



Are you focused on your priorities?

A list of 90 Key Performance Indicators is a contradiction in terms.

By Allan Wille, CEO, Klipfolio Inc.

You have regular meetings to discuss performance. Every quarter, there's a bigger meeting where the organization looks at its successes and failures and reevaluates its priorities.

How is progress measured between meetings? Maybe there's a spreadsheet that you update when you have time or there are complex reports from an enterprise resource planning system. Do you look at them? Does it matter?

If the answer is yes, you belong to a select group of people that can overcome daily distractions to stay focused on the big picture. It's too bad you spend so much time digging and analysing. In the time that remains you're an informed and effective contributor to organizational goals.

But if you're like the rest of us with competing demands that make focusing on KPIs difficult or impossible, this article is for you.

Obvious Priorities

Here is a snapshot of NORAD. Even if you don't know what NORAD does, you can make an educated guess based on the image. This is because NORAD's priorities, the USA, the former USSR, and the space between the two, are right in front of everyone. If something changes it would be difficult to miss.

Alternatively, here is a picture of a German emergency response center. Like NORAD, in this business saving time saves lives. It's easy to see that the operator can keep a close eye on the railways and highways that matter to her job performance.

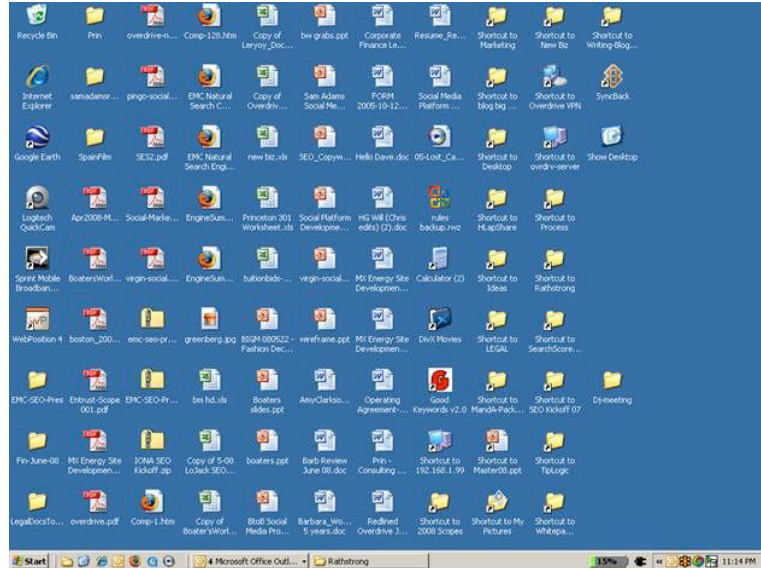


With that in mind, let's compare the screens used by marketing, media, and IT professionals. Like you, their job performance, and the overall performance of their organizations, is measured against previously agreed-upon success metrics.

The CEO's Desktop

This executive owns an advertising firm with a variety of household names on his client list. It's easy to guess at key performance metrics that might keep him up at night: progress against revenue targets and renewal rates for existing clients come to mind.

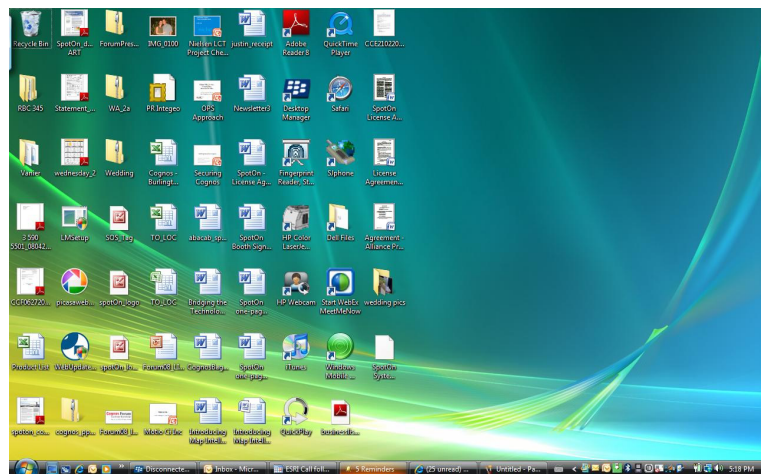
Judging by the 90 icons on his desktop, he wants quick access to a lot of information. Even if his key performance information is just a click away behind one of these icons, there's now only a 1 in 90 chance of that icon being the one that captures his attention. Add ringing phones, email alerts, and people coming in and out of his office to that mix, and it doesn't get any better.



How about the VP Marketing?

