

# Clarifying Contribution

Most managers can be persuaded that people in organisations should be held accountable for their contribution / for what they give rather than the results / what they get. They nevertheless balk at the prospect of actually applying this dictum in practice.

The reason they do so is primarily a “how to” problem. They know how to set targets, measure peoples’ achievement against target and calculate an increment/bonus amount aligned to the actual results produced. They are not necessarily au fait when it comes to specifying, assessing and rewarding people for their contribution in the context of the results to be achieved.



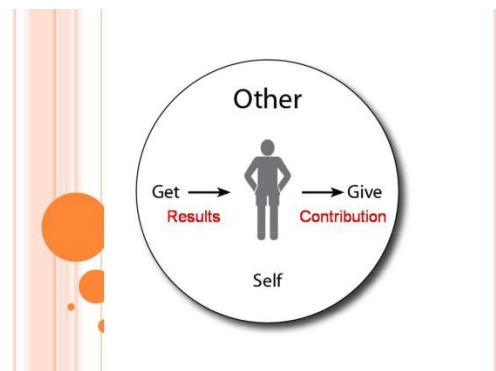
Clarity of contribution is a critical enabler of contribution. It is the “means” issue which most people in organisations believe, if addressed, will most enhance the value they can add to the organisation.

Clarity of contribution is, moreover, a precondition for holding people accountable for their contribution. This is because it is not possible to fairly assess and reward people for their contribution, if their contribution has not been clarified and agreed in the first place.

## Contribution vs. Results

Contribution is different from Results. Contribution is about giving / about what a person puts in to a situation. Results, on the other hand, are about getting. Results have to do with outcomes.

Contribution, moreover, refers to what is done or delivered which is of added value to someone else. As such, contribution sits squarely in the hands of the person making the contribution.



A farmer, for example, adds value by what he does – ploughs, fertilizes, plants and harvests. How well he carries out these tasks; whether he is below/on/above standard, describes the nature of his contribution.

Similarly the value added by a debt collector is a promise to pay by the debtor. Debt collectors, who perform above standard are those who are able to convince a significantly higher proportion of debtors to pay than the average debt collector.

While contribution is against a standard, actual results are relative to desired or anticipated results. Any results can therefore be below/on/above target.

Results are in part a function of contribution but are also affected by external factors. Whether the farmer gets a bumper crop or not is partly dependent on the weather. Similarly, whether a debtor actually pays off their debt can be due to reasons other than the debt collector's powers of persuasion. The debtor may, for example, have received an inheritance and decided to use this windfall to get out of debt.

The difference between contribution and results outlined above does not suggest that the two are independent of each other. On the contrary, the complex interplay between the two in fact produces one of four possibilities at any point in time.

	CONTRIBUTION (Below / On / Above Standard)		RESULT (Below / On / Above Target)	
1	On / Above Standard	😊	On / Above Target	😊
2	Below Standard	😞	On / Above Target	😊
3	On / Above Standard	😊	Below Target	😞
4	Below Standard	😞	Below Target	😞

The First Possibility arises when both the contribution and the results are on/above requirement. The Second and Third Possibilities are the inverse of each other. Possibility Two occurs when contribution is below standard but the result, at a point in time, is nevertheless positive. With the Third Possibility contribution is exemplary but the results, as reflected on the scoreboard, is less than desired. With the last Possibility

both the contribution and the results are poor.

Clarification of contribution is therefore not something which should be divorced from and separate from the results. In clarifying contribution what is determined and defined is what needs to be done or delivered, now and going forward, in order to impact positively on the desired results. Contribution, in other words, should be clarified in the context of the results to be achieved.

## Clarifying Contribution At The Level Of The Role

The most common means of delineating expectations of individual performance in an organisation is via some kind of scorecard or performance contract. The scorecard typically specifies the results to be achieved in each of a number of Key Result Areas.

The example shown is for a Business Area Leader Process on a Platinum Mine. Job incumbents are required to deliver results in five areas – Volume/Quantity, Quality, Cost, People and Safety.

