
Editorial

Andy Neely

This special issue of the *International Journal of Business Performance Management* draws upon a selection of the best papers presented at the Performance Measurement Association's biannual conference, held in July 2000 at the University of Cambridge. The Performance Measurement Association, which was launched at the July 2000 conference, is an international multi-disciplinary network for those with an academic and/or a practical interest in performance measurement and management. The network, which has a current membership of over 700 people from some 50 countries around the world, seeks to achieve several aims, including:

- To encourage the development of a multi-disciplinary community centred around performance measurement and management.
- To provide networking opportunities for members of that community so that individuals can better understand the research that has been undertaken into the field of performance measurement and management on a worldwide basis.
- To facilitate the exchange of information and ideas about theory and practice in the emerging field of performance measurement and management.
- To encourage the exchange and joint development of teaching and education materials designed for practitioners in the field of performance measurement and management.
- To enable the rapid transfer of ideas, concepts and insights in the field of performance measurement and management from academia to business and vice-versa.

In addition to an extensive online presence and an active discussion forum (www.performanceportal.org), the Performance Measurement Association is seeking to build a community around performance measurement and management through regular international conferences. The next conference is scheduled for 17–19 July in Boston, Mass. and will be addressed by Professor Robert Kaplan of the Harvard Business School and Professor Baruch Lev, of the Stern School of Business, New York. Some 200 people from 30 different countries attended the previous conference, July 2000, and the papers included in the special issue illustrate some of the themes and issues discussed.

The first paper, by James Sheffield, now with the PA Consulting Group, explores the deployment of the UK Government's Best Value performance reporting initiative throughout Scotland. The paper sets the Best Value performance reporting initiative in the context of other Local Government reforms, such as Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), Value For Money (VFM), Citizen's Charter and Scottish Local Government reforms.

The second paper, by Tony Bovaird and Arie Halachmi, continues the theme of Best Value, but this time addresses it from an international perspective, exploring the roots

and antecedents of the concept. As well as describing the history and evolution of the concept, Bovaird and Halachmi draw heavily on the results of pilot evaluations of the Best Value scheme to explore its strengths and weaknesses.

The third paper, by Umit Bititci, Trevor Turner and Mike Bourne, explores a different issue, namely the design of performance measurement systems. The authors take the performance measurement system design process developed by researchers at the University of Cambridge, entitled 'Getting the Measure of Your Business', and compare and contrast this with the Strathclyde reference model through the medium of an action research study.

The fourth paper, by David Cochran, James Duda, Carlos Lobo and Paulo Lima, continues with the theme of design performance measurement systems, this time detailing a process based on axiomatic design principles. The core of Cochran *et al's* thesis is that axiomatic design offers a better means of developing performance measurement systems, as it forces a clear link between customer requirements, functional requirements and design parameters, thereby making explicit not only what should be measured, but also how performance can be improved.

The fifth paper, by Jacky Holloway, adopts a more theoretical and critical stance, exploring the evidence investigating the performance impact of performance measurement. This paper makes a particularly important point, in that it bemoans the lack of theoretical underpinning for the subject of performance measurement and suggests several potentially rich streams of research.

The sixth paper, by Robert Johnston and Lin Fitzgerald, continues with the critical theme and presents research data questioning the validity of some performance measurement initiatives. Provocatively entitled, 'Flying in the Face of Fashion', this paper argues that the current fashion for implementing balanced and robust measurement systems has resulted in managers becoming obsessed with accuracy of measurement, rather than appropriateness of management.

The seventh paper, by Bernard Marr and Andy Neely, echoes some of the issues raised by Johnston and Fitzgerald, through a study of the performance measures used in dot.coms, click-and-mortar and brick-and-mortar firms. Amongst other findings, Marr and Neely report a widespread interest in performance measurement across the board, with some diversity of interest in terms of specific measures.

The eighth paper, by Denise Conroy, continues with the critical theme, but this time links back to the public sector and questions whether customer satisfaction is meaningful in the public sector. Conroy argues that public sector organisations might be better concentrating their resources on improving customer service, rather than measuring customer satisfaction.

The final two papers, one on Marketing Measurement by Bruce Clark and Tim Ambler, and one on Accounting Measurement by David Otley, were specifically commissioned for the conference as summaries of performance measurement from functional perspectives. Both Clark and Ambler and Otley therefore present a review and synopsis of performance measurement within their chosen fields of expertise.

Together these ten papers illustrate the range and quality of presentations made at the Performance Measurement Association's 2000 conference. They range from theoretical to practical, from critical to supportive, from technical to behavioural, but in all cases their aim is to help offer ideas and concepts that will improve the theory and practice of performance measurement.