

Running Head: RESOURCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Aligning a Resource Accountability System

With Vision – The South Peru Project

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Introduction

Leaders in today's missionary organizations need to see themselves as stewards. They are stewards of the organization and its various resources. Not only are these leaders increasingly being held accountable by their various stakeholders to produce results, they are also accountable to God to produce a good return on the investments that have been made into the organization whether they be financial or other (Matthew 25:14-30).

Value-for-money is a phrase that not only applies to for-profit business; it also applies to faith-based organizations like mine, Wycliffe Bible Translators. Value-for-money must be accompanied by a commitment to resource accountability.

In this paper I will delve into the resource accountability system that is being used by my South Peru team in Cusco, Peru. I will begin by giving an overview of the whole system. Next I will explain how our accountability system deals with the basic decision making system requirements. I will then investigate our capacity and preparedness to implement the needed system changes. To end I will recommend a series of prioritized actions that should be implemented in order to increase the effectiveness of our resource accountability system.

Setting the foundation

In order to understand the following paper there are some key assumptions that must be understood. This paper will look at the South Peru Team. I am a member of this nine member team. The team works as part of the Summer Institute of Linguistics-Peru (SIL) which is linked to Wycliffe Bible Translators. Each of our team members is seconded to SIL from Wycliffe.

What is our envisioned future?

“There exists a core of indigenous churches brought to maturity through the life-changing and sustainable use of the vernacular scripture.” (South Peru Team, 2006)

Our statement of an envisioned future does not include us as an organization. This is because we are working ourselves out of a job and we are building up the organizational capacity of two local faith-based organizations to meet many of the needs of their own people. This idea of sustainability is part of our strategic priorities.

What is our purpose statement?

“We, the South Peru team, are building capacity into the Quechua church, until the year 2010, in life-changing and sustainable use of the Quechua scriptures.”

What are our core values?

The following core values are those of Wycliffe Bible Translators and not just our South Peru team (WBT, 2006, ¶ 4).

1. The transforming Word of God
2. The language of the heart
3. Excellence in all we do
4. Partnering as servants
5. Transferring vision and capacity
6. Trusting in God for the impossible

Who are the key stakeholders?

Customer responsiveness. Our principle customer is the Quechua church. In many ways the greater Quechua community is really our customer because we are training the church

so that it will reach out to its community. For the sake of this paper I will consider the Quechua church to be my customer.

Employee value. We have literally hundreds of employees if you were to consider all the people that are out teaching and running the various programs that we started and are now supporting. For the sake of this paper I will consider the employees to be the nine members of the South Peru team (SPT).

Organizational capacity. There are various key stakeholders in our value chain. They include organizations like the Peruvian Bible Society with whom we do a lot of work and whose Bible translation we as a team are promoting.

Owner expectations. The owners of our project are those who have invested in the project. These include our families, both nuclear and extended. They include the churches and individuals that have generously invested their prayers and their money. It also includes those donor agencies that have made contributions towards our project costs.

Community benefits. The community is the greater Quechua community whom we are serving.

What are our strategic priorities?

We have a series of strategic priorities that have been set by our board at the International level of Wycliffe Bible Translators. In our local project we work with the following priorities that have come down to us from our international board (WBTC, 2006, ¶ 7).

1. Partnerships: Working in unity with other organizations to jointly do the job.
2. Training: Equipping Wycliffe's staff with the skills to equip others.
3. Urgency: Getting the task done more quickly than the status quo will permit.

4. Vision-sharing: Motivating God's Church everywhere—at home and in field countries—to further Bible translation.
5. Sustainability: Establishing translation projects that continue beyond Wycliffe's involvement.

Current resource accountability system overview

In this section I will give an overview of two of the three principle components of our resource accountability system. They include results leadership and results information. The third component, the results-based systems, will be thoroughly explained and developed in the following section (Remple, 2006).

Results leadership

Our current leadership is results focused. Our leader has adopted a results-based servant leadership paradigm. He is a results-based servant leader because he empowers us as team members to make major decisions. For example, I may want to make a shift in my strategy for our literacy program and I am free to make that decision. I have never heard from him, “no, you can’t do that.” He trusts us but still will hold us accountable to meeting our objectives. He believes that there is often more to be gained by letting your employees try and then fail than there is value in saying, “no, do it this way instead.” There will always be a good long-term return to the investments that are made in empowering people and our leadership believes this and puts it into action.