										Rating	
Quality			Weight Rating	Weight	Performance Scale					Actual Achieved	1.00
					100%	1	2	3	4		
1	Concentration Grade		L	6.5%	80%	90%	100%	110%	120%		1.00
	Measure	157g/ton									
2	Concentration Recovery		H	80.6%	80%	83%	87%	88%	90%		1.00
	Measure	85.80%									
3	Information on time and correct (reporting)		L	6.5%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%		1.00
	Measure	% Compliance to internal audit									
4	Appropriate Policy Implementation		L	6.5%	85%	90%	95%	98%	100%		1.00
	Measure	% Compliance to internal audit									

Within the Quality Key Performance Area there are a number of key critical measures/targets each of which is weighted in terms of its importance. Levels of performance against targets are stipulated in numerical terms. Actual performance achieved (level 1 through 5) is then converted into a performance rating.

Performance Scoreboards, like the one shown, have merit. They serve to align everyone in the organisation to the same set of goals. They also provide the context in which contribution can be made. What they don't do however is clarify what an individual's unique contribution to the achievement of desired results in each Key Performance Area actually is. They do not elucidate what the individual needs to effect as their unique contribution to the achievement of any score(s) on the scoreboard.

Where organisations do attempt to clarify contribution as well as the results, the vehicle they typically use is the Job Description or Job Profile. The problem with most Job Descriptions, however, is that they are written primarily for job evaluation purposes. Consequently they are often voluminous documents in which the essence of the role is lost among all the "padding" written with the Job Evaluation Committee in mind.

Job Descriptions also tend to focus on the scope and scale of the job rather than on its unique "give" or value add. In a financial institution, for example, the Job Specifications at three levels in the hierarchy were all identical. The only difference was in the job title (Branch Manager, Area Manager, Provincial Executive) and the area/scope of responsibility.

From a Care and Growth Perspective clarification of contribution at the level of the role is most useful when it achieves the following:

- It makes explicit the unique purpose of the job.
- It distinguishes the role from other roles both horizontally and vertically in the hierarchy.

Role clarification moreover is not something which should be done off line by the HR function. Rather it should be an interactive process involving at least the job incumbent and his/her immediate manager, and preferably also representatives of roles which relate in some way to the role being defined.

The ensuing discussion and debate between the parties should give rise to a one pager which spells out the sole reason why the role exists and its key accountabilities or tasks. The one pager needs to be a live document which is in the possession of the individual fulfilling the role not the HR function.

From experience, there is a simple but very useful question to ask to distil out the essence of a role. It is "what am I paying you for?" The answer to this question should be expressed in a single sentence. The role of a Schuitema Consultant, for example, is "to enable client organisations to shift the focus of their attention from taking to giving". A role which does not have a unique purpose or value add should not exist.



The key accountabilities which taken together fulfill the role's purpose also need to be unique. The best way to ensure that this is the case is to build accountabilities from the bottom up. That is to start with the role(s) which directly contribute to the result(s) to be achieved (e.g. Sales Representative, Operator, Rock Drill Operator) and thereafter to progress up the line from one level of management to the next.

There are two golden rules to be followed when doing a role clarification exercise. Firstly, there must be no duplication of accountability. The accountabilities at one level

in the line must be distinctly different to those at the level below and above that level. Secondly, included in the accountabilities of those who lead others must be accountabilities which relate to the Care and Growth of direct reports. Accountabilities extracted from the roles of Team Leader, Production Manager and Manufacturing Manager at a biscuit factory illustrate quite clearly that each of the incumbents, at the three levels in the manufacturing hierarchy, are required to make very different contributions to the results required.

<b>Team Leader Accountabilities</b>	<b>Production Manager Accountabilities</b>	<b>Manufacturing Manager Accountabilities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountable that operators are on time, on line and on shift.</li> <li>• Accountable for replenishment of raw materials.</li> <li>• Accountable for speedy resolution of stoppages on the line.</li> <li>• Accountable for multi-tasking and multi-skilling of line operators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountable to provide daily support to the Team Leader on problems on the line.</li> <li>• Accountable for managing all operating costs in area.</li> <li>• Accountable for setting and upholding production standards.</li> <li>• Accountable for enabling demonstrated improvement in the contribution of each Team Leader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountable for identifying and prioritizing Continuous improvement projects for Manufacturing.</li> <li>• Accountable for building and cultivating a mature relationship with the Union on site.</li> <li>• Accountable for ensuring adequate service from support functions.(Engineering, Quality etc)</li> <li>• Accountable for enabling demonstrated improvement in the contribution of the Production Managers.</li> </ul>