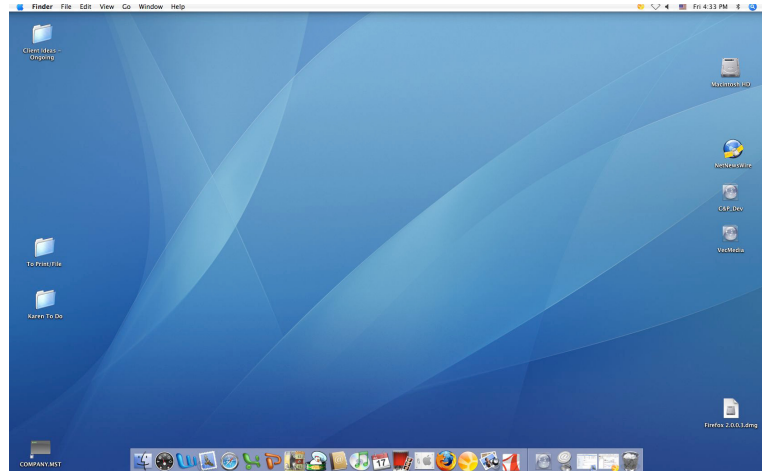
Instead of basing decisions on anecdotal evidence and individual opinions like "I really like beige", modern marketers have a lot performance metrics and analytics options.

As the VP Marketing for a business intelligence software startup, you might expect this guy's desktop to stream web analytics information like web visitors, program spending, marketing-generated sales pipeline, marketing ROI, qualified-leads and lots of others. Instead, there are about 50 icons – half the number appearing on the CEO's desktop. But no performance metrics.



Let's Look at a Mid-Level Manager

Elsewhere on the org chart we find a Manager at a media buying agency. Judging by her desktop, she's either highly organized, or most of her work takes place in person or on the phone. Despite that, it's safe to assume that she needs to stay on top of program spending for different clients using different media channels as well as tracking the results. She'd probably appreciate having those figures right in front of her when a client calls with questions.

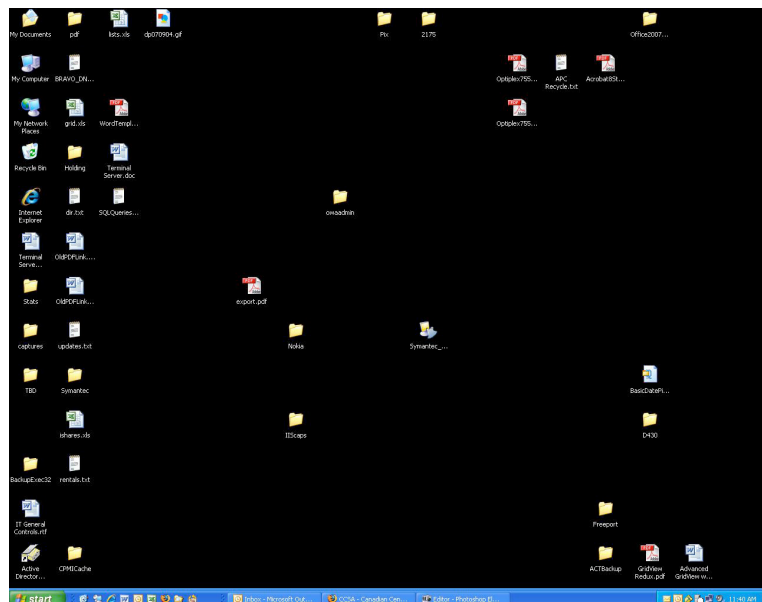


There are only 9 icons on this desktop though there are 20 more shortcuts appearing on the dock at the bottom of her screen. From 90 icons for C-level management, to 50 for the VP and 30 for managers, this tiny sample of desktops suggests that the higher you are on the corporate ladder, the more issues you have to monitor. Alternatively, it implies that senior managers aren't very good filers, which seems unlikely. Regardless of the reason no can see their performance metrics at a glance.

Are Technical People Different?

Here's an IT Manager's desktop. He manages the servers, email, work stations, and service desk tickets for a federal government agency.

The performance metrics you'd expect him to be concerned with include server states, bandwidth usage, virus alerts, and help desk tickets. With the productivity of all the information workers at the agency under his care, he could really benefit from having network performance information on his desktop.



Performance From Theory to Execution

Exceed the limits of your attention span and the quality of your work is bound to be affected. The beauty of metrics-based performance management is that your organization identifies a short list of KPIs that fits within your attention span. A list of 90, 50 or 30 key performance indicators is a contradiction in terms. Long before you get to 30 discrete measures, they're no longer "key". Big league baseball does its best to contradict this idea by reporting more player performance statistics than you can swing a maple bat at.

