

A Better Indicator for Targeting & Measuring Performance “ON THE AVERAGE”¹

Dr. Kenneth F. Smith, PMP

Various types of averages – *arithmetic mean, median, and mode* – are widely used as indicators to establish targets and subsequently measure performance. However, I have long been perplexed that despite whatever accomplishment is reported, the fact is obscured that ***at least half of the items tabulated and measured in the population database are/were below the average!*** The issue is even more distorted when the distribution is not ‘normal’ and a few individual items are excessively large outliers, compared to the general run of the remainder of the population.

For example, where the **target** is **20** ‘*some things*,’ and the results from a **sample of 30** are

Arrayed from Low to High as follows:

0, 5, 6, 11, 12, 15, 17, 17, 18, 18, 18, 18, 18, 19, 19, 19, 19, 20, 20, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 33, 60, 65

Tabulated below as:

0
5
6
11
12
15
17, 17
18, 18, 18, 18, 18, 18 **Mode**
19, 19,]Median[19, 19
20, 20, 20
21
22
23
25
26
28
30
33
60
65

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The Total is 642, and Arithmetic Mean ‘Average’ $642/30 = 21$

PROCLAIMING SUCCESS!

While the lesser utilized Median is 19, and the Mode is even less at 18.

BOTH of which INDICATE A SHORTFALL!

To overcome this problematic assessment situation, I developed a two-step process to create another indicator, the “**AT LEAST NUMBER or PERCENTAGE**” by counting the number & percentage of items that **Equal or Exceed a number or percentage of a Target**, then reporting those results.

Thus, from the preceding illustration, the number **Equal or Exceeding the Target** was **13**,
and the **percentage $13/30 = 43\%$**

which, I contend, is a more meaningful indicator of group accomplishment than any of the averages.

For anyone interested in applying this approach, I have an excel template, shown on the following page,

Figure 1

"SMITH'S 'AT LEAST' TWO-STEP" (SALTS) APPROACH TO TARGETTING & STANDARD-SETTING & EVALUATING RESULTS © 2020. Dr. Kenneth F. Smith, PMP						
1. ENTER YOUR TARGETTING DATA IN THE YELLOW CELLS BELOW						
Target Audience/Responders :	Rice Farmers					
Type & Units of Production:	Cavans per Hectare					
TARGET/STANDARD: At Least	70	percent of the Rice Farmers				
Attain at Least	35	Cavans per Hectare				
SALTS RESULTS						
At Least	64.3	percent of the Rice Farmers				
Attained at Least	35	Cavans per Hectare				
SIMPLE AVERAGE RESULTS: 53.4 Cavans per Hectare BUT without regard for Targetted Percentages, so be wary of individual performers who distort the mode						
2. DELETE ANY EXISTING DATA BELOW, THEN ENTER THE DATA COLLECTED IN THE YELLOW CELLS BELOW for up to 2,000 respondents, and the results will be displayed above.					9	Number of respondents Equal to or greater than Target
					14	Number of respondents
				641.1	TOTAL PRODUCTION	
	RESPONDENT ID	RESULT		Result = or > Target		
1	ken	80		1		
2	etc	25				
3	etc	50		1		
4		95		1		
5		90		1		
6		15				
7		35		1		
8		34				
9		44		1		
10		20				
11		50		1		
12		30				
13		100		1		
14		80		1		
15						



While simple average results can be tallied and calculated with this template, its Prime use is when individual Productivity is also as important as total Production.

which is available for free from me on proof of purchase of my book **Project Management PRAXIS** (available at Amazon).

About the Author



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Initially a US Civil Service Management Intern, then a management analyst & systems specialist with the US Defense Department, Ken subsequently had a career as a senior foreign service officer -- management & evaluation specialist, project manager, and in-house facilitator/trainer -- with the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Ken assisted host country governments in many countries to plan, monitor and evaluate projects in various technical sectors; working ‘hands-on’ with their officers as well as other USAID personnel, contractors and NGOs. Intermittently, he was also a team leader &/or team member to conduct project, program & and country-level portfolio analyses and evaluations.

Concurrently, Ken had an active dual career as Air Force ready-reservist in Asia (Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines) as well as the Washington D.C. area; was Chairman of a Congressional Services Academy Advisory Board (SAAB); and had additional duties as an Air Force Academy Liaison Officer. He retired as a ‘bird’ colonel.

After retirement from USAID, Ken was a project management consultant for ADB, the World Bank, UNDP and USAID.

He earned his DPA (Doctor of Public Administration) from the George Mason University (GMU) in Virginia, his MS from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT Systems Analysis Fellow, Center for Advanced Engineering Study), and BA & MA degrees in Government & International Relations from the University of Connecticut (UCONN). A long-time member of the Project Management Institute (PMI) and IPMA-USA, Ken is a Certified Project Management Professional (PMP®) and a member of the PMI®-Honolulu and Philippines Chapters.

Ken’s book -- **Project Management PRAXIS** (available from Amazon) -- includes many innovative project management tools & techniques; and describes a “**Toolkit**” of related templates available directly from him at kenfsmith@aol.com on proof of purchase of PRAXIS.

To view other works by Ken Smith, visit his author showcase in the PM World Library at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/authors/dr-kenneth-smith/>