



Gathering Information

(Sources: CHR Process Improvement, Volume II, Unit 7, Data Collection, CHR: Listening to Patients/Customers: A Process Guide)

What: This tool will help you when you need to gather information about what is happening, what needs to be changed, how people are reacting and to solve problems related to change. You can use this tool to decide what method you will use to gather information and to guide you in collecting, analyzing, providing feedback and developing action plans.

Why: As a change leader, you may need to gather information to gain a clear understanding of the situation, issue or problem; to help others understand the change needed; and to move change forward. Remember that although information can be a catalyst for change, information itself will not change behaviour. Information can however, clarify the kinds of behaviours and actions needed to create the desired outcomes.

When: Gather information during the planning stages and then continue to seek information as you build commitment, anchor and monitor the change.

How: Before you begin to gather information – consider the following questions:

- Why do you need more information and how will it be used?
- Who can provide meaningful and relevant information?
- What method(s) will be used?
- What resources and time will be required to collect and analyze data?
- Who might be involved in planning, gathering and/or analyzing this information?
- How will confidentiality be maintained?
- How will the summary of results be shared with those involved (if applicable)?
- What concerns might people have about the process and use of this information?

Once your ready to begin use these five steps for gathering information about a change:

- 1) Decide on most appropriate method for getting the information you need
- 2) Collect the information
- 3) Decide what the information tells you
- 4) Respond, provide feedback or report as appropriate
- 5) Plan the next steps

1) Decide on most appropriate method for getting the information you need:

- Decide what method to use. Think about why you are collecting the information and how it will be used.
- Decide who can provide the most meaningful and relevant information.
- Match your data collection method to the types of information you need, the people involved, and the resources and time available:
- Where it makes sense, involve others in the planning.
- Where appropriate ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Which of these method(s) for collecting information suits the current situation?

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Your Feelings About Situation</p> <p>In this method you need to trust your own instincts, intuition and experiences. Chances are if your feeling unease with a situation so are others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ honest ▪ important data ▪ leads by example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ perceptions may not be supported by facts ▪ subjective
<p>Observation</p> <p>This method gathers information by observing and recording behaviour while it is occurring. Observations can be formal using tools and instruments (eg. number of times, number of people, etc.), or informal observations while focusing on other things (eg. making note of body language during a discussion).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ more direct information about behaviour than document review ▪ can provide strong, credible evidence if well documented ▪ reveals more complex and subtle interactions than would show up on a questionnaire/survey ▪ flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances during the observation period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ formal observation sessions can be time consuming ▪ hard to maintain objectivity ▪ requires strong skills to maintain observer consistency ▪ people may act differently when they know they are being observed ▪ transcribing and interrupting findings takes time and focused thinking ▪ may disrupt work processes

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Document Review</p> <p>This method gathers information from records, reports and other sources, not from people. For example: Sick time records, incident reports, customer complaints, revenue & expense reports, manpower reports, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ unlikely to reflect observer bias ▪ provides insights that are not easily observed ▪ very little time involved required by others ▪ data is credible ▪ results can be easily quantified and analyzed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can be difficult to access the right information ▪ can be hard to retrieve exactly what you want ▪ records may be incomplete, inconsistent or inaccurate
<p>Meetings</p> <p>This method can be used in a variety ways. Having a meeting can be an excellent way to get the lay of the land quickly, clarify a work groups issues and concerns, quash rumours and exchange information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ part of regular routine, therefore will not feel like something different for people ▪ everyone hears the same information at the same time ▪ people feel heard ▪ people more likely to be committed to actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ past meetings may have been perceived as wasteful, boring, ineffective and frustrating ▪ people may not attend ▪ can be challenging for the manager to stay non-defensive
<p>Interviews</p> <p>This method enables private one to one discussions and can be very structured or informal. Interviews can provide rich information about the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of affected individuals. The interview format gives you the opportunity to probe further into issues or concerns. The objective is to find reoccurring patterns or themes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances during interviews ▪ builds rapport ▪ relatively easy to administer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ time consuming ▪ subject to bias of interviewer ▪ interviewee may feel threatened ▪ requires skilled interviewer ▪ selective interviews may be perceived as favouritism and create suspicion

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Focus Groups</p> <p>This method is simply a group interview with between 6 and 8 people. The discussion usually lasts between 1 and 2 hours and the goal is to gather information about people's perceptions, experiences and feelings. This is an excellent method to use to help you develop surveys.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances during event ▪ good for gathering background information as basis for other tools such as questionnaires ▪ provides more reliable information about the ideas and attitudes of a given group ▪ small enough group to easily manage ▪ provides opportunity for probing into specific issues or comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ require significant advance preparation ▪ require skilled discussion leader ▪ results are not quantifiable ▪ one groups attitudes may not reflect the larger population's ▪ relatively expensive if people are being paid for their time ▪ can be hard to get groups together ▪ time consuming to turn results into a report
<p>Surveys/ Questionnaires</p> <p>This method consists of a carefully designed set of questions which can be administered to a large number of people. They may cover single or multiple issues. Surveys may be fixed response (eg. when a person is asked to select their response from a scale), open ended (eg. when a person is asked to record their perception, opinion, etc.), or a combination of the two.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can gather quantifiable data ▪ multiple viewpoints can be gathered ▪ can provide large amounts of data on many topics ▪ once designed can be quick, easy and cheap to administer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ people may be tired of filling them out ▪ no opportunity to probe for more information ▪ potential low participation rates ▪ very impersonal ▪ if not predesigned can be time consuming and expensive to develop

Additional Resources:

Strategic Directions Volume II - Tools & Techniques for Process Improvement
Customer Listening Process Guide

2) Collect the information.

Explain to those involved in the process:

- the background and rationale for gathering the information
- how confidentiality will be maintained, if applicable
- how the results will be shared, if applicable
- how the information will be used

When using face to face collection methods:

- Set a positive tone
- give people lots of opportunities to ask questions and voice concerns about the process and use of the information.
- probe for the information you need.
- ask questions that encourage people to describe applicable occurrences and situations.
- try to write down the words the person is saying, not your own interruption of the words.
- tell people how and when you will report your findings back to them if appropriate. If not appropriate you need to tell people.

3) Decide what the information tells you.

- Avoid conducting any analysis until collection process is finished. This ensures you do not jump to the wrong conclusion.
- When appropriate, involve others in interpreting the collected information. Different viewpoints strengthen analysis of the results and help you recognize your own personal biases.
- Sort the information into manageable pieces that can be understood by others.
- Use suitable tools and methods to analyze the results. Don't hesitate to seek assistance from those who are experienced with data interpretation techniques and tools.

4) Respond, provide feedback or report as appropriate

- Decide who needs to hear the information and tailor your report to them (eg. senior management, staff, peers or transition team).
- Consider the analysis as preliminary and in draft form until you've had the chance to present the material to stakeholders and obtain their feedback.

5) Plan the next steps

The most important step in gathering information from others is developing your action plans. Action plans should include who will do what and by when.