*Note: Examples not a full list of Accountabilities for each role.*

## Clarifying Deliverables For A Reporting Period

Role based descriptions of contribution define the nature of the contribution appropriate to the incumbent in the role. Any description of contribution at the level of the role is nevertheless limited in the following ways:

- Role based descriptions are not specific enough. They do not set down what specifically needs to be delivered by an individual, to positively impact on desired results, in the next reporting cycle. Two people may be fulfilling the same role but, as a result of different external demands, may be required to focus on very different deliverables going forward. The issues facing a Provincial Executive in the Northern Cape, for example, may be very different from those facing the Provincial Executive in Gauteng. As a result the nature of their contribution in the next reporting cycle would not be the same, even though they are both employed as Provincial Executives.
- Role based descriptions are static. They assume the same level of task maturity of everyone in the role. Practically speaking, somebody who has only been in a role for six months however is unlikely to be able to contribute in the same way that a seasoned professional who has occupied the role for a number of years could do so. To expect otherwise would be unrealistic.
- For leaders, what needs to be given by them in terms of the Care and Growth of direct reports tends, in role based descriptions, to be too generic. Statements like “regular feedback on contribution to standard given to all direct reports” or “ensures people have the tools/resources required to do their jobs” are platitudes. They do not specify the changes in individual direct report(s) which constitute the individual leaders’ Care and Growth contribution in a given period of time.

### **CARE AND GROWTH CONTRIBUTION: GENERIC**

<b>CARE</b>
1) Knows his / her people well and is interested in them as people not just as employees.
2) Is there for his / her people not the other way around/ the line of service is down not up the line.
3) Spends sufficient time with direct reports in team meetings, one-on-one meetings, in the field ‘watching the game’.
4) Listens to and respects the views and opinions of his / her people. Relationships with his / her people are characterized by mutual trust and respect.

**MEANS**

- 1) Ensures people know the mission, vision, values and objectives of the company.
- 2) Ensures individuals know what is expected of them and how their jobs contribute to the required results.
- 3) Ensures people have the tools / resources they require to do their jobs.
- 4) Ensures structures, systems and processes enable their people to make the contribution required of them.
- 5) Ensures that people have the decision making authority to do their jobs.

**ABILITY**

- 1) Ensures formal training and development is effective in ensuring that employees have the competencies required to do their jobs.
- 2) Develop his/her employees understanding of the business and how it is performing.
- 3) Effectively coaches direct reports both in terms of how to do their job and why the job should be done.
- 4) Facilitates employee growth through regular review and deliberate changes in employee accountability.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

- 1) People are held accountable for their contribution not for what they are getting out / results.
- 2) Regular reviews of contribution / feedback at an individual level are conducted.
- 3) Only once people have the means and ability are they held accountable.
- 4) People are disciplined for deliberate malevolence and censured for carelessness.
- 5) Those who contribute to the desired standard are acknowledged / praised.
- 6) Those who consistently go the extra mile are rewarded for doing so.

For all these reasons Schuitema advocates the following two step approach to clarifying contribution:

**STEP ONE** is the clarification of priorities/what results require focus on right now. The critical results can either be taken directly off the scoreboard or determined from the current key issues and indicators of success if they were addressed. Clarity of results provides the context for then specifying the contribution required by each person to positively impact on the results to be achieved. Without this context what people need to do could be anything.

**STEP TWO** is the determination of a set of deliverables per individual. That is a clear delineation of what each person needs to affect or produce which is of added value in the next reporting period.

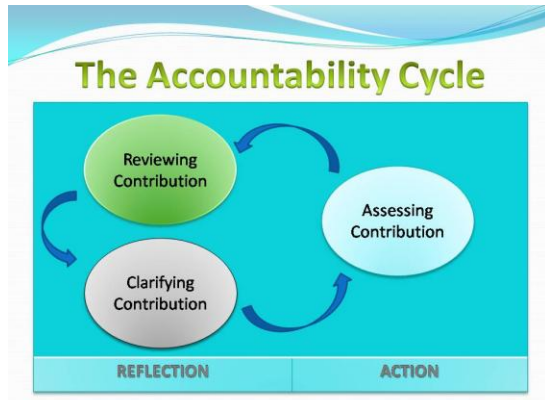
The reporting period may vary but should probably not exceed  $\pm$  90 days. This is because it is relatively easy to see what needs to be done in the next 3-4 months. Beyond that time frame contribution becomes increasingly vague. The 90 day period also provides flexibility. If what is done does not produce the required outcome (Possibility Three of the Four Possibilities outlined earlier) different actions/deliverables can be affected in the next reporting cycle.

