiation and conflict management skills one on one
- Bringing together human services staff - leading a systems approach

Cost Control

(\$, Time, Image and Morale)

- Reducing rights and power based costs
 - Formal grievances
 - Time of managers working on a case
 - In-house lawyers
 - External legal interactions
 - Agency complaints
 - Court suits and settlements
 - Insurance costs

Cost Control cont.

- Preventing the loss of valued people
- Getting to disputes early
- Listening to whistleblowers very early
- Providing early information to management about things going badly
- Dealing with fear and humiliation

Cost Control cont.

- Dealing with especially delicate complaints or chronic complainers (stepping stone)
- Filling in for parts of a system that are not functioning well
- Filling in where no system exists
 - Union employee to union employee
 - Intra-team
 - Manager to manager

Cost Control cont.

- Catching new problems
- Following up
- Preventing sabotage and theft of property and ideas
- Catching unsafe working conditions
- Dealing with false malicious allegations
- Dealing with harassment of all kinds

Cost Control cont.

- Preventing violence to self
- Preventing violence against others
- Triaging very serious cases

Statistics

- Statistics need to capture value added and cost control

New Problems

Compare to the Practice of Others

- Contacts and cases (see handout)
- Ratio of contacts to cases
 - range .05-14
 - mode 2.0
 - median 1.5
 - average 1.9

Compare Practice cont.

- 136 ombuds report how evaluated
 - 10% no official evaluation
 - 1% external assessment
 - 6% periodic review by committee
 - 14% annual performance review
 - 8% solicit feedback
 - 13% employee attitude survey
 - 35% questionnaires
 - 4% review of annual report
 - 9% other

Compare Practice cont.

- Cases ombuds report save the most money
 - Sexual Harassment and discrimination
 - Keeping valuable people
 - Race, culture and disability
 - Other discrimination
 - Misconduct, fraud, abuse and crimes
 - Managerial abuse and mistreatment
 - Violence against self or others

Compare Practice cont.

- 1996 survey - 166 ombuds reported 258 “highest potential cost” cases
 - 40% dealt with harassment, discrimination or interpersonal violence
 - 20% dealt with otherwise illegal or criminal behavior
 - 40% were not obviously illegal or criminal - implicated co image and mgmt practices (1/4 = retention of valuable people)

Compare Practice cont.

- 50% of the ombuds report spending time as follows:
 - 60% in counseling and complaint handling
 - 20% in advising management - informing management and working for systems change
 - 10 % in education and training
 - 10% in administrative duties
 - Largest other area is professional development

Functions Requested by Constituents

- I Intervene as a neutral party
- SC Raise employee issues to upper management
- HP Provide confidential individual counseling
- HP Generate ways to improve work relationships with supervision

Functions cont.

- HP Help clarify and resolve conflicts
- HP Provide a sounding board
- R Refer employees to appropriate internal resources
- I Provide for mediation between 2 or more people

Functions cont.

- I Informally investigate situations
- HP Generate options to improve work relationships with peers
- SC Consult with employee groups
- HP Clarify company policy
- SC Conduct exit interviews

Functions cont.

- SC Influence organizational policy or practice
- SC Work for systems change
- SC Provide for continuous employee input of ideas and concerns
- HP Help individuals to build their interpersonal skills

Functions Grouped

- Helping people help themselves 44%
- Systems change 27%
- Intervention 22%
- Referral 7%

Is the Ombudsman Useful?

- Marketing and visibility of function
- Availability to constituents
- Adherence to and understanding of applicable standards
- Attendance at professional activities
- Continuous training

Useful? cont.

- Use by constituents
- Demographics of constituents
- Response time to inquiries
- Effectiveness of statistics
- Connection to other parts of the system

Useful? cont.

- Referrals to and from compliance offices
- Skills that need improvement
- Timeliness and usefulness of feedback to management
- Hear and resolve some bad cases
- Pick up some new problems

Useful? cont.

- Examine whether outside complaints went through the Ombuds
- Look at systems change as a result of visits to the Ombuds
- Look at changes to policies and procedures as a result of visits to the Ombuds

Self Scrutiny

- Am I as effective as I could be?
- Did I handle this case as well as I could?
- What can I learn from new problems, worst cases, mistakes, successes?
- Did I follow through on problems?
- Did I follow up with visitors?
- Did I highlight systemic problems?