Results information

Though we have good results leadership we are lacking in the results information category. We have results objectives but we do not have good results measures to go with the objectives. We have no financial targets other than the budgeted amount allocated to

each objective. We do not have well defined non-financial targets. All we have are vague indicators and product/output goals. The need for financial and non-financial targets was a major issue of discussion during our latest round of strategic planning and review, yet nothing was done about it. Our team leader recognizes the need for them but has had difficulty putting them down on paper. There is a felt need, at this time, for results information.

Since we have been receiving funding from several agencies or foundations for our operations, we have had to adapt a system that is more results focused than what is used in other parts of our organization. We do not have a board that is over just our project. We have a board over all of our organization in Peru, SIL-Peru. We also have a board over our sending agency which is Wycliffe Bible Translators Canada. We relate directly to our SIL-Peru board via our director. The board has given our director significant authority. They are in the process of becoming more policy –governance. Five years ago the board was far too involved in administration. The administration of SIL-Peru has given our project leader significant freedom and this is because we have consistently produced results and built trust. In this paper when I refer to the board I will refer to the SIL Peru board unless otherwise stated.

System requirements

Our organization's accountability system does not fully address the basic decision-making system requirements. Our systems need to be realigned with our vision and our current priorities. In this section I will look carefully at each of these requirements and give an assessment of how we are addressing each one.

Governance

Our board in Peru is experienced in operations, because they all are frontline workers. This enables them to understand the frontline issues and to make informed customer oriented decisions. But it can really hamper the governance process because they are so personally attached to their decisions. They end up usurping a lot of authority and decision making that should be done by the administration. In Canada this would not happen since a nonprofit board here does not have employees or paid members on the board. In Peru it is normal to have a nonprofit board that is made up exclusively of paid employees and often the CEO is also the chair. This brings up all sorts of other ethical issues. But our board in Peru is made up of members that are all accountable to proper functioning board in their home country.

The board has only seven members so it is relatively easy for them to make decisions in a timely manner, when you exclude other factors. Our SIL Peru body votes in a new board every year so this also creates a challenge of continuity. At this same time we elect a director (CEO) every year. This has the potential to be devastating but it has actually been quite positive. It has worked out well because we as a body have almost always been unanimous in our decisions as to who will be the director. God has always supplied us with the perfect person. The re-election process is usually quite positive in that it is almost always unanimous and this then is a great expression of our support to the director. The director has always been homegrown and we have never brought someone in to be the director. A director can only serve for four consecutive years after which for one year he/she cannot be director. Board members cannot hold any position for more than two consecutive years.

The challenge for our board is to where the hat of board member when it is appropriate and wear the hat of frontline worker when it is appropriate. The two should not be mixed. This has been a major challenge for our board.

The board has developed a mission statement and strategic goals but they have never written out a vision. They have an implicit vision but it is not always all that clear and it has not yet been made explicit.

The structure of our local team is flat with only nine members and one leader. Decision making authority is pushed right out to the frontline worker. The team leader plays the role of support staff and he does a very good job of staying in that role. Our team leader is given incredible freedom to lead our team and those in administration above him do not interfere unnecessarily but genuinely are there to serve us as the frontline workers. Our team has its own vision and strategic goals that fit into the large organizational context. The vision and strategic goals are well developed and useful. They do not need to be redeveloped at this point although we do revisit them on an annual basis.

Performance objectives

Our team is well on its way to becoming results focused as we compare ourselves to others in our immediate organization. Although we are on the track towards being results focused I think that we still have a long way to go before we are truly there. We have a solid vision and a strong sense of mission. We also have a solid understanding of our core values and how they relate to the implementation of our vision. We have objectives laid out in a rather broad sense and we have strategic initiatives that are then

linked with the objectives. What we are missing are the measures that relate back to the results information category.

We need results measures as a filter to run our decision making through. Solid results measures and targets, both financial and non-financial, are needed in order for us to gauge our progress on a day to day basis. Many of our results objectives are four or five years away and so it is often difficult to measure the progress made in proportion to an objective that is so far off. The same goes for our vision. We do a fairly good job of running new ideas through the filter of our vision but the vision is so far off that it can be difficult to know how some small decisions will affect the completion of our vision. Having targets that are within a year or six months would add increased urgency and a better sense of direction to our team.

