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NQI Progressive Excellence Program (NQI PEP®) Submission Formats

By John Perry – Chair of Adjudication CAE/NQI PEP®

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Introduction

- This document has Two Sections
 - **Section 1** – deals with all NQI PEP® Levels
 - **Section 2** – deals specifically with Level 4
- The suggested Submission Format for NQI PEP® submissions will help an applicant retain focus (on Criteria) throughout their submission and help facilitate the NQI Verifier Submission Read/Review process. The format will also assist an applicant in telling their story, covering actions and achievements.
- While organizations may wish to use a different format when preparing a submission, this one is recommended in terms of style and information levels. We hope you find this helpful and assist you in outlining the good things going on in the organization that meet NQI Criteria intent.
- The suggested format consists of two parts:
 - a) An overview, and
 - b) List of actions plus appendix information covering related Criteria.
 - c) Summary of best practices
- Over and above the use of the suggested submission format, the organization needs to provide general information as outlined in the NQI PEP® Guide, being:
 - ✓ **Profile:** describe the principal activity of the organization
 - ✓ **Locations:** Include a list showing the address, number of people, contact names, plus phone number and email address (for each location listed in the submission)
 - ✓ **Glossary of terms:** if acronyms specific to your organization are used in the submission, attach a glossary of terms
- **Submission size:** for Level 1 try not to exceed ten pages; for all other Levels try not to exceed thirty pages (appendix material would be in addition)

Assessment

We strongly recommend that, prior to making a submission, the organization complete a comprehensive assessment against the relevant Criteria. The assessment report/outcome helps the organization decide if it is ready to make a submission and is extremely useful when preparing a submission. It benefits an applicant to include a copy of their assessment report (including any ratings/scores) as an appendix to the actual submission.

Section 1. Submission Format (all categories)

A. OVERVIEW COVERING BACKGROUND & APPROACH (executive summary format)

- **Submission for Quality Criteria or Integrated Criteria**
Provide a brief overview (content noted below) for each separate Criteria Driver (i.e., Planning, Customer Focus, People Focus, etc).
- **Submissions for *Healthy Workplace*[®] Criteria**
Provide a brief overview (content noted below) at the front of the submission outlining the organizations involvement with healthy workplace development (such information serves as good background information for NQI Verifiers).

Suggested format for the overview (for all Criteria sets):

1. **Background:** Outline why the organization focused on the Criteria Driver (or Healthy Workplace (HW) issues in the case of a HW submission) and why there was a need for improvement. For example an organization might outline key external factors that led it to address improvement issues across their system in a more strategic manner.
2. **Approach:** Comment on the general approach applied to work on the Criteria Driver. For example in the Customer Focus Driver there may be a particular reason why the organization changed its focus and approach to be more customer driven, or in the Process Management Driver a change of approach was made to move toward a greater focus on prevention versus correction.

In regards to a *Healthy Workplace*[®] submission, the organization could outline its high level strategy for working on all key elements of a healthy workplace, and how the approach being taken to HW development is nurturing a healthy workplace.

B. ACTIONS & APPENDICES

Following the Introductory Overview, create a list of Actions to cover the Criteria, along with a related Appendix Listing (noting the actual tab location for attached documents).

Important to note

- It is **not** a requirement that each listed action item be accompanied by an appendix reference/document. The key question to ask is if an attachment would assist an NQI reviewer in the interpretation and understanding of the action.
- A mixture of bullet points/actions plus actions with an attachment (appendix) is the normal practice (example are shown on the next two pages).
- In some cases (at Levels 2 to 4), back-up material may be available electronically for the verifier to review, in which case a hard copy sample is provided in the submission and material is available on-site for further review if needed.

Some submission examples (Quality Criteria):

Example - ABC Organization - Planning Driver

Background

The need for a simplified and repeatable planning process became evident two years ago and our solution was to research planning methods and introduce a new planning system. (This was achieved through our Project Management Office).

Approach

Implementing a practical planning model has solved many of our issues on the subject (earlier identified) and improved consistency of a planning approach across the organization. Today, standardized unit templates and a planning calendar are in use. These tools facilitated the creation of balanced and measurable goals that link well to overall strategic objectives.

(Criteria example from Level 3)

The organization has established and implemented a method to gather, analyze, and use information to provide input for the planning process.	
Actions	Evidence (reference the attachments)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning cycle has been established to aid the understanding of our corporate planning cycle so each area/stakeholder knows when to provide input • Identification of key client, supplier/partner, and employee input opportunities for input to goals/planning • Formal assessment against NQI Criteria conducted to help guide improvement planning 	<p>Section 2 Appendix</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate planning calendar and employee presentation (on planning & planning calendar) • Employee Well-Being survey (results presentation) • Assessment Report • Presentation on assessment outcomes

Example - ABC Organization - People Focus Driver

Background

The organization has seen a positive overhaul to Human Resources (HR) practices. The improved practices are a welcome addition to the employee experience, but the organization knows there is still much work to be done to fulfill HR management goals set out for the next three years. However we are well on our way and are on the right track. We are pleased to advise that the organization was named one of the top ten employers last year in our province.

Approach

With the number of organizational changes and pressures through growth in recent times, creating a culture of trust has been a key focus of our leadership team. People are being encouraged to share their ideas and suggestions, be part of a spirit of innovation and calculated risk-taking. To this end, our approach to HR has a strong focus on communications; for example, implementing informal opportunities for employees to interact with leadership, such as a *Lunch with the Boss* program, that has been very popular. Also, offerings such as communications courses have been popular.

(Criteria example from Level 2)

The organization established and implemented a method to recruit and select people	
Actions	Evidence (reference the attachments)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established core job competencies • Competencies are now used in the interview and selection process • People and their roles are tracked and identified using organizational Charts • Staff are encouraged to provide Recommendations and referrals 	<p>Section 4 Appendix</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core competency model • Interview Guide • Organization Chart

C. SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICES

- As an Appendix/addendum to the submission, provide examples (along with a brief overview/description) of what the organization considers to be its best practices.
- It is understood that these practices may well have been referenced within the body of the submission, however a separate key summary listing highlighting exceptional actions under cover of an executive summary format will assist submission review.
- Best Practices relate to any actions, programs, policies and processes that are highly effective in helping the organization improve its operations and have made a major measured contribution to quality improvement and/or healthy development.
- Note: for Quality or Integrated (Quality/HW) submissions, the best practices listing should be set against individual Criteria Drivers, this structure will assist review.

Section 2. Level 4 Submission Format

- NQI PEP[®] Level 4 differs from other Levels as the key focus is on results, notably a requirement to specify **levels and trends**. Some outcomes are not purely data related however and there are Criteria requesting information on **Indicators** of progress and the **Extent** of development or implementation, i.e., scope; as such there is a requirement for **narrative answers not purely data/charting** (the majority however relates to data), for example:
 - **Indicators** of the effectiveness of leadership actions, or the effectiveness of actual implementation (for example improvement plans). This can be impacted by a number of internal factors such as stability in the management ranks, general feedback about a consistency of focus (or lack of), and impacts from external sources not controlled by the applicant, such as organizational realignment issues due to an economic slowdown; matters that are not in the purest sense measurable but are as equally as important as data review (some would suggest more so).
 - Questions on **Extent** relate to scope of an activity or achievement.
 - At Level 4 an applicant has the opportunity to reflect on overall general achievement (from a comprehensive progressive improvement journey) within an Executive Summary, and Criteria covering **Indicators and Extent** gives additional opportunity to comment on key achievements on specific matters (important when considering current state and the nurturing of a quality and/or healthy workplace culture). Remember a Level 4 organization is classed as a “Role Model”.
- This guideline is provided to assist applicants in meeting NQI requirements for Level 4. It is sorted by Quality and *Healthy Workplace*[®] categories.

A. ALL CATEGORIES

- The following is guidance in regard to NQI submission content requirements for Level 4 submissions.
- **Note:** The examples listed are a mix of public and private sector Level 4 Criteria (quality Criteria), outlining the requirement for both narrative (key actions) and data/results (levels & trends). Albeit, for practical purposes, the charting examples shown below are focused on the Quality category, the same format outlined can be applied to *Healthy Workplace*[®] and Integrated Criteria Level 4 submissions. In regards to submission Guidelines for the *Healthy Workplace*[®] category, refer to Part B.
- The suggested format is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather to assist applicants in the development of a Level 4 submission. For example, an applicant may have a number of specifics to outline in regard to overall achievements/results from their improvement journey they wish to highlight (through three earlier Levels of certification).

