SHAPE
BETTER SERVICES

NAME
Measurement Tool

AUTHOR/OWNER
Shape

SOURCE
Shape resource

INTRODUCTION

In using the term 'measuring design' what we really mean is measuring the impact of design activity on a specific process or service. Rather than simply measuring design (how much we spend on it, how long it has taken etc.) we need to identify a key area that needs changing, identify a plan to change it and then measure by how much the chosen design activity has impacted (improved) it. Once we can identify what our core target for change is, we can plan how we will effect that change and satisfy the demand for improvement.

NOTES

Success indicators

It is crucial to define what a successful result looks like, and how you will know that you have succeeded in order to measure the impact of design activity.

Once the aim and objectives of the project have been clearly identified you can identify the point in your project that represents completion. Measuring a result is near impossible unless a set of success indicators have been agreed in advance. For more information about defining success indicator, go to the "Identify" stage of the Shape resource.

Potential success indicators could be:

- Reputation - how has the project improved the reputation of the department/ region/ team/ service
- Time reduction - reduced the time from idea to launch of a new service
- Cost savings - how has the project contributed to efficiencies and cost savings
- Customer insights - has the project found real needs in the community and fully addressed them improving the lives and environment of citizens
- Improved usability - how has the project helped to make things simple to use, accessible to all sections of the community. Has it made services better understood or more widely used
- Improved sustainability - how has the project affected usage of materials, energy, travel or otherwise made a positive impact in the community and environment

Capturing evidence

The evidence of a change can be physical, such as a new building or environment, a website or service, but the evidence of improvement is generally some form of figures and data, such as an overall reduction in costs, waste, or complaints, an increase in service users or awareness, or an improvement in citizens' quality of life.

The evidence usually requires some form of 'before and after' measurement and data capture. This can be statistical or anecdotal. Interviews with users are valid data; they can describe an improvement based on the users' emotional response to the service or environment and their wish to use it/visit it more regularly.

We suggest there should be measurements undertaken throughout a project at a minimum of three points: before, during and after.

- Before: Measurements capture the starting conditions before beginning the project - perhaps including the problems, conditions or perceptions you are trying to solve
- During: Measurements capture the immediate effects of the project, as it is being developed and commissioned
- After: Measurements capture the longer-term changes made by the project's implementation

Ultimately, measurement produces the evidence required by sponsors, financiers and citizens that your project is justified and effective, in addition to being delivered on time and on budget.

Therefore it is vital that a plan for measurement is drawn up and approved before any projects are started. This will initially capture the starting conditions, and also detail how any on-going measurement is going to happen. It could be that the measurement will take place at particular milestones during the project, in order to assess each stage.

Responsibility
It should be made clear:
- Who is responsible for the measurement
- What is being measured
- How it is being measured

If projects within the overall strategy are interlinked, then measuring how one delivery impacts on the others might be helpful.

Outcomes
The plan should also include how the measurement will happen during the lifespan of the project outcomes. Change always takes some time to effect, so planning to measure at time intervals, for instance six months, one year and two years from the launch, and using a consistent methodology and focus will yield comparable and useful evidence. The same methodology should also apply to any other projects undertaken as part of the overall mission. Any measurement plan will then apply across the projects with the results from each added together to monitor the mission delivery.

USEFUL LINKS

- http://www.effectivedesign.org.uk
- https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/knowledge-resources/report/measuring-value-and-role-design