

## Quality and a Way to Measure It: Both Essential in Today's Market



Implementing measurement tools can mean the difference between outsourcing and outsourcing effectively. RPO Providers can better serve their clients if they survey satisfaction occasionally.

*By Didier Bonnefoy*

**Quality**—it is what today's fast-paced market demands, but it doesn't end there. In our competitive industry and challenging hiring environment, client standards and expectations for value have gone up. It is more important than ever to monitor the quality of work and, even more important, to be able to demonstrate it to our clients. Therefore, managing clients in this respect has become a top priority, making a total-quality-management approach necessary to client satisfaction and the ultimate success of any recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) relationship.

As is often said, what's measured is managed. Organizations driven by results must recognize that establishing measurement tools and processes are the most important steps in creating an environment for success. In fact, committing to appropriate, customized, and continuous measurement metrics is the most critical part of any RPO engagement. It allows RPO providers to offer clients:

**Peace of mind.** The main concern of most clients when considering outsourcing their HR processes is the potential lack of control. Decision makers fear turning over activities if they also have to surrender management of quality and progress. By establishing continuous qualitative and quantitative measurement metrics at the outset, RPO consultants give clients the power to monitor activities, as well as opportunities to communicate or adjust the situation when necessary.

**Continuous quality.** Both clients and RPO providers

have an interest in monitoring the effectiveness of an RPO engagement. Beyond checking in with clients regularly, establishing precision metrics and structured feedback tools allows both parties to gauge progress. It also helps determine when a swift change in direction is required.

**Greater value.** While cost efficiencies are certainly factors during any engagement, companies are beginning to look toward RPO partners not necessarily to lower their HR costs but to offer greater value for the money they spend. With measurement metrics in place, clients are better able to manage their investment. As an added value, measurement results also may offer clients useful information about their organizations, such as opportunities for process improvements or industry trend information.

### The Right Metrics Make All the Difference

So, how do you use metrics to build a winning relationship with your client? Take time to establish the right measurement tools. First and foremost, establishing clear, specific objectives tailored to the client is the most important part of any engagement. This involves a detailed audit of the organization, its objectives, challenges, vision for the future, industry environment, organizational structure and HR goals. Although there are no "one-size-fits-all" solutions, some of the metrics built into a client's service agreement may include:

- Search metrics such as completion rates and time frames;
- Completion metrics such as candidate development, presentation, interview, or offer-to-hire cycles;
- Financial reports including comparison analysis, satisfaction survey results, and trending.

It is important to understand your client's quality expectations and to understand which of these metrics are priorities. For instance, one client may place highest value on ease of completion, while another client may simply value speed. A Futurestep client once asked us to recruit 100 new hires in two months.

To this client, whether we could achieve that goal determined the quality of that engagement. (We achieved it.)

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Initiate continuous communication throughout the RPO engagement. This ensures that quality and client expectations are managed, that both parties maintain flexibility, and that the client feels informed and in control. Futurestep encourages the establishment of a steering committee—typically consisting of the project managers from both sides—that meets on a weekly basis to go over ongoing results. Various decision makers also meet on a monthly and quarterly basis.

Seek feedback often and listen carefully. At the end of any time period, assessing strategy and team effectiveness and whether objectives were met is critical to maintaining and improving quality and further builds client relationships. Futurestep's client satisfaction survey measures the following: overall satisfaction, responsibilities and requirements, communication, timeliness, candidate qualifications and diversity, performance compared to expectations, values, likelihood of continued business, and awareness of other services offered. Our survey has proven to be an invaluable tool. For instance, its feedback guided us toward developing steering committees with each client.

### **How Do You Define Quality?**

Ask 20 people what quality means to them, and you'll get 20 different answers. To an RPO provider, quality is achieved when your service fully meets your client's expectations. You get this ideal fit when you work together to establish quality measurement metrics up front. More than a value-added service, providing, measuring, and demonstrating quality are critical to client satisfaction and mutual, long-term success.

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