Criteria asking for “Indicators”

Some Level 4 Criteria ask for “indicators” of effectiveness (or the “extent” of), and such Criteria require narrative form response, including a listing of key actions that meet Criteria intent. The format should be the same as outlined in Section 1, with any related key documentation (evidence) shown with an appendix reference. Criteria examples:

- **Indicators of effectiveness of leadership in setting strategic direction & demonstrating leadership (in quality)**
 - ✓ Narrative: for example feedback from employees on understanding and reinforcement of direction (i.e., surveys), also
 - ✓ Employee support for the quality focus and perceived levels of reinforcement by management.

- **Extent of senior management involvement in sharing ideas & effective practices**
 - ✓ Narrative: for example presentations on improvement and the quality focus given by leadership to other organizations and/or institutions, over the past twelve months.

- **Indicators of effectiveness of training & education**
 - ✓ Narrative: participant feedback & surveys.
 - ✓ Narrative: outline of training on quality principles/methods and their benefits.

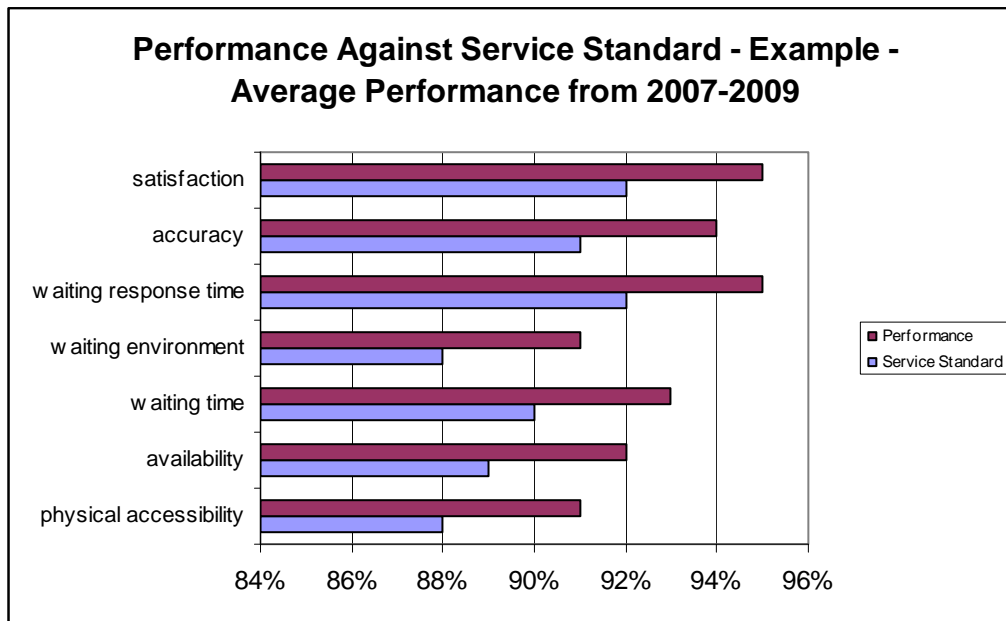
- **Indicators of effectiveness of design process for new services and/or products**
 - ✓ Narrative: for example (if applicable to the organization) outline the success and effectiveness of the process in place to design and implement new systems/processes.

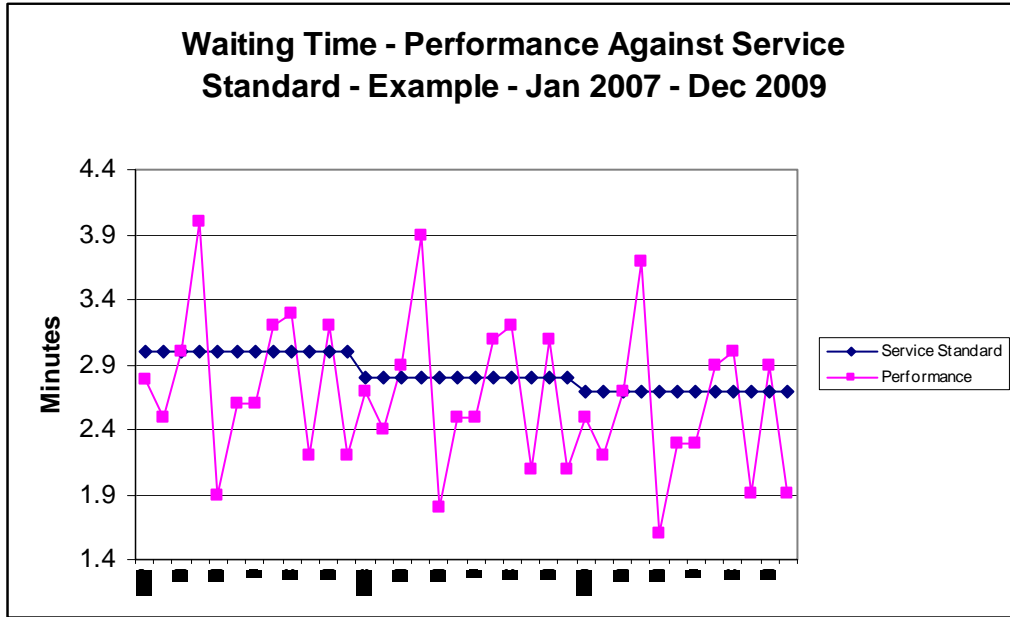
- **Indicators of positive working relationships with qualified partners**
 - ✓ Narrative: for example provide comments from key partners on working relationships with the organization, and outline on improvements generated through dialogue with partners/key suppliers.

- **Indicators of the extent to which responsibility to society and the environment is considered**
 - ✓ Narrative: for example outline how the organization strives to improve and sustain a constructive focus on corporate social responsibility.
 - ✓ Narrative: for example outline work on environmental sustainability, community relations, and (if applicable) nurturing progressive aboriginal relations.

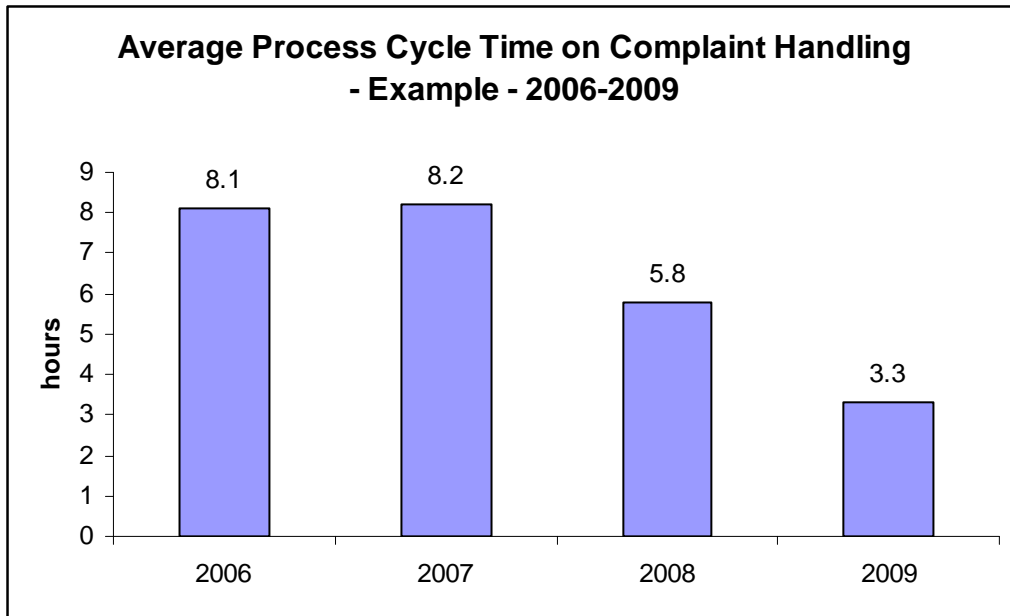
Criteria asking for “Levels & Trends”

- The requirement on trend data is the provision of a minimum of three years' data. NQI realize however that some key improvement projects may be fairly recent, and these can also be included if deemed important.
- An effective way to portray data is in chart form – bar charts, graphs etc; it is highly recommended that this method is used. This assists the verifier in reviewing the trend data (see sample charts below). The charts included, which come from successful Level 4 submissions, are the **kind** of charts preferred by NQI (the examples included are not prescriptive, they hopefully will assist in the generation of ideas)
- **Levels/trends of performance in dealing with client/stakeholder complaints**
 - ✓ Data: for example performance against service standards; example:

