

Individual feedback recorded at forum on KPI held at Cyberhub on Oct 13, 2009

Reporter #1, Menara Star

- The KPI form does not reflect the amount of work we're doing. The KPI form is very basic and very business oriented and doesn't take into account the day-to-day business that takes place in Editorial. The KPI form has obviously been done by a person who has a business background and no editorial background.
- Management should give us guidelines and not make us put down absolutely everything we do. Right now, it's just too difficult. Some things can't even be substantiated – one can make it up things such as the start and end time.
- We don't know how to fill the form. We even put in weekends, just in case. Should journalists be spending time logging work they've already done? We have enough work to do without having to record the details of the work we've done.
- If I have a 6pm assignment and I write it at home at 10pm, would they believe me when I record that on the form (since it's not recorded in the system)? Will I be queried as to whether the information I'm inputting is genuine?
- Indicating number of words – is that before or after the copy is cleared? It would seem that the target is (to generate) the maximum number of words – it doesn't matter if it's of bad quality.
- Even ad space in a page could affect the length of our stories. Is that (if story is cut to fit) any reflection on the quality of my work?
- There's a disconnect between top management and staff. There's no direction in how the KPI is being implemented – it's not a bad idea to find out how your employees are working but this is **not** the way to do it.

Reporter #2, Menara Star

- With the Prestige 5 system, the company already has a detailed record of our work. And who can go through all that data generated from filling out all these forms?
- We have better things to do that spend hours filling in the form. It's completely disruptive to our work processes.
- The KPI has not been successfully implemented other than for sales-oriented jobs.

- In addition to writing, I take photographs. It's a waste of my time to have to monitor and record the publication dates of my photographs. It takes a long time as I have to physically go through the newspaper to find them and then record the details. So I've given up on recording the publication dates when my photographs appear.
- Scrap the forms and let the editors evaluate us. The form itself is a technical glitch! Evaluate us like they do during our probation.

Reporter #3, Menara Star

- We deal a lot with PR people and we spend a lot of time on the phone – are we supposed to account for that?
- We should sit down with our editors and have them evaluate us every few months. We should also have access to see our evaluations and be given the chance to speak up for ourselves if we don't agree with the evaluations.

Reporter #4, Menara Star

- Basically people are putting everything into the forms, including phone calls.
- Time problem – sometimes it takes us days to finish a story. Time is not reflective of the effort that goes into a story and page.
- In an era when we are trying to cut down on the use of paper by going paperless whenever possible, the KPI making us to use so much paper to fill up the KPI sheets.

Sub-editor #1, Menara Star

- The KPI sheets are totally quantitative and do not record anything that measures or reflects the quality of my work. It just acts like a giant time sheet or detailed version of a punch card. This is totally unnecessary when Prestige 5 already records how much time I spend subbing a story or doing layout – it's a waste of my time physically recording all this!
- How can proper evaluation of my work be done this way? KPI is often used to assess the performance of jobs with tangible targets as opposed to creative work – which is what we do. This is not the means to proper evaluation of our work – it's just a time sheet.
- The ridiculous amount of time needed to fill in the KPI form disrupts my work – I've opted out of filling the forms so that my work doesn't suffer because of it.

- Feature and news stories take vastly different amount of time to complete. Does it mean that feature writers are less competent because they take more time to complete their stories?
- How do the KPI sheets fit into the KPI framework? Section heads don't seem to know what the framework is, how the KPI is being implemented nor how assessments will be done. I asked my section head if he was going to refer to my completed KPI form when he assessed my performance and he answered "no" – so why should I waste my time filling the form?
- There's no indication of transparency with the KPI or even if there will be an audit of the data at the end of the day. There seems to be much room for manipulation of the information recorded at every level and this system does not eliminate personal bias or favouritism in the evaluations.

