

# Celebrate Successful Project Measurement

— Mary DeFoe, CSQA, Principal of [Integral Process Solutions](#)

My favorite food is pasta. I also like pizza, ice cream, wine, and anything chocolate. I know however that if I over indulge with these favorites my clothes no longer fit, my energy slows down, and my health begins to show other negative signs.

We all have measures that we follow in our everyday life that have become intuitive because we're so used to them. At other times in our lives, we may choose to ignore measures because we believe we can improve the results based on our knowledge and experience. Below are examples of some common measures we use in our life without question to help us:

- Health care: blood pressure, pulse, temperature, weight, cholesterol level
- Transportation: speed, fuel gauge, water temperature, odometer, air pressure
- Cooking: ounces, weight, oven temperature
- Sports: scores, batting averages, assists, saves, times, distances.

All these areas provide us with guidelines to understand where you are and how to make life better. We know intuitively that monitoring these measures enables us to comprehend what's happening and the direction we need to move to get the results we want.

For years, my New Year's resolution, like others, was to lose weight. This was not a new resolution — rather a repeating resolution throughout my life. So this year I finally took the plunge. I was frustrated with trying various changes on my own that just weren't producing lasting results. Couldn't someone just lay down some parameters for me to follow so I wouldn't have to think about it? So I reached out to a professional weight management organization for help. Weight loss experts explained the program and what I needed to do. They set me up to track and measure my food on a daily basis. Periodically, my weight and blood pressure was collected. Over time, I could see the impact of eating the right foods. I could also see the impact of making food choices that weren't on the list of selected foods. This organization guided me throughout the program when I wasn't motivated and kept me on track even when I wasn't willing. They were also experienced with the emotional resistance and knew how to encourage me to stay focused. Overall, I was able to drop a significant amount of weight and better yet I now feel comfortable with managing my food choices. Don't worry! I still occasionally squeeze in some of my favorite foods.

So why am I sharing this story with you? These same weight measurement concepts also apply to software development and project management. As a new project manager, I wasn't familiar with the measures to help me manage projects. As my project management knowledge matured I started to observe what other project managers were using and researched the industry standards to enable me to monitor progress. Typically, there were task effort estimates vs. actuals, cost estimates vs. actual, phase dates estimates vs. actuals and project durations. When taking on managing the PMO, I had to establish measures to monitor the other software development processes as well as Project Portfolio measures. It was helpful to seek measurement expertise to set up standard project measures across



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the organization for baseline measures to monitor the organization. I added defects to manage quality and function points to manage project size throughout the life cycle. To ensure the processes were efficient and effective, I developed measures for a variety of software development processes. The next step was to summarize project data and trends to understand the organizational strengths and weaknesses. Quarterly reports were produced for management to make objective decisions. Then, there became a need for cultural change recognition in implementing measures through training and coaching to ensure lasting change for projects and the way people worked. As a result we helped:

- Managers to make better decisions using objective data
- Project teams manage their checkpoints for progress
- Project Managers, senior management, customers, and other project stakeholders improve communications
- Functional managers use data to meet organizational goals.

**The following activities can help you with your project measurement:**

- ***Find help if you don't know where to start.*** There are many resources available including internet research, industry software organizations, and experts in the field of measurement. You may even have resources internal to your organization.
- ***Establish a baseline of where you are today.*** Establish a few measures within your own projects to manage product quality, process effectiveness, and project progress. Start small to get comfortable with using measures to monitor your progress, grow the measures as you see progress and soon it becomes intuitive.
- ***Establish regular check points to collect and analyze progress.*** Determine the critical and ongoing points in your project plan to collect, analyze, and report your progress.
- ***Use the data to make decisions to achieve your goals.*** Review the collected data and discuss the results with the various project stakeholders. Determine if adjustments are needed on your project to be made to improve your progress.
- ***Don't be discouraged along the way.*** Any time is a good time to start establishing some measures. If you find it difficult, seek out resources that can help you. It will take time for your team to adjust to the measures and they may need to be coached to stay on track. Make sure you consistently use the data to support your new methods and innovations.
- ***Celebrate your success.*** Remember that it's important to recognize your success. There are many stakeholders and roles played on a project. All of these resources appreciate being recognized when you reach your goal.