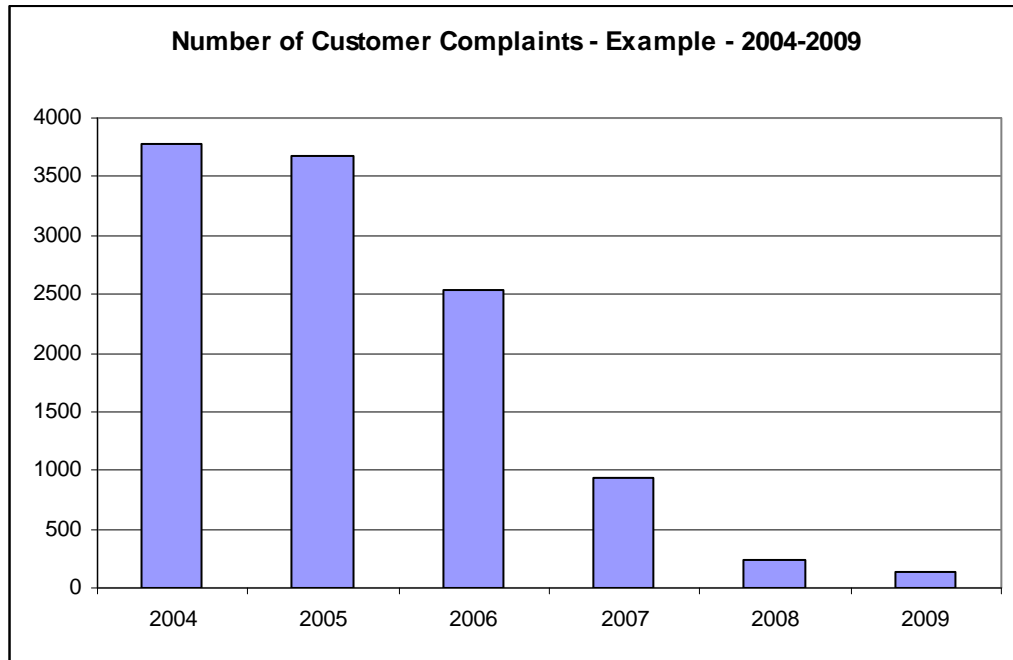




✓ Data: for example process cycle time improvements on complaint handling:

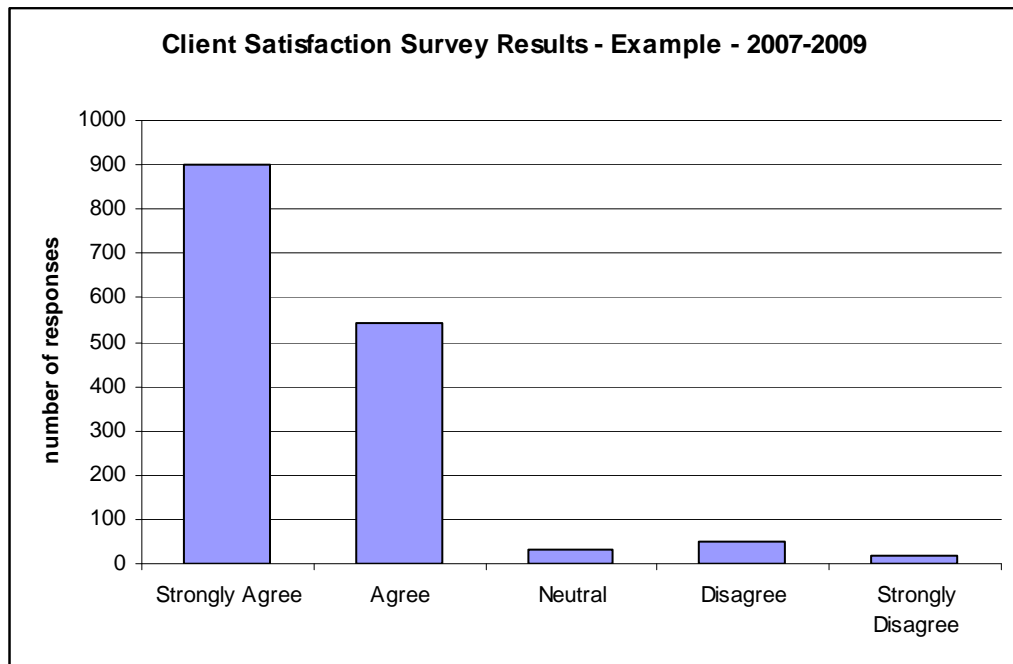


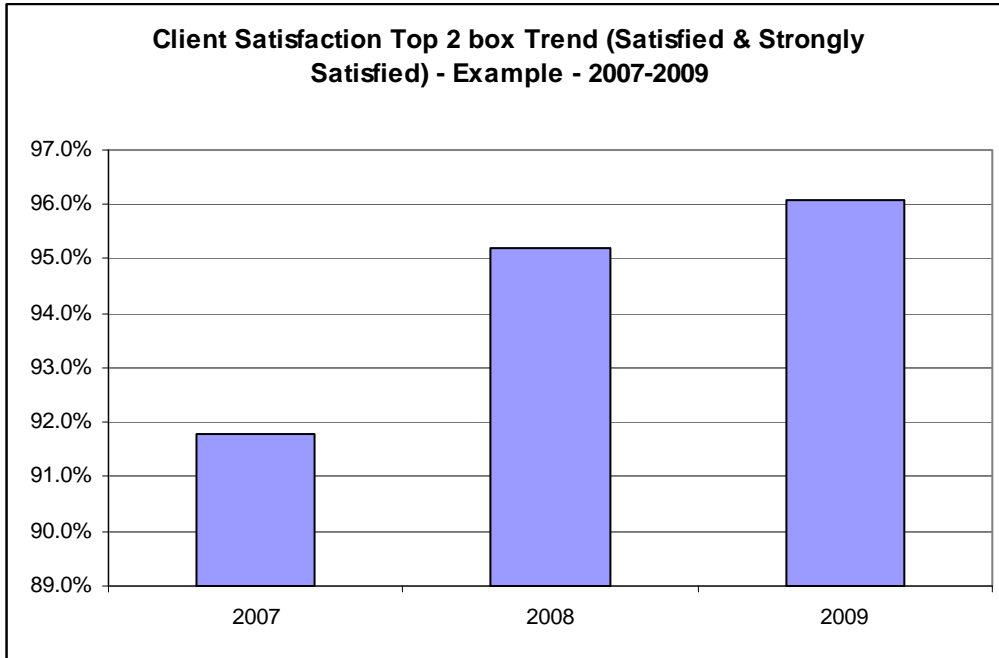
- ✓ Data: for example a decrease in the number of customer complaints.



- **Levels/trends in client/stakeholder satisfaction**

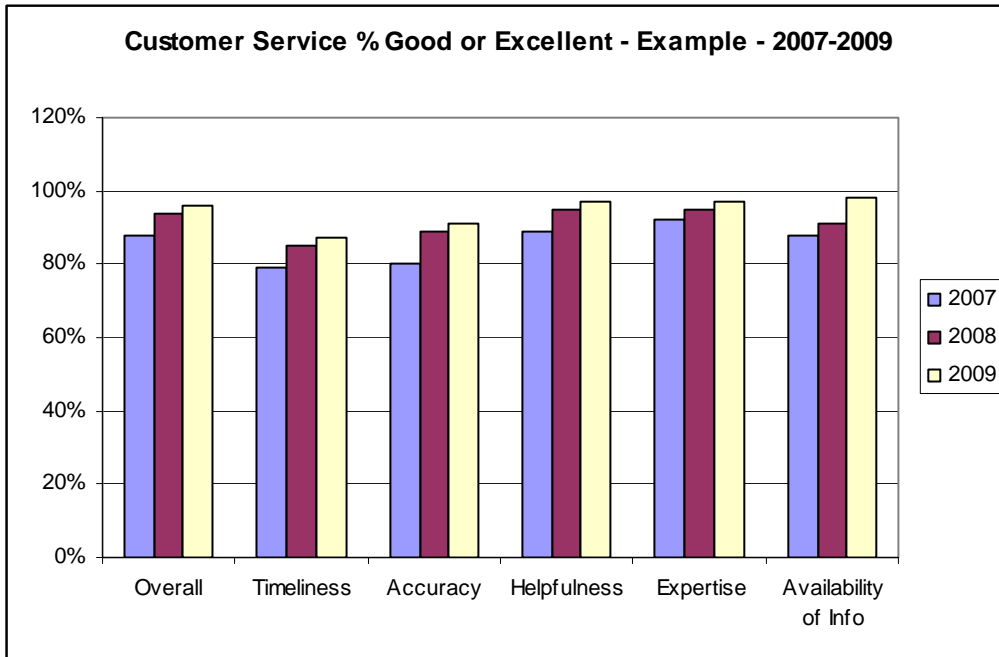
- ✓ Data: for example client satisfaction survey data.



