# The Really Busy Person's Introduction to Constituent Voice

The 30 second version

Keystone's Constituent Voice™ approach provides a way to measure progress against intended outcomes while fostering relationships of trust between implementers and those meant to benefit. It provides a constant stream of feedback data to improve performance. When triangulated with other evidence of results (including objective measures and impact evaluations), feedback data not only helps explain what is happening now, but is often predictive of future outcomes.

The essentials:

❑ Ask 2 to 5 questions continuously across a representative sample of your constituents.

❑ From the responses, cluster your constituents into three categories: promoters, passives and detractors.

❑ Analyse and compare your feedback with that of similar organisations.

❑ Manage vigorously – including dialogue with those providing feedback – to increase the number of promoters and decrease the number of detractors.

❑ Empower frontline staff to improve their scores. Reward those that do. Train or lose those that don't.
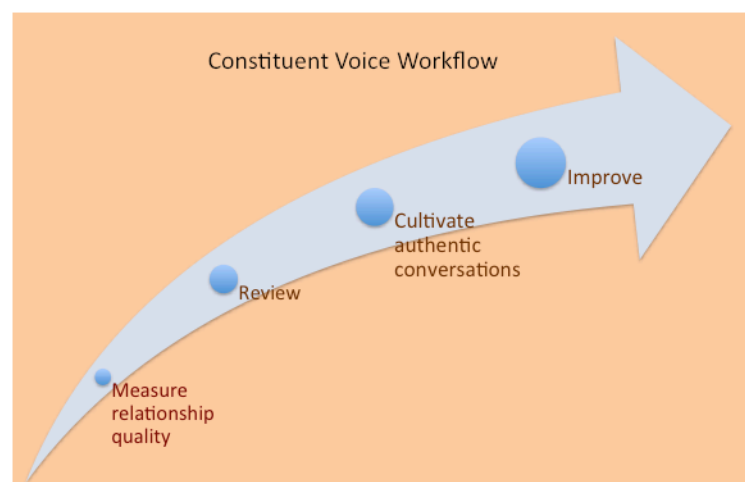
Source: Keystone Accountability

The 300 second version

Organizations working for development and social change lack a unifying performance principle, such as profit maximization. While measuring impact is technically possible, until now there has been no cost-effective measurement approach that solves this structural problem of performance management.

Keystone solves this core problem by making the perspectives of the people who are meant to enjoy the benefits of development – the primary constituents – visible to other decision makers in the system. These constituents' voices are central to managing the performance of programs aimed at development and social change yet they are mostly neglected or ignored. Keystone surveys and services provide a continuous and representative flow of feedback that organizations use to be accountable to the experiences of their primary constituents:

- A commodity buyer discovers which of its services are most valued by the farmers that sell to it, and how the use of those services influences a farmer's decision on how much of his or her crop to sell.
- A school gains deep insights into how student experiences at and with the school affect their motivation and choices.
- A mining company discovers how to improve its relationship with the communities affected by its operations.
- A rural development NGO finds a glaring flaw in its strategy, corrects it, and sees its feedback scores improve within days, and beneficiary outcomes improve within months.

Constituent Voice™ is a tool to manage performance rather than a form of evaluation. Still, feedback data is an early indicator of change taking place and can be triangulated with other evidence of results (including objective measures and impact evaluations) to enrich your understanding of what is happening now. It is often predictive of future outcomes.

In developing the Constituent Voice™ method, Keystone has drawn from tested customer satisfaction techniques, and has adapted them to the context of development where people's choice is often limited by the monopolistic position of aid agencies and government service providers.

Consumers in a market economy can choose between products and this ability to choose underlies the potency of customer satisfaction metrics. The constituents of social services, development programs or public policy reform are also making choices, albeit different ones from the consumers of competitive market services and products. Where people do not have a choice about whether to participate, nothing is more important than understanding the factors that inform how they participate. Keystone's Constituent Voice™ method collects feedback about the elements that underlie these "choices".

Our approach usually investigates four elements;

- First we focus on the relevance or importance of the organization, service or product to the constituent.
- Second we look to understand results produced by the organization from the perspective of the constituent.
- Third we assess the quality of a unique interaction, such as training or a collection point.
- Fourth we explore the quality of the relationship between the constituents and the organization. Focusing on relationship determinants like trust, voice, empowerment, readiness, credibility, fairness and responsiveness.

Our closed questions use a 0 to 10 scale, which allow us to segment constituents into three categories – promoters, passives and detractors – and to develop a unique strategy for working with each segment.

The Constituent Voice™ model locates data collection as but one step in the five-step operational cycle pictured below.

Use it, or lose it! The single most important step in the cycle involves closing the loop by reporting back to constituents what you heard and how you propose to respond. Organizations that move beyond data collection to dialogue not only learn and improve their performance, they underwrite higher response rates and more frank feedback in future surveys.

The path to a predictive indicator

A job development program for people who have been incarcerated incorporates Constituent Voice into its existing rigorous practice of goal setting by program participants. Feedback is collected and discussed from the outset of the programming, beginning with a 5-day orientation course. At the end of each day in the course participants rate the day's work using a 0 to 10 scale: "Based on today's class, I believe that this program can help me." Using voting devices they see their aggregated scores in real time and can discuss them and their implications for the next day's work, which begins with a goal-setting exercise. Staff can react immediately to negative scores to propose remedies and prevent dropping out.

The daily feedback sessions also include a question that will be asked at every stage in the yearlong program: "On a scale of 0 to 10, how much do you agree with the statement: I get more back from MyNewLife than I put in?"

Successful respondents tend to give higher scores to this question as they progress through the program over the year. Participants' answers to this question are analyzed alongside objective data such as participation rates, timeliness, and completion of assigned tasks. Overtime, it becomes clear that answers to this question predict how the participant will fare in their first job after graduating from the program.

Constituent Voice™ is an iterative performance management tool, not an exhaustive research study. It tells you when you have an issue. It empowers managers and especially frontline staff to investigate, experiment and engage constituents to find lasting solutions. And it will tell you whether you have solved the issue.

Keystone can work with you to:

✓ Review your theory of change, map your touch points with your constituents, and design a feedback system that works for you.
✓ Collect, analyze and report feedback data.
✓ Embed Constituent Voice™ in your performance management system.
✓ Draw recommendations from feedback data.
✓ Design a communications strategy for your feedback data.
✓ Train and support your staff to collect and analyze your feedback data in-house.

For more information, please contact info@KeystoneAccountability.org