Assigned deliverables need to meet the following criteria:

- They should contribute to achieving a result. If there is no connection between an individual's contribution and a result(s), the contribution should obviously not be made. This is seemingly not the case, but if, for example, there was no relationship between convincing a debtor to pay (the debt collector's contribution) and money in the bank (the desired outcome) there would be no reason to have debt collectors.
- They should be unique in the sense that they are specific to an individual at a point in time and in terms of his/her unique circumstances. Also unique in that any deliverable should be assigned to one person only. As soon as more than one person is accountable for a deliverable, no one is accountable.
- They should be specific and concrete such that it should be possible to answer the question "was this done/delivered? - 'yes' or 'no'". If yes, "was it done / delivered on or above standard?"
- They should be appropriate to the role or level in the organisation. The deliverables in leadership positions, if appropriate, should contribute primarily to enabling others (through the provision of care, means, ability and accountability) rather than directly contributing to the results.
- They should provide growth for the person. That is, they should be stretching but achievable.
- They should be time bound. That is specific to the next 90 days/appropriate reporting cycle.



## Barriers to Clarifying Contribution



Clarifying contribution is an element in an ongoing accountability review cycle which takes place throughout the year. In all three sets of 90 day deliverables need to be defined in a twelve month period following on from a review of the previous set of deliverables.

Clarifying contribution on a regular and ongoing basis is not easy. From Schuitema's experience there are two barriers which need to

be overcome if the discipline of clarifying contribution on a regular basis is to become entrenched in an organisation.

The first barrier to the scripting of 90 day deliverables is that people find this difficult to do. It takes time to learn how to do this properly. Typically three to four cycles are needed before unconscious competence is achieved. Many people are simply not prepared to go through the learning curve to get there.

The second impediment to instituting a 90 day deliverables process is that the rewards which come from clarifying contribution are not immediate. The analogy which springs to mind is that of exercise. Initially one is only aware of the toil and struggle that is being experienced. It is only much later, if one has persevered, that the benefits become apparent.

### Typical shortcomings / errors in scripting contribution / deliverables

From Schuitema's experience of assisting people in organisations to clarify contribution there are a number of common errors that are made. The most common of these are as follows:

- People confuse results and contribution. They have been schooled to think in terms of quantifiable, measurable results because that is what they have historically been measured on and rewarded for. They have difficulty identifying unique contribution / what

### Result / Contribution

	RESULT	CONTRIBUTION
• Grow D3 profit variance. YTD to R170k	✓	
• Hold artisans accountable for adhering to call out standards		✓
• 100% Rollout of quality programme		✓
• Increase % of managers who are PDI to 30%	✓	

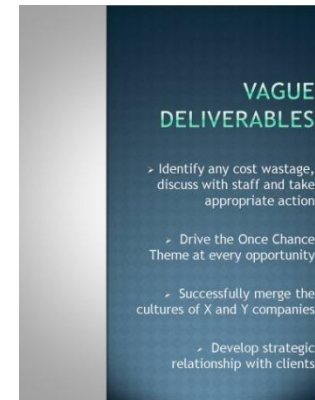
they personally will affect which will be their contribution to the result(s) to be achieved. What must they personally do, for example, which will aid the achievement of a profit variance YTD of 170k.



- People confuse activities with accountabilities / deliverables. People say what they are going to do e.g. “attend staff meetings at all contract sites” not what they are going to affect / deliver by their actions.

Actions / activities / effort are not on their own deliverables. A deliverable has only been made when something is affected or produced which is of added value to someone else. What, for example, will be delivered / affected by the person as a result of attending staff meetings at all contract sites?