Reporter #5, Menara Star

- How do you qualify the kind of work we're doing? Our stories reflect the amount of work and effort we put in and the editors should be the ones to assess the work we do.
- We should know how we're being assessed. I doubt that our editors will be looking at the KPI forms to assess our work. Some people fill in their KPI forms on the very last day before submission.
- We're writing stories – surely our editors know whether our stories are good or if we're even writing.
- Some people do more work than others, and it's not fair. The KPI doesn't show this and is not the right way to evaluate our work. Editors should assess us.

Reporter #6, Menara Star

- Each section has a different standard and it's not being reflected – we're all getting the same form.
- Business is using a different sheet from the rest. Its reporters have to record the stories and people they meet. Only stories that are used, however, are recorded. They've been doing this for close to a year.
- Some of us do multiple jobs – I clear press releases – but I'm told to use the reporter's form.

Reporter #7, Menara Star

- Reporters at Newsdesk began filling out these forms in August. Since then, we've received no feedback on our KPI form submissions.
- Before they drew up the KPI system, they should gotten feedback from us on what is viable to monitor our work.

Reporter #8, Menara Star

- There are contradictory instructions from the bosses – one says not to worry about filling the form while another is asking for the completed form.
- It's depressing – our stories are chopped into half although we produce quality work. So after the story is cleared, the word count doesn't reflect the amount of work we actually put into the story. Is anyone going to take the trouble to check my original word count?
- Instead of these KPI forms, our section head should evaluate us.
- Are we being evaluated individually or as a department? What if there's deadwood in the department? He could pull us down. We don't mind being evaluated but it must be done well.
- Reporters in the bureaux are lost - they are having a tough time filling out the KPI forms. When they call HQ, they are told to fill in the form as it's "self explanatory"! (If it were, they wouldn't have to call up in the first place).

Editorial Artist #1, Menara Star

- After the first person does the page layout, the page could be rejigged. Which means two people are working on the same page, and it doesn't mean the first person is more productive than the other. Then (according to the KPI data) there would be 2-3 people claiming ownership for that one page!

Editorial Artist #2, Menara Star

- How do you judge creativity? The boss thinks that creativity is more important than the quantity you produce. Yet, we have to do as many as we can just to fill up the KPI forms.

Editorial Artist #3, Menara Star

- Because the focus of the KPI seems to be quantity, the layout artists are all rushing to do as many pages as possible. Ultimately,

the quality of our work will suffer and our layouts will become static. How do we respond when our bosses complain that our work is not creative?

- I feel so stifled by this system and I find filling out the KPI form such a waste of time. Creative work should not be “timed” or have time limits imposed because it stifles the artist’s creativity.

Sub-editor #2, Menara Star

- As sub-editors we work on many pages and they (KPI forms) don't take into account the amount of stories that are put on each page and how long it takes us to work on the stories. Some stories may take longer than others to work on.
- The focus of the KPI now is on quantity — it doesn't reflect quality.

Sub-editor #3, Menara Star

- No instructions/directions given on how to fill KPI form.
- How will it be assessed, especially for sub-editors where work is subjective, not quantitative?
- The KPI form needs to be manually filled. How does one keep track of every single thing done during subbing (especially during peak periods like budget, economic report, supplements) and at the same time update the KPI sheet?
- Pages do change hands from one sub to another. How does this get reflected in the KPI assessment?

Sub-editor #4, Penang, via e-mail

- Since the trial run began, it has affected the quality of work at the Subs desk. We not only have to fill in (details on) the pages we do but also the advertisement sizes as well. Actually, I fail to see the significance of the ad size. For Nation pages, we only change certain stories and not the whole page. So, it does not have any bearing on the ad size.
- As we tend to forget what time we start and end a page, we have to stop doing our pages midway to fill up the end time, start time, story title and story slug. This disrupts the flow and I'm not sure if we are putting in quality work (when having to fill in the forms).
- If KPI is here to stay, I think it should be simplified and all the petty details (especially start and end time) should be done away

with. Speed doesn't mean efficiency... just as quantity doesn't mean quality.

