



Internal Control – More Than a Good Idea – It’s Also the Law!



I would make an additional point – unless you make it clear to your IT (information technology) people what you need to know – the kind of decisions you need to make, the resources to be invested in such decisions, the impact of such decisions on world peace, the economy or good dental hygiene, then your IT people will just be alienated technologists – who will look upon you “surface people” as Eloi, while they work in the dark, underground as Morlocks. See H.G. Wells *Time Machine* for details.

Of course, the IT folks will not make your data needs a priority unless they see evidence that you 1) care about the data; 2) make valid decisions based on the data; and 3) your decisions make a positive impact on the people of New York State. Yes, they can also help the people of Ohio or Vermont, but they have their own way of doing things.

If you have the soul of a manager, you will have an insatiable need for more data, faster data, more relevant data, data you can synthesize into INFORMATION. Maybe you are monitoring ground water contamination levels around a landfill, PCBs in the Hudson River, or acid rain in the Adirondacks (most of which comes from Ohio, I think). Or then there is the alarming incidence of asthma in our next generation. Or the paucity of engineers graduating from our universities. Or the number of potholes on I-90.

There is an old axiom (there are rarely new axioms) *“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”* Some folks just throw in the towel, and assert the second half of the axiom. These are called “experienced managers”. It is too late for them – they’ve burned out from years of inadequate data support. But there is hope for you IF you start clamoring now for timely and relevant information.

Maybe you will need to start collecting it the old-fashioned way. Ask people questions.



Keep a paper log of transactions. Start numbering incoming correspondence. Maintain key statistics on 3 X 5 cards.

Start a checklist. Include key statistics in your monthly report. It might impress your boss, but it will help whoever follows you in your position.

Establish realistic goals, set deadlines, then monitor results. If the NYS Education Department can renew an RN’s certification in 24 hours, maybe you can inspect and recertify that day care center in 30 days.

Do you need to expand your RFP mailing list? Try “Googling” potential vendors via the Internet. Network with peers in other/comparable agencies (we are all in this together – maybe they know something useful). Boldly go where none have gone before (just be sure to get competitive bids, and save your receipts).

Here is where you have to do a little something on your own: Make a list of your key functions.

What are the goals? What risks must you avoid in order to meet those goals? Then make a list of the kinds of data that would help achieve positive results. Are there mandated deadlines? Will delay in processing hurt a citizen, client, patient, student, taxpayer, applicant or vendor? Who can you assign to handle those key functions? Do you have useful procedures written down, or have you got trained staff to rely on? When is Louise retiring? Can you get out before she does?



If you don’t have the soul of a manager, pass this two-page treatise on to someone who does.