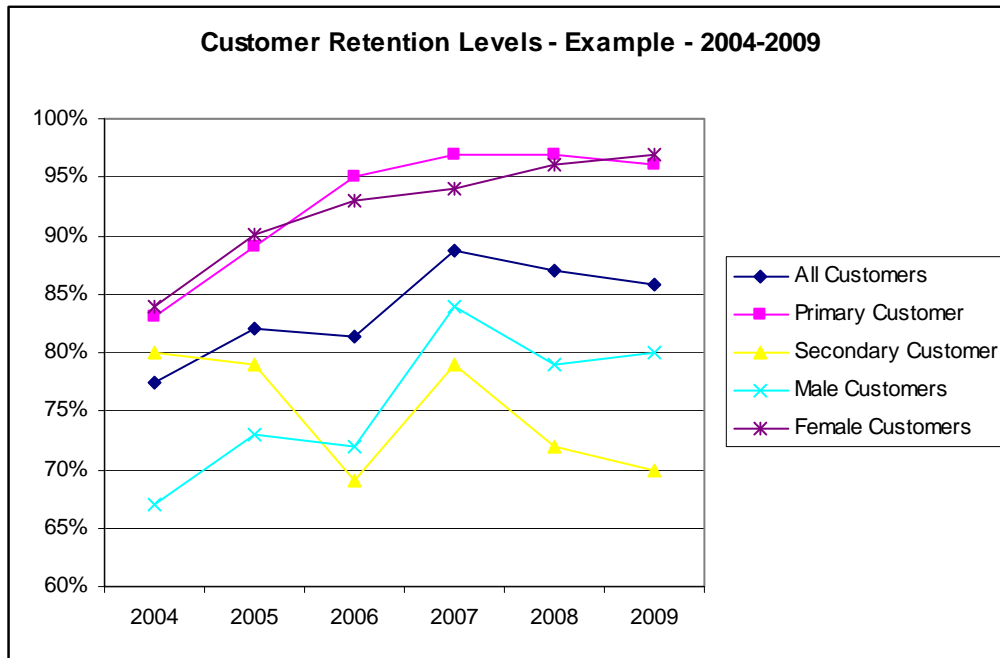


- **Levels/trends in customer satisfaction, loyalty & retention**

- ✓ Data: for example customer service survey data.

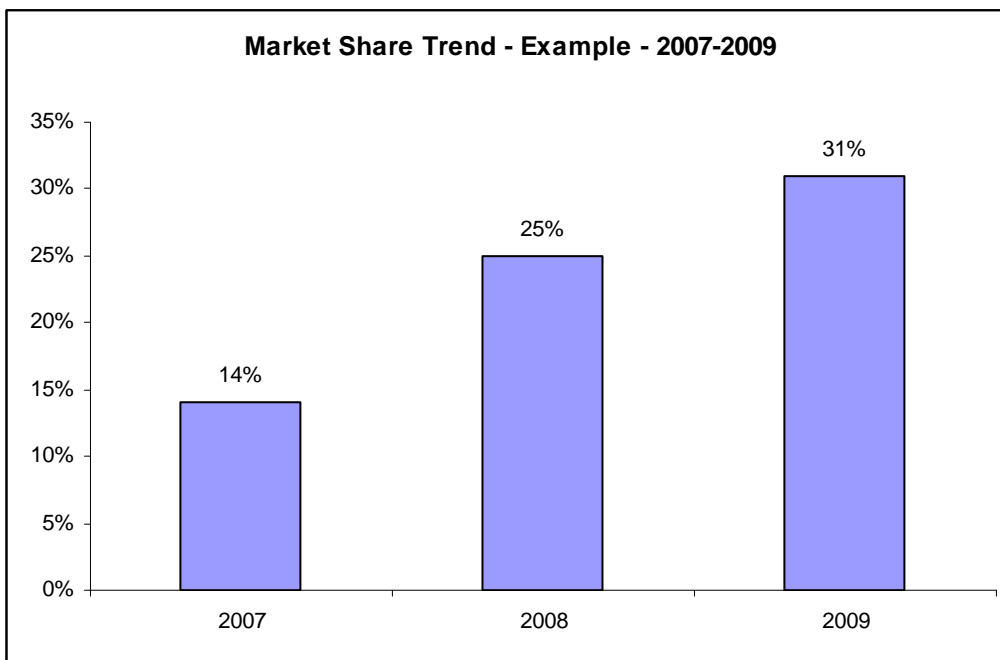


✓ Data: Customer retention levels.

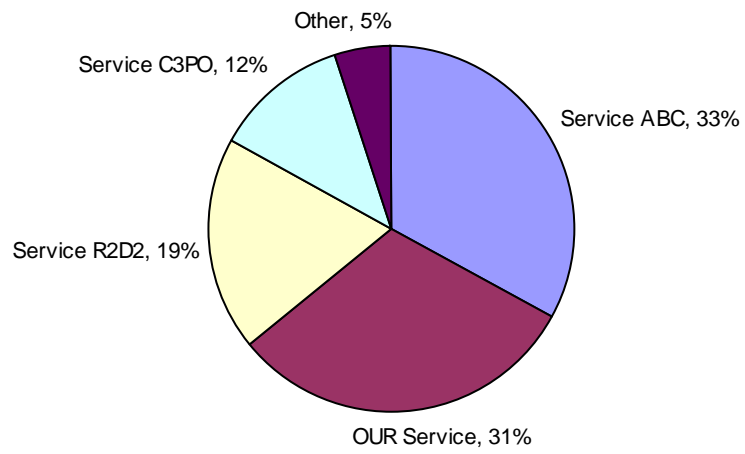


- **Levels/trends in sales growth, market share (and/or customer share)**

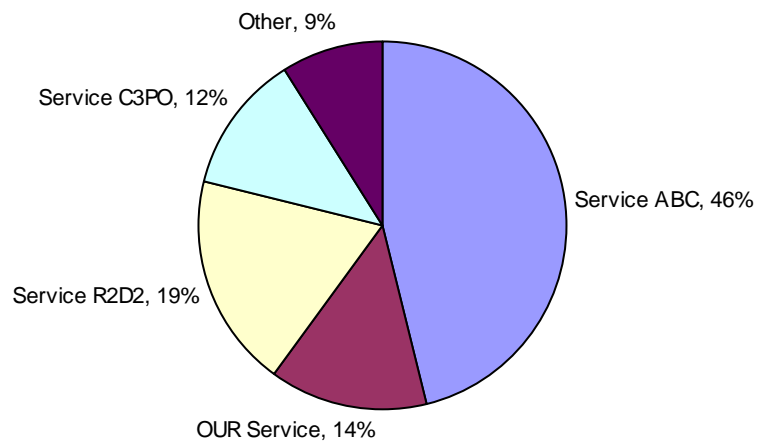
✓ Data: Market share data.



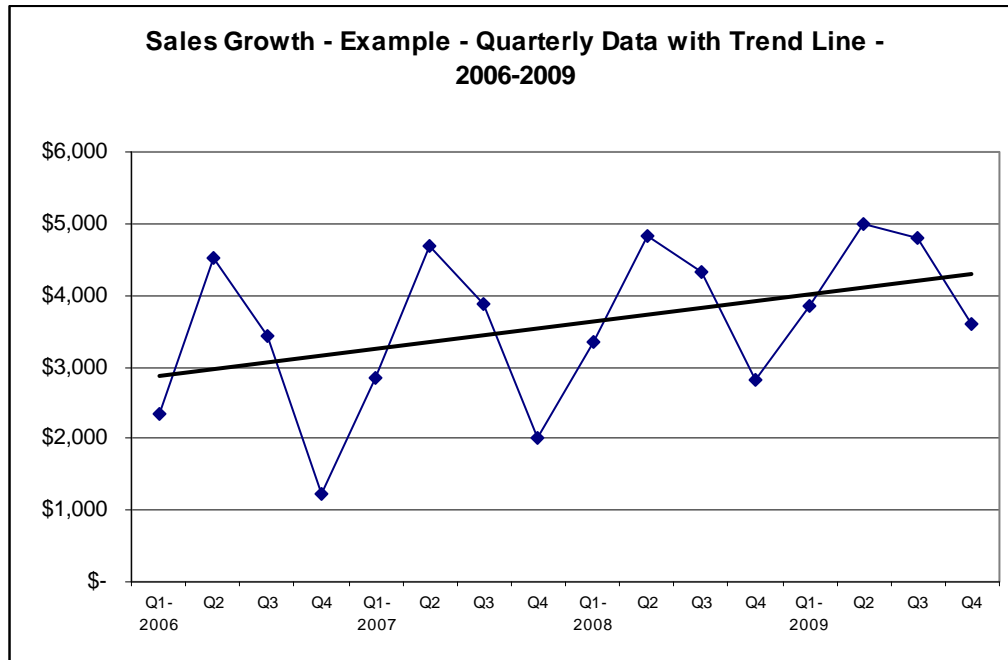
Current Market Share Data - Example - 2009