Our results-based objectives are not dealing well with the five stakeholder interest groups. The two driving stakeholder groups are customers and owners. The remaining three groups, community, employee and organizational capacity, are not being met in a deliberate way in our current business plan.

Operations/Budgets

Our operations and budgeting system are really quite simple. We developed our business plan with vision, objectives, products and activities. We have a comprehensive list of activities that are linked to our vision. We then simply do an activity based budget that is based upon the activities that we developed in the business plan. In doing this our vision and results objectives literally drive our budget.

Monitoring, Reporting and Service Improvement

We monitor for improvement at several levels. We are required by our main funding agency to bring in an external consultant every two years to do a thorough evaluation of our project. This person will look primarily at results. Are we getting the results that we planned for and are we getting the results that we are reporting? Our last evaluation touched on all the five stakeholder categories. It was very well done and comprehensive. It also came with many recommendations many of which we have implemented (such as professional development for myself) or are trying to somehow implement at this time (Kelley, 2003).

Another outside factor is our donor agencies. One of them now requires us to send in quarterly reports which are not common in our industry. This has forced us to remain results focused and always looking for improvements because each quarter we want to be able to show that we are on track or exceeding our projections. We also have annual reporting that is more comprehensive than the quarterly reporting.

Internally each of our members is required to submit a monthly report which is not of major consequence. This does not really serve the purpose of monitoring for improvements but simply monitoring to ensure that something is being done. Yet these reports are also used for prayer requests regarding our programs. In this sense this reporting has a direct link to service improvement. One of our core values is “trusting God for the impossible.”

We have an annual member review process where each team member, alongside our team leader, looks at whether or not they accomplished their annual results objectives. We are moving towards using 360 reviews.

Each year we set aside several days to go through our plan, evaluate what we have done and adjust the strategic plan according to any changing factors. After this we then set up our next year’s budget according to the strategic initiatives that we are going to launch or continue.

System capacity for change

The following index for change will be used from the perspective of me introducing change into our system to make it more fully a results-based system.

(Remple, 2006, HO 7.6)

Key Success Factors for Change	Questions to Assess and Accomplish Success Factors	Score 1 - 5
Leading change <i>Who is responsible?</i>	Do we have a leader	
	- who owns and champions the change?	5
	- who makes a public commitment to making change happen?	4
	- who will garner resources to sustain change?	4
	- who will put in personal time and attention to following change through?	5

I would be the champion of change in introducing the needed changes but I would not go it alone. I would first get full support of our team leader and at least one or two others before making a public commitment to the changes. I believe that our team leader could just as easily take this and run. He already is results focused and he already has a felt need for this.

Key Success Factors for Change	Questions to Assess and Accomplish Success Factors	Score
Creating a shared need <i>Why do it?</i>	Do employees	
	- see the reason for the change?	3
	- understand why the change is important?	3
	- see how the change will help them and/or the business in the short term and long term?	3

This is where some time would need to be invested in order for me to introduce these changes. I have a reputation for being opinionated and sometimes having crazy ideas. If the rest of the team does not grasp onto these ideas then it will not work. If my team just thinks that this is another crazy idea from Justin, they will not accept it. I would need to first begin by planting the idea in one or two others and let them champion the idea.

I think that our team will understand that if we set up a good resource accountability system we will do better at accomplishing our goals. The challenge is to get people to believe it enough to be willing to change and invest in the change.

Key Success Factors for Change	Questions to Assess and Accomplish Success Factors	Score
Shaping a vision <i>What will it look like when we are done?</i>	Do employees	
	- see the outcomes of the change in behavioural terms?	3
	- get excited about the results of accomplishing the change?	2
	- understand how the change will benefit customers and other stakeholders?	3

This is very closely related to the previous success factor. I believe that I could communicate this to certain people but once again I could be faced with people thinking that I am simply pushing a crazy idea. I recognize this as an issue in my leadership and am slowly learning how to deal with it. Similar to what was mentioned before I would need to plant the idea in the minds of others in an informal context prior to bringing it before the whole group.

