

Dashboard for project management and process improvement



A lot of managers use dashboards. Only a few are satisfied with the information provided by the dashboards they use. When build an efficient and useful reporting system, it helps to be familiar with proven best practices, detailed below.

It is important to distinguish two categories of dashboards:

Operational dashboards

These are the indicators of good management; the inevitable and the permanent ones.

In areas like management, finance and accountancy, they are perfectly well known. This is less the case in more technical areas, like software and systems development.

Strategic Dashboards/Balanced Scorecards

About 20 to 25 indicators make it possible to follow-up the progress of your strategy. The strategy is moving because its environment does: customer inquiries, competitor offers, and technological innovation.

The indicator a manager needs today is not the same as the one he will need in several weeks or months. These types of dashboards need certain agility in order to be adapted to new needs.

In order to create efficient dashboards, it is necessary to

- Establish a Measurement and Analysis process
- Automate the Measurement and Analysis process

A. Establish a Measurement and Analysis process

SEI CMMI, PSM or ISO 15539 propose a 4 step process:

1. Establish resources.

A part from material and software aspects, a "Mister Dashboard" has to be assigned. He will have responsibility for the project and for the adequacy between needs expressed and indicators available.

2. Plan, specify indicators.

This is often the most delicate part. Which indicators do we need? What is important for us?

3. Perform, Implement a measurement system.

Data collection has to be automated, data has to be stored. The indicator has to be built and handed over to the manager.

4. Evaluate and improve.

Question the existing indicators. Some may no longer be of interest, others not efficient. The dashboard has to improve.

Solutions based on spreadsheets or datawarehouse only deliver a part of the expected functionalities

B. Automate the Measurement & Analysis process

The chosen tool has to be able to:

- Monitor and supervise the entity's strategy. Share experiences and practices. Be secured.
- Be responsive to the progress of the needs
- House a ready-to-use library of indicators, with templates for planning
- Automate the complete chain: from data collection to the presentation of indicators
- Create templates for dashboards to institutionalize a common language
- Accept manual data entry when it is not available in the existing processes
- Perform statistical analysis to reduce the values of the limits and improve processes

Solutions based on Excel or a database only deliver a part of the expected functionalities. Spirula DashBoard has been developed to cover all the needs. That is the reason why most of the mature American companies have adopted it.