



# Tom Romito

## FACILITATOR

### **FACILITATION AND MANAGING TO OUTCOMES**

I'm Tom Romito. I'm a facilitator and I help organizations that want to grow. Many organizations feel they're stuck in the present and can't move forward. I've worked with many groups of people in 24 years of facilitating, and some of them were unwilling to take a giant step into the future by trying something new.

I couldn't put my finger on the reason for this inertia until I read a book called "Leap of Reason: Managing to Outcomes in an Era of Scarcity" by Mario Morino. While the groups I worked with that were stuck in time wanted to make difference, they didn't know how to manage outcomes. Morino explains that managing outcomes is about "measuring the good we do for those we serve so we can learn and improve our programs over time."

In my experience, most groups don't like to measure performance because it's another activity, almost like another project. Who's going to do that? Everyone who has a passion for the organization is already carrying the load. So collecting data falls by the wayside, regardless of the fact that doing so would help them improve what they're doing for those they serve.

To illustrate this, an organization I'm in has the objective of educating the public about conservation of the natural world. We conduct