KPIs are not new thinking. They have been recognized for more than a decade in most boardrooms. But they often stay in the board room until the next meeting. That's where desktop dashboards like Klipfolio come in.

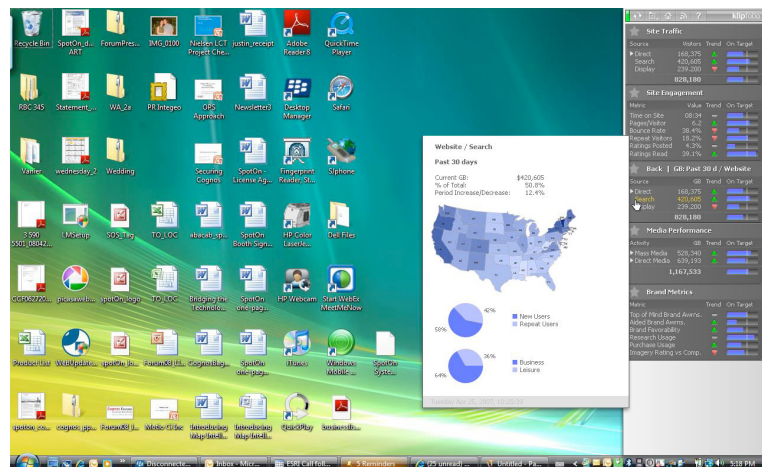
Unavoidably on your desktop

Look at how Klipfolio Dashboard, the desktop dashboard for business, changes two of our examples: the VP Marketing and the IT Manager.

Web analytics

If the VP Marketing monitors web-based KPIs, here's a Klipfolio web marketing dashboard for him.

Marketing KPIs such as sales leads, top keywords, and web traffic come straight out of Google Analytics to his desktop. The VP can mouse over any metric for more info and then drill down into it with just a click. He can dock the dashboard across the top of his screen, down either side, along the bottom, or leave it floating, and still have lots of real estate for his other icons or applications.

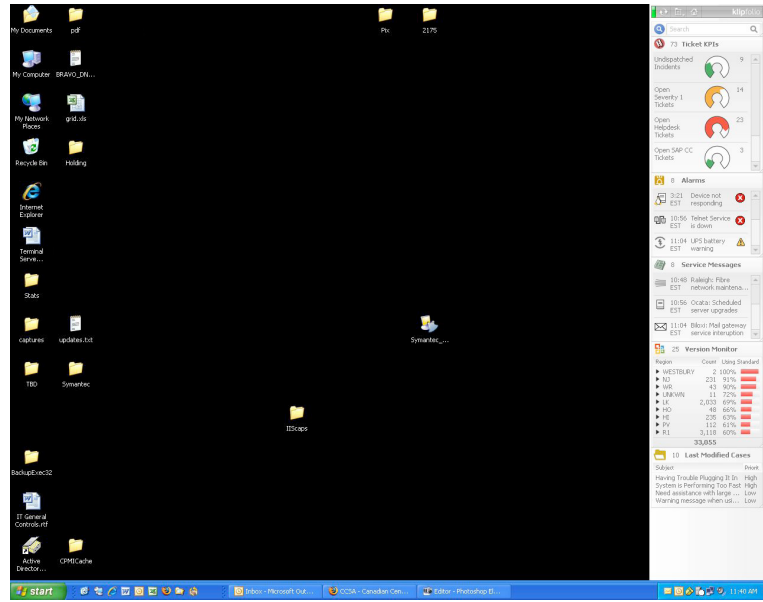


Service desk

Here's a Klipfolio service desk dashboard added to the IT Manager's desktop. It tracks various departmental KPIs: device states, open help tickets, and many more. With these KPIs on his desktop, the IT Manager has still has plenty of real estate for his 50 icons – though he may no longer need them.

Unlike using a browser-based dashboard, if he launches another

application, a spreadsheet, email, or anything else, the Klipfolio dashboard is still visible.



See, Decide, Act

Most departments could benefit from keeping their KPIs in front of their team members full time. In addition to executives, marketers, and service desks, other groups like sales and operations are already working to automate their processes and present the results to employees quickly and clearly.

Before now KPIs have been trapped on white boards and flip charts in board rooms; then buried in complex ERP systems; and most recently kept in browser-based enterprise dashboards that may or may not be noticed and used by information workers.

Each advance is one step closer to an environment that people will turn to for at-a-glance awareness of their priorities. Desktop dashboards like Klipfolio complete this evolution by promoting your organization's carefully considered KPIs on the desktop where they need to appear. Because it's hard to hit a target you can't see.



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