Key Success Factors for Change	Questions to Assess and Accomplish Success Factors	Score
Mobilizing commitment <i>Who else needs to be</i>	Do the sponsors of the change	
	- recognize who else needs to be committed to the change to make it happen?	4

<i>involved?</i>	- know how to build coalition of support for the change?	3
	- have the ability to enlist support of key individuals in the organization?	3
	- have the ability to build a responsibility matrix to make the change happen?	4

As was mentioned earlier, it will be important to have other people support the change before I go public with it. Our team leader is without question the most important person that will make or break the implementation of the change.

Key Success Factors for Change	Questions to Assess and Accomplish Success Factors	Score
Modifying systems and structures <i>How will it be institutionalized?</i>	Do the sponsors of the change	
	- know how to link the change to HR systems?	4
	- recognize the systems implications of the change?	4

The change to a better financial accountability decision-making system would not involve any immediate changes in our HR systems. We have a set amount of people that we are working with for ten years and we will certainly not receive any more people in the last four years of our project. In fact, if we become more results-based in our systems then we may finish our project ahead of schedule which means that people would be freed earlier for re-assignment.

Adding results measures and targets to our scorecards would mean extra controls. The controls may be controlled and developed by the person, who is actually doing the work, but it is still an extra control and the team leader will want to know if progress is being made towards the targets. I do not like to add more controls to people's work. A compromise of sorts may need to be made in order to introduce the change. Another type

of control may need to be dropped or modified in order to integrate these new controls into our current systems.

Key Success Factors for Change	Questions to Assess and Accomplish Success Factors	Score
Monitoring progress <i>How will it be measured?</i>	Do the sponsors of the change	
	- have a means of measuring the success of the change?	3
	- plan to benchmark progress on both the results of the change and the process of implementing it?	2

The ultimate way for me to measure the success of this change would be to determine if introducing these system changes resulted in us achieving our results objectives earlier, with higher quality and/or with reduced costs. Because we have such major growth and change in our program from year to year, I would not be able to simply compare data from one year or period to the next. A comparison of what happened would need to be made with data from a scenario of what would have happened had we not introduced the needed systems changes.

Key Success Factors for Change	Questions to Assess and Accomplish Success Factors	Score
Making it last <i>How will it get started and last?</i>	Do the sponsors of the change	
	- recognize the first steps in getting started?	4
	- have a short- and long-term plan to keep attention focused on the change?	4
	- have a plan for adapting the change as necessary over time?	3

The first step in introducing these results-based system changes will be to bring our team leader on board with me. Together we can then develop the actual inner workings of the needed system changes.

Recommended results-based leadership strategies

The following strategies all relate to the introduction of the balanced scorecard model. The strategies are listed in a prioritized order. (Remple, 2006, HO 4.1)

1. Develop a series of results objectives that would be achievable in one year or less.

Our current objectives are too long-term to be easily measured. These new one year objectives would simply be the first steps towards the longer-term objectives that we already have.

2. Our current objectives are divided up into five categories according to different types of activities, much like departments. We have an area for developing writers, an area for developing leadership, an area for developing new readers etc. The way in which it is divided up is operations driven. It will be necessary for us to ensure that all stakeholder groups will be adequately addressed in the plan. I propose that we maintain our current groupings of objectives because they are operations driven. If we were to divide them up according to stakeholder groups we may give the impression that we are becoming more administration driven. We will simply need to ensure that each stakeholder group is being adequately addressed in each of our current categories.

3. Once we have developed our results-based objectives for all the stakeholder categories we can then set out our measures and financial and non-financial targets. Setting financial targets will be new and challenging for us since we are more comfortable and accustomed to simply dealing with non-financials. Because we need to report to our owners on a quarterly basis, we should have quarterly targets that lead us to our annual objectives. This would mean that we set a series of four financial as

well as four non-financial targets for each objective. In doing this we increase our accountability and we will make our reporting more objective.

Conclusion

Our organization's systems must continually be scrutinized through the lenses of our vision, our core values and our strategic priorities. We must continually keep them aligned with one another.

Our South Peru project is well on its way to becoming truly results-based. By implementing the recommended systems changes the project will increase its resource accountability, will better address its various stakeholder interests and will ultimately see the fulfillment of its envisioned future.

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