Past Market Share Data - Example - 2007



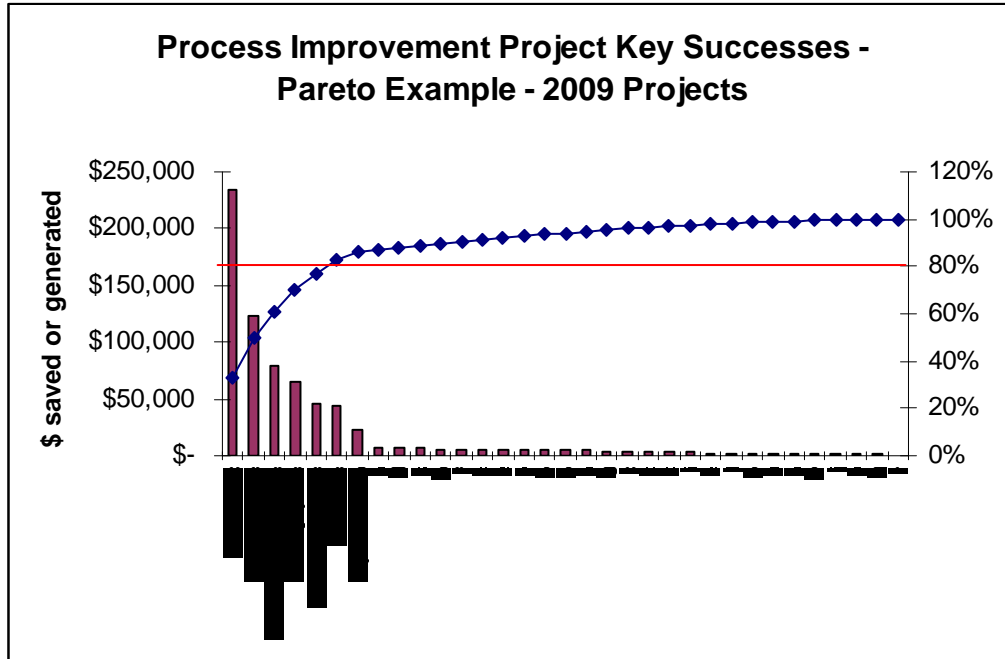
✓ Data: Sales growth data.



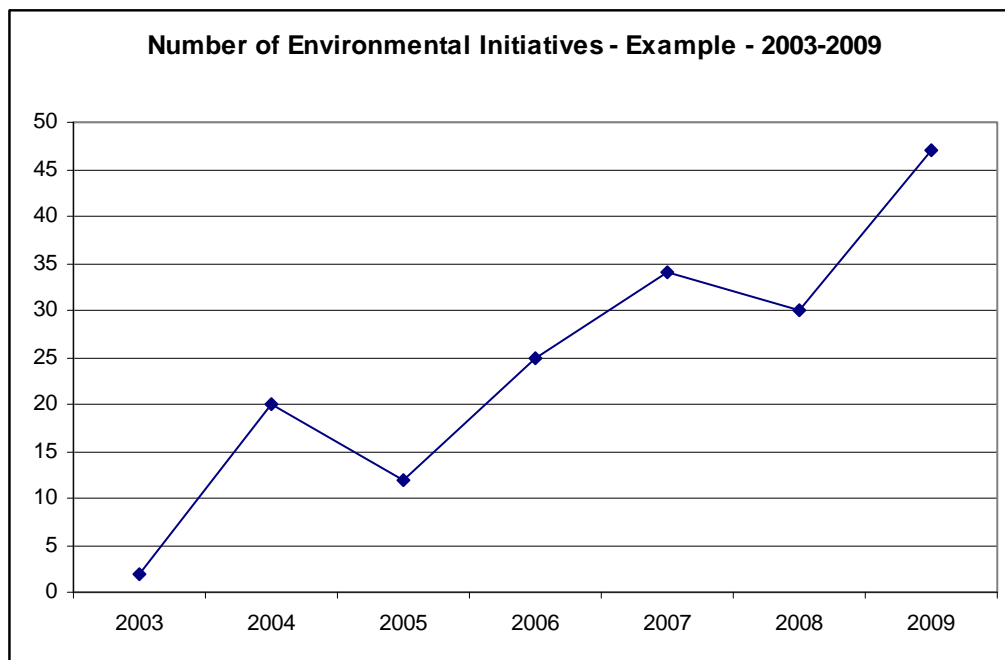
- **Levels of involvement in improvement activities**

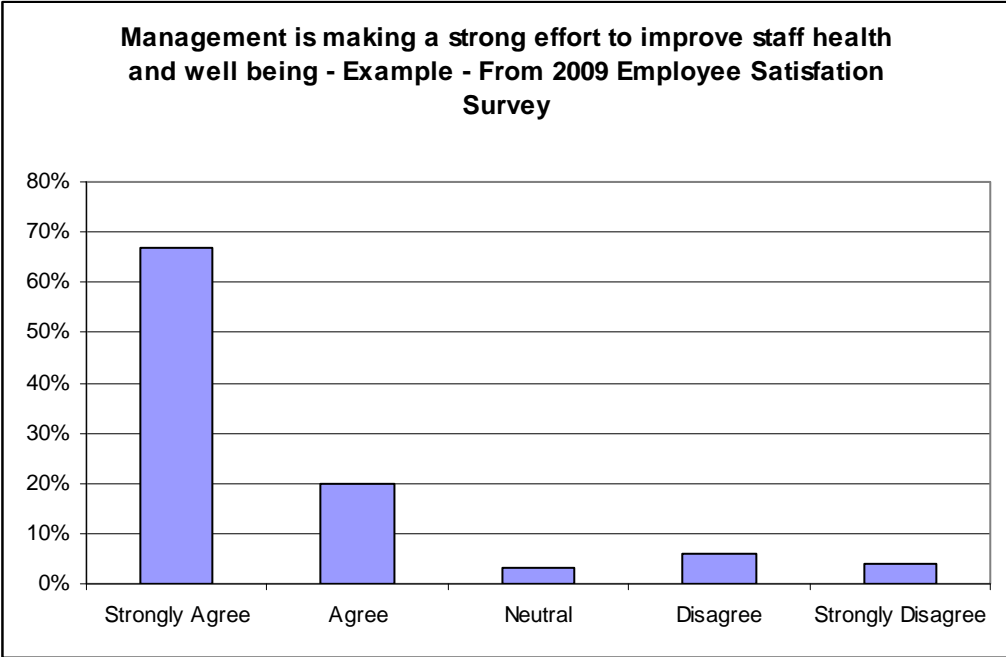
✓ Data/narrative: for example the number (and activity) of improvement teams and key successes.



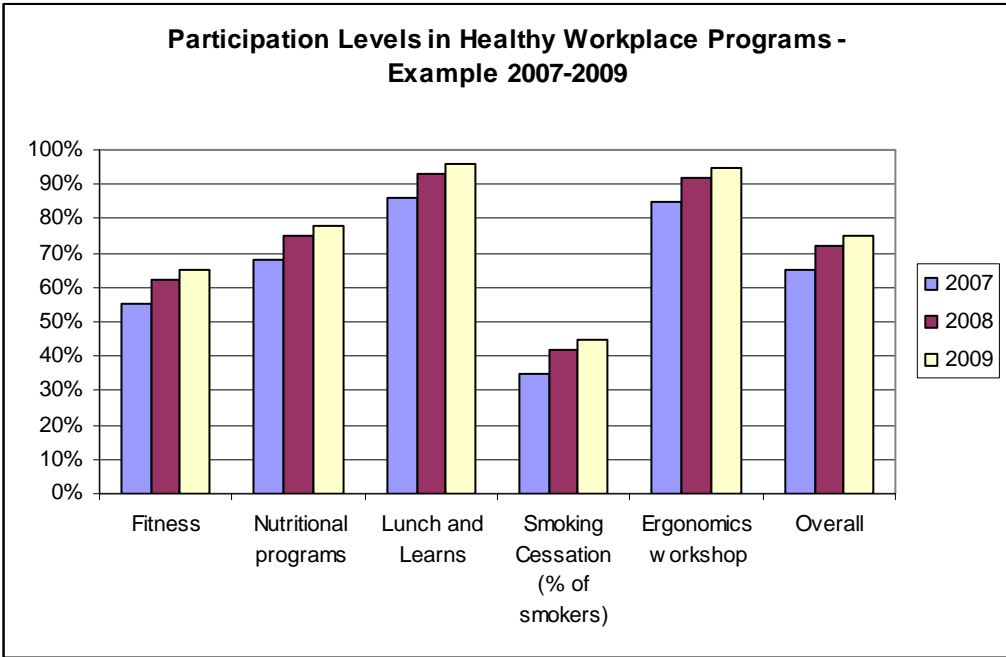


- **Levels of awareness & involvement in addressing issues related to well-being (health, safety & environmental)**
 - ✓ Narrative/data: for example outline of actions on protecting the environment (number and scope of initiatives).
 - ✓ Narrative: for example actions taken to improve staff health and wellbeing, and data related to how this is working.