- They are too vague / generic. For a deliverable to be a deliverable it has to be concrete and specific. It needs to state unequivocally what will be delivered in the next 90 days which is of value to someone else. When deliverables are too vague it is not possible to hold someone accountable (both positively and negatively) for the contribution that they have made.
- People confuse 90 day deliverables with the day to day tasks which make up 80% of their jobs. Ongoing, routine tasks e.g. monthly billings, should not be included in a set of deliverables. What should be included are the critical few contributions which will both impact positively on desired results and provide personal growth for the person accountable for delivering them.
- Conversely 90 day accountabilities are often either overwhelming or a walk in the park. A good set of 90 day deliverables should be manageable but stretching.
- People have a tendency to duplicate the same deliverable at more than one level in the hierarchy. Someone will lay claim to a deliverable which should actually be the deliverable of his/her subordinate. As a result their contribution is not appropriate to the level they occupy in the hierarchy
- Another shortfall is to specify the ‘what needs to be delivered’ but not ‘the standard at which it should be delivered’. Standards for tasks / deliverables are critical because they tell the person what doing the task well or delivering to excellence actually means.
- Finally there is a tendency to put forward management accountabilities rather than leadership accountabilities. Words like ensure / check / monitor pertain to management. Leadership, on the other hand, is about providing the



preconditions (means and ability) for contribution and then holding people accountable for the contribution made.

The good news is that a set of 90 day deliverables do not have to be perfect first off. A chance to improve on them is literally ninety days away. One manager fished out his first set of deliverables, devised eighteen months previously and said to me that he was embarrassed by their poor quality. In fact, for a first effort, they were actually very good. What a person needs to give in any case becomes increasingly apparent but only with the passage of time. Instant perfection is not what this is all about.

## The benefits / rewards for clarifying contribution

Clarifying contribution enables contribution in a number of ways:

- Firstly, it provides focus both now and going forward. It helps people concentrate their efforts on those critical few things which really make a difference. It helps them remove the clutter from their day to day lives, to see what is really important / value adding in amongst the frenetic busyness which envelops most corporate souls.
- Secondly, clarifying contribution helps a person to make the shift from reactive to proactive. Issues which are urgent (be they important or not) are those which tend to get attention. Because they are urgent they are reacted to. Issues which are important but not urgent (Covey's Quadrant Two), on the other hand, only get attention if they are deliberately planned for and people hold true to the plan.  
The process of clarifying contribution helps to shift people's focus to that which is important; it enables people to change from being essentially reactive to being primarily proactive. It ensures that what will affect a move forward, both in terms of personal growth and improved results, actually gets done.
- Thirdly, clarifying contribution is empowering. This is because contribution, as opposed to results, sits in one's own hands / is in one's control. When people are focused on that which they can do something about they are obviously empowered.



## Overcoming the Barriers to Clarifying Contribution

All of the benefits outlined above are true. What is equally true, however, is that commitment by an individual to a set of deliverables for a defined period involves a risk. In making a commitment of this type, a person puts themselves on the line far more than when they agree to a set of targets. This is because it is always possible to rationalize away failure to achieve a target, to ascribe a below target outcome to external factors. Failure to make an agreed contribution however is another matter. Contribution, as said before sits in a person's hands. When the deliverable is not made there is no longer somewhere to hide.

Notably, it is the risk inherent in committing to a specific contribution which is initially what is apparent. The benefits of doing so, on the other hand – focus, proactivity, growth and empowerment - only become apparent over time.

For the very real barriers outlined above to be overcome requires the following:

In the first instance people need an opportunity to practice writing deliverables. They need to be given the space and time to develop competency at this task. To this end, an internal or external coach who helps people develop their expertise at this task can be useful.

While people are learning how to clarify contribution moreover, they should not be assessed or rewarded for their contribution. This is because when assessment / reward is linked to defined contribution prematurely peoples' focus shifts from genuinely seeking to make the best contribution that they are capable of to making sure they maximize their reward.

Secondly, from experience, people will only persevere with the process, up to the time they begin to realize its benefits, if they are required to do so. Clarifying contribution, in other words, cannot be a voluntary process.

Where organisations have successfully implemented the 90 day deliverables process, it is Schuitema's observation that this has always been because a Senior Manager has insisted that the process be done. Further to this they hold people accountable for doing so.

Not initially but in due course people experience the benefits of defining contribution as far outweighing the effort involved. They wonder why they ever worked in any other way.