

Pat Lynch's Organizational Effectiveness Triage Process

Organizational effectiveness begins with triaging all your activities so you can prioritize the allocation of your resources. Here's how to do that.

1. Use your organization's mission as the criterion for all decisions. A common mission statement in the fire and rescue service is, "To save lives, protect property and the environment, and foster economic growth."

2. List all the organization's activities - i.e., programs, services, processes, functions, and tasks. Be specific. For example, for internal services you would list the various human resource functions, financial reporting and budgeting functions separately rather than generically as "administration." Services for external stakeholders would be listed by their various major parts, such as treatment and transport for EMS.

3. Triage each item in #2 using the organization's mission as the criterion:

A. **Critical** activities are those whose absence would prevent the agency from fulfilling its mission. Example: Payroll is critical because people will not work without pay.

B. **Very important** activities are those whose absence would have a significant negative impact on the organization's ability to fulfill its mission.

Example: EEO-related programs may be very important because while the organization will be able to achieve its primary mission if it is not in compliance, the financial, morale, effectiveness, and other costs are substantial.

C. **Important** activities are those whose absence would allow the organization to achieve its mission, but at a diminished level of performance.

Example: Clerical or administrative functions may be important when their absence results in significant delays in providing necessary resources or services.

Note: if your organization engages in activities that are not at least important, stop it!

4. Decide what your allocation of resources will be among the three triage categories. Here are some sample allocations:

Critical activities = 100%, very important and important activities = 0%

Critical activities = 75%, very important activities = 20%, important activities = 5%

5. Describe each activity from a **risk perspective** by answering the following questions. (Note: Item A establishes the connection between the activity and the mission. If there is no connection, ask yourself why you are doing it. If there is no good answer, stop doing it. Items B through E represent four ways to reduce outputs if resources are cut; the answers to these questions help identify the impact on the mission when insufficient resources are available to sustain activities.)

A. How, exactly, does the activity support the organization's mission?

What would be the impact on the agency's ability to achieve its mission if the activity was:



What would be the impact on the agency's ability to achieve its mission if the activity was:

- B. not provided?
- C. delayed?
- D. partially provided?
- E. provided at a reduced level of quality?

6. Consider the **feasibility** of each activity, including the costs and time required to implement it, by answering the following questions. (The four items below represent ways to increase inputs, if possible, when insufficient resources are available to sustain all activities.) Is it possible to:

- A. increase the efficiency of the activity?
- B. outsource the activity?
- B. have employees work longer hours?
- C. delegate the activity to someone else internally?

Organizational effectiveness is enhanced when the results of the activity triage, the risk and feasibility assessments, and the designated allocation of resources are aligned with your organization's mission.

More about Dr. Pat Lynch

Pat Lynch, Ph.D. enables first responders to elevate the level of public safety in their communities and to keep their personnel safe. She is the primary author of *Every Fire-Rescue Professional is a Leader: A Practical Guide to Individual, Team, and Organization Development*.