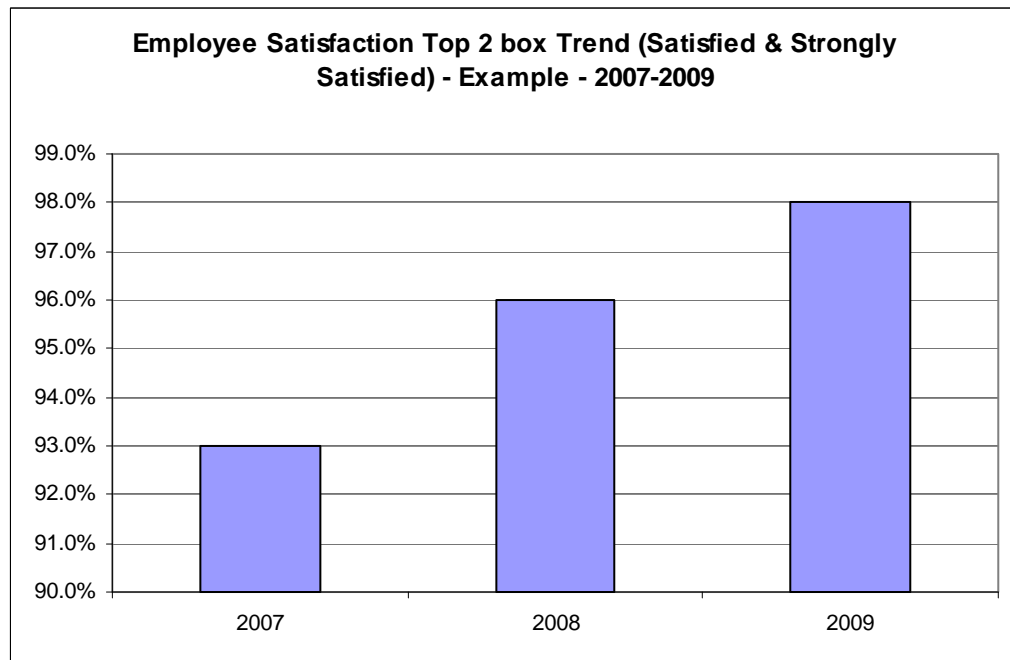
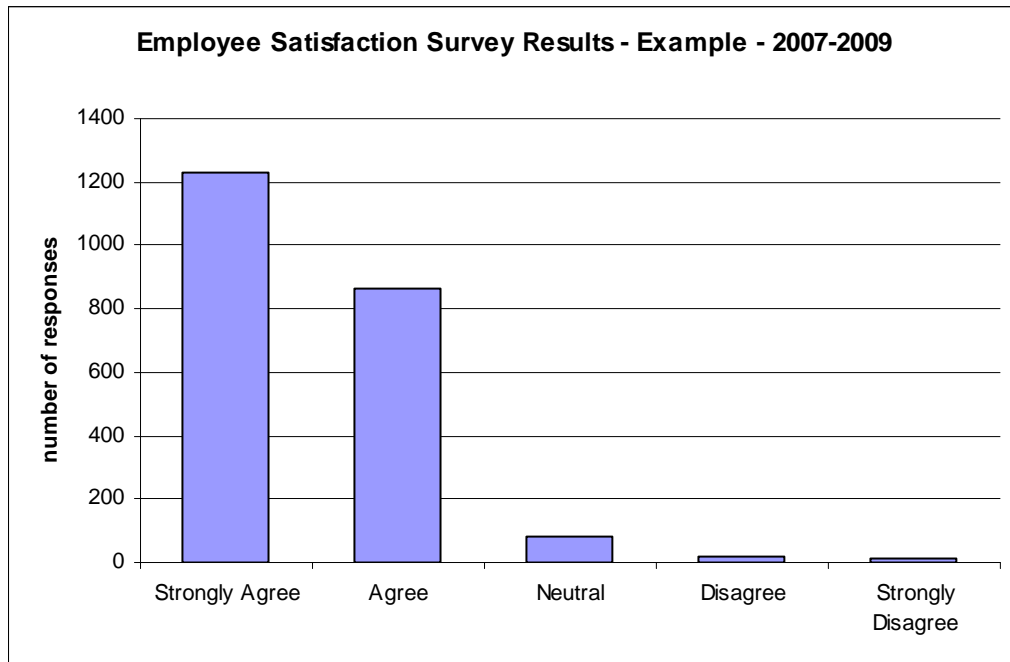


- ✓ Data: for example employee involvement levels in health & wellness programs (e.g., fitness, nutritional programs etc); and availability of such programs.



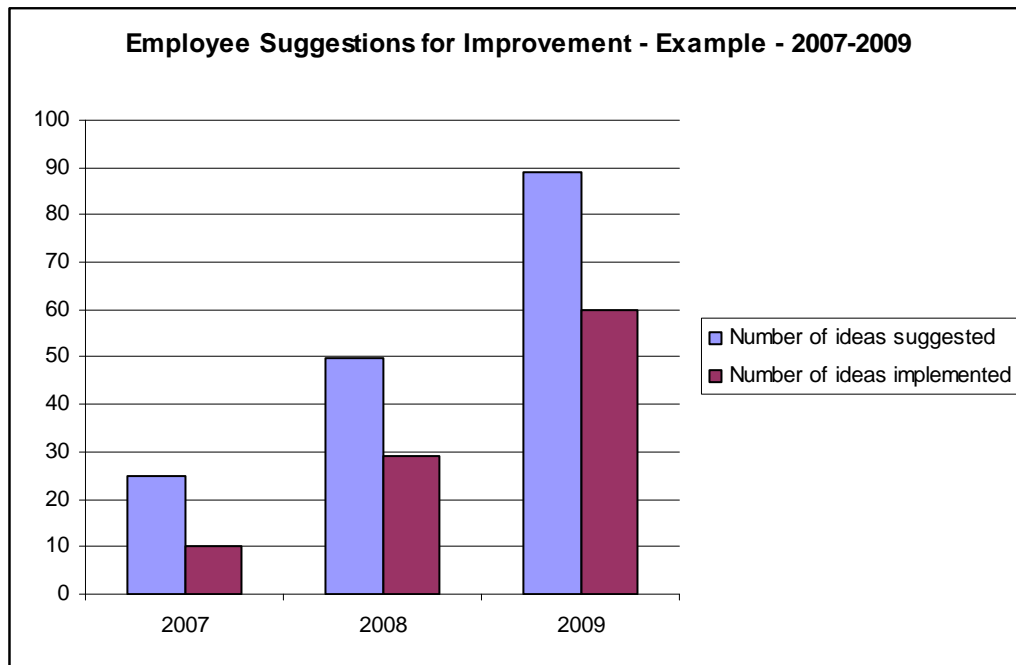
- **Levels/trends in employee satisfaction/morale**

✓ Data: for example results from employee satisfaction surveys.