Reporter #9, Bukit Jelutong, via e-mail

- Is KPI meant to have us account for every minute of the work day?
- It seems unfair for feature writers since longer pieces and flowery language are required and this will inevitably take more time to do than news stories. Re: the start and end times on the KPI form – will that imply that we're less productive?
- If one's KPI form is impressively long with a stellar list of tasks accomplished, will that person be entitled to fight for a better increment/promotion if they weren't given one after the fact?

Photographer #1, Menara Star

- I take many pictures for each assignment but if they appear months later in a magazine, that affects the information that I record for the monthly KPI sheets. I might submit 300 pictures for X publication but only 12 are used – the KPI forms won't reflect the amount of work I've actually done nor the time I spent doing it. What if the photos aren't used because of space constraints? This would be a situation beyond my control yet the information recorded on the KPI sheet would make it look as if my work wasn't done or was not up to mark.
- For major assignments, 5 to 8 photographers may be assigned and from all the pictures they take, only 1 picture may be selected. The information recorded by the KPI forms would make it seem as if the rest of the photographers whose pictures weren't selected aren't performing or not delivering quality photos.
- Very often certain photographers are assigned only to a certain beat, such as Business, which means mostly mugshots, therefore lessening their potential to get cover photos. The KPI data wouldn't reflect this.
- None of us know how the KPI works or how filling out these forms will benefit us. We don't even know what the objectives are to even try to meet them.

Photographer #2, Menara Star

- I don't see how the KPI sheets measures my work quality, ability or effort.

- It's too troublesome to go through the newspapers to record which of my pictures were used. I usually end up doing it at the end of the month when my boss asks me for it.
- What about pictures which are used later or repeated? How do I fill these into the KPI sheets? In September, only 8 of my pictures were used when I worked 25 days – the KPI data wouldn't reflect the real situation
- My boss should be in a better position to evaluate my work and performance.

Photographer #3, Menara Star

- Having to keep track of our photos which are printed and published online is additional work for us. If I were to go on a long vacation, by the time I return, the online link wouldn't be there any longer for me to check and record usage of my photos.
- My job is a field position – I'm out all the time and I don't have time to sit around and fill out KPI forms.
- Because of the lapse of time between when the pictures were taken and when they are published, there will be "holes" in the KPI forms that we fill and this also makes it hard for us to report.
- There are 28 pixmen in my department and each one is going to produce a stack of sheets – will my section head even be able to go through them?
- Will there be feedback on my input?
- The KPI is a waste of time, paper and resources and adds unnecessary pressure on us in many ways.

Conclusion

An informal vote was taken and 100% of members who were present at the Oct 13 forum **want the existing KPI system to be retooled before it is officially implemented.**

A large majority indicated that they were **unwilling to continue filling the KPI forms.**

Members who were present expressed that they welcomed evaluations but preferred **individual assessments by their section heads and immediate superiors – assessments which would be discussed with them whereby they would be allowed to justify/defend their positions if they disagreed with the assessments given.**

Suggestions submitted to StarMag by a senior reporter:

It could be helpful to point out many criteria not being covered by the KPI.

Factors that could be considered for reporters or sub-editors

- 1) Number of cover stories written per year (or month)
- 2) Number of feature stories written per year (or month)
- 3) Number of basic stories written per year (or month)
- 4) Percentage of stories which are self-generated
- 5) Number of pages coordinated per year (or month)
- 6) Number of pages subbed per year (or month)
- 7) Number of pages proof-read per year (or month)
- 8) Attendance ... number of MC's taken per year

Less quantifiable factors

- 1) Dependability (as opposed to punctuality)
- 2) Attitude
- 3) Initiative
- 4) Quality of writing, grammar, language-usage, etc
- 5) Specific knowledge (i.e. relevant to reporter's beat)
- 6) General knowledge