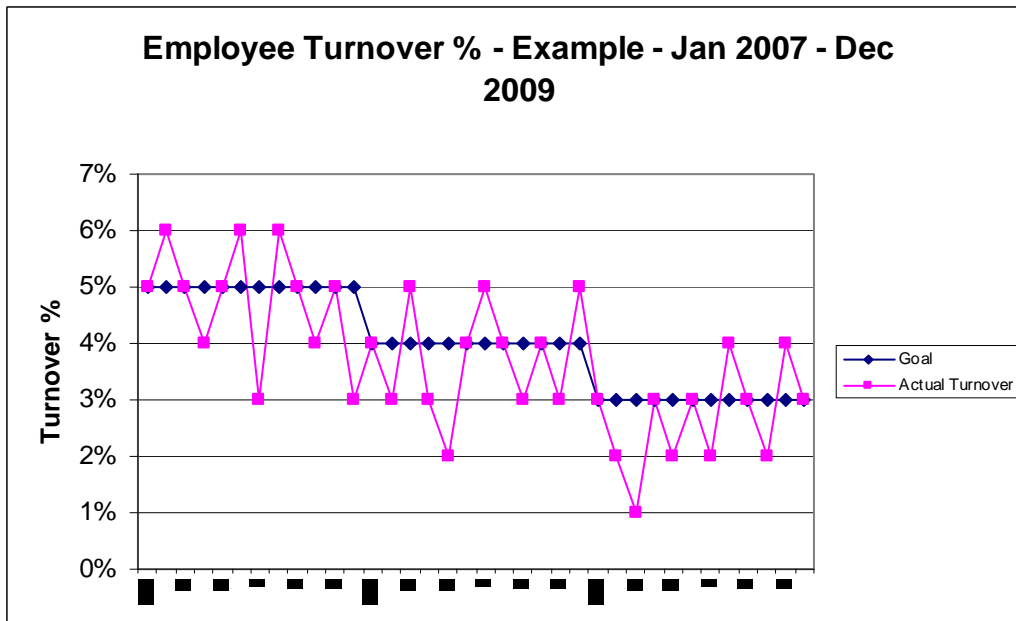
- **Levels/trends of employee suggestions/ideas**

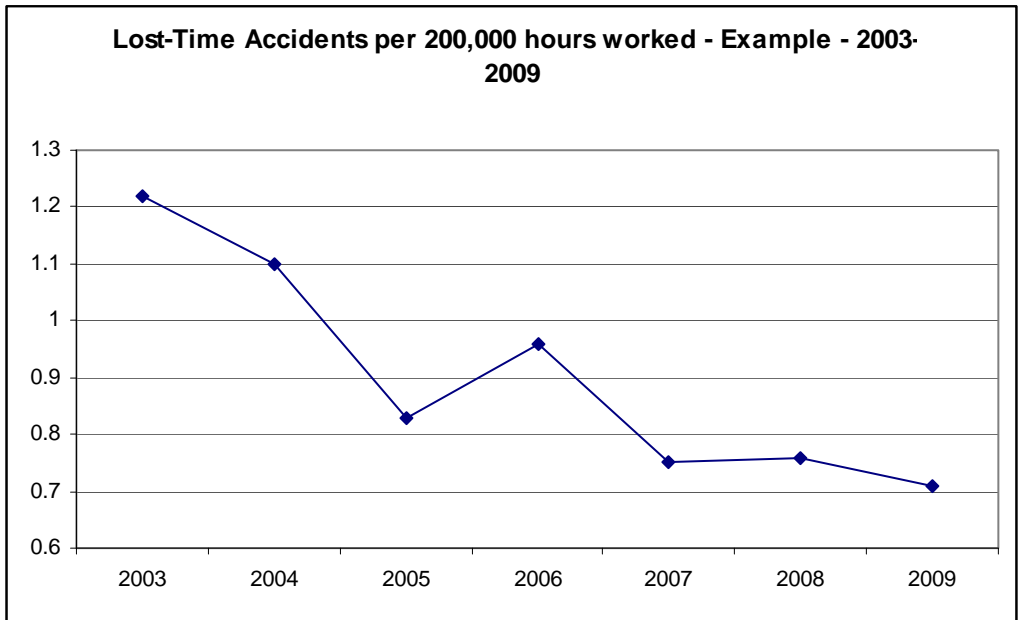
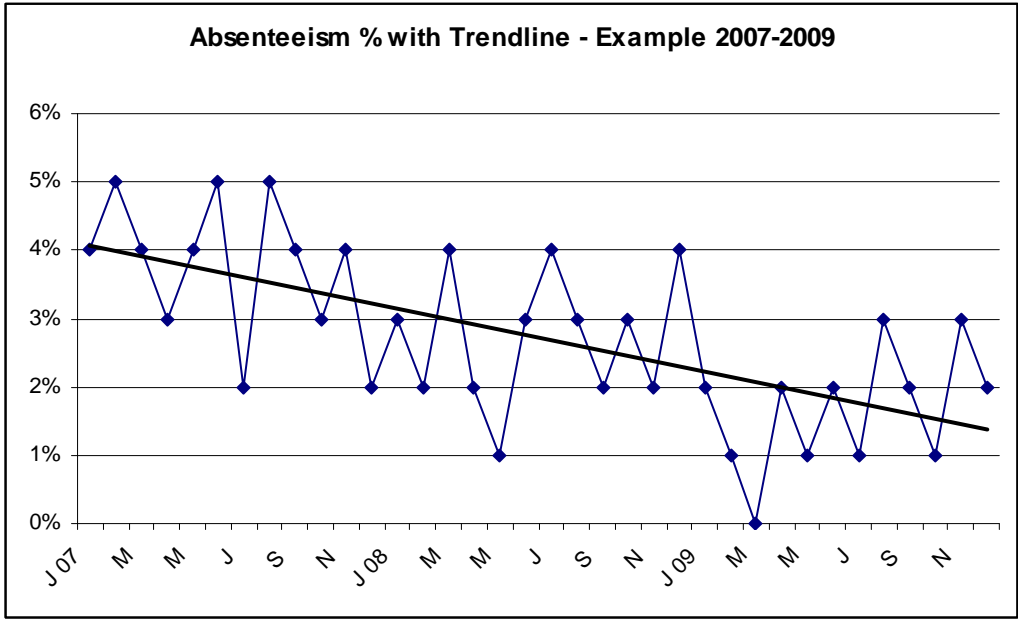
- ✓ Data: for example the number of suggestions/ideas submitted.
- ✓ Data: for example the number of employee suggestions/ideas implemented.

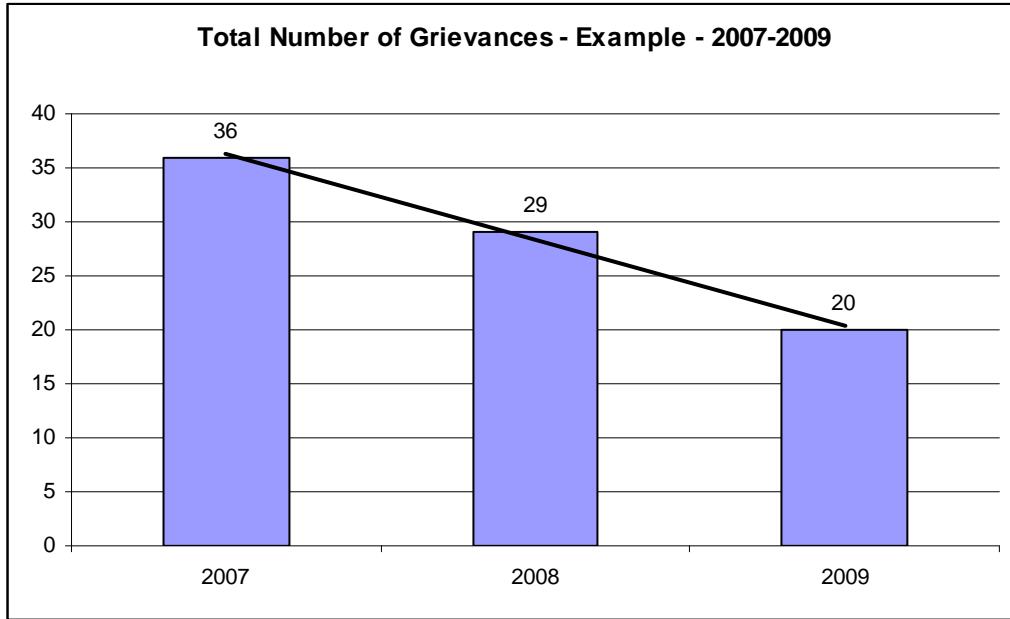


- **Levels/trends in measures of employee dissatisfaction**

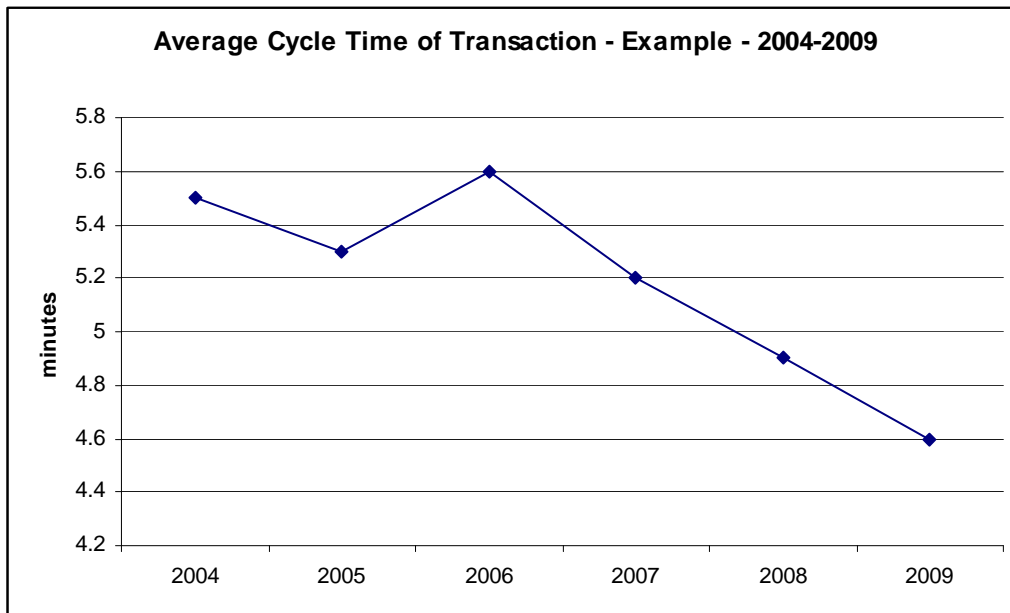
- ✓ Data: for example levels of employee turnover, absenteeism rates, and workplace grievances recorded.



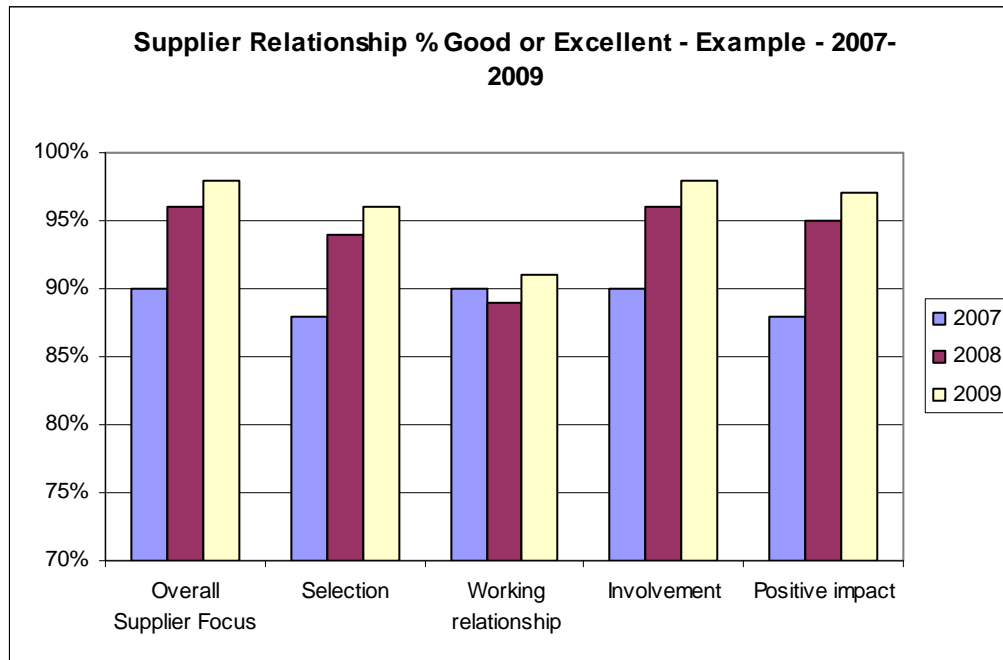




- **Levels/trends in process capability & cycle time for key service delivery**
 - ✓ Data: for example specific cycle time reductions, lowering of waste outcomes in productivity improvement (if measured), also any data on operational cost reductions through quality the improvement efforts.



- **Levels/trends in overall efficiency & effectiveness for key service delivery and/or production processes, including support admin processes**
 - ✓ Data: for example productivity data.
 - ✓ Data: for example waste reductions (if measured).
 - ✓ Data: for example process cycle times (could be key process or otherwise) – i.e., measures reflecting the outcome of a key process improvement project.
 - ✓
- **Levels/trends of quality of services and/or products provided**
 - ✓ Data: (if available) for example trend data on supplier/partner/service provider product and/or service quality, and audit results.



B. **HEALTHY WORKPLACE®** CATEGORY – LEVEL 4 SUBMISSION

- The following is guidance in regard to NQI submission content requirements for *Healthy Workplace®* category Level 4 submissions.
- This is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather to assist applicants in the development of a Level 4 submission; for example an applicant may have a number of specifics to outline in regard to overall achievements/results from their healthy workplace journey (through three NQI PEP® Levels of certification) they wish to highlight.
- The focus of Level 4 is on results, and the requirement on trend data is the provision of a minimum of three years' data (although we realize some key projects may be fairly recent, and these can also be included if deemed important). An effective way to portray data in chart form – bar charts, graphs etc.
- For examples of the kind of chart formats recommended by NQI, **see those shown under Part A** (above). This **same approach should be applied**, content of course relating to healthy workplace data (in line with the Criteria).
- Two questions ask for evaluation of effectiveness (of healthy workplace programs and in regard to leadership issues) and such Criteria requires narrative form response, including a listing of key actions that meet Criteria intent. The format should be the same as outlined in Section 1, with any related key documentation (evidence) shown with an appendix reference.

Criteria:

- **Evaluation of the effectiveness of healthy workplace (HW) programs, and levels and trends in overall accomplishments in meeting or exceeding healthy workplace goals**
 - ✓ **Narrative:** evaluation on the Health Plan and HW programs, outline:
 - How the HW Plan and programs were successfully implemented
 - The tracking of measures in regard to analysis of progress against HW goals
 - How employees are made aware of the accomplishments in meeting or exceeding healthy workplace goals

- The levels of improved awareness of healthy lifestyle programs across the organization
- Outline any interesting positive behaviour changes that have happened due to having a healthier workplace
- ✓ **Data (shown in chart form)**, for example:
 - Outcomes (and trends) in absenteeism
 - Outcomes (and trends) in accidents rates
 - Outcomes (and trends) in short and long-term disability data
 - Comparative data review with sector averages (absenteeism, accident rates and short and long-term disability)
 - Levels of participation in HW programs
 - Data (and trends) on employee benefits utilization rates
 - Comparative data review on benefits utilization and costs with sector averages
- **Levels and trends in work satisfaction and morale, recruitment, retention and team effectiveness are analyzed and discussed**
 - ✓ Data: employee engagement survey results
 - ✓ Data: survey results in overall employee satisfaction.
 - ✓ Data: for example:
 - specific survey results on satisfaction with general work conditions
 - occupational health and safety issues
 - training
 - communications, and
 - levels of cooperation and collaboration in the organization.
- **Levels and trends in customer/client satisfaction are analyzed and discussed**
 - ✓ Data: for example customer/client satisfaction survey results.
 - ✓ Narrative: for example an outline on how (and if) having a healthier workplace has made a positive impact on customer satisfaction levels.
 - ✓ Narrative: for example the process for review of customer/client survey outcomes, and follow up preventative actions.

- **An informed leadership that understands the impacts of healthy workplace issues and the outcomes of the disability management system, and that evaluates and works at improving their approach to managing a healthy workplace environment**
 - ✓ Narrative, for example:
 - Outline how responsibility and accountability for moving the healthy workplace focus is being maintained (for example through a committee structure with leadership involvement).
 - Outline what information on the disability management system is forwarded to leadership for discussions and review (for example on worker rehabilitation issues).
 - Outline how leadership and senior management keep up-to-date on healthy workplace approaches and key practices, to help sustain an ongoing healthy workplace focus and to assist them in nurturing a healthy workplace culture.
 - Comment: Level 4 review gives an organization time to reflect on their journey through levels of progressive implementation and It can be helpful, at Level 4 review, for leadership to keep two aspects of evaluation in mind (in addition to a review of outcomes data alone):
 - Formative Evaluation: To question if the analysis for developing goals (for example a review of Level 2 Criteria) was and remains sound, for example benchmarking against sector organizations, level of internal and external input on goals and the testing of ideas before implementation.
 - Process Evaluation: To question and be sure about the ongoing analysis and implementation of good methods to meet goals, and systems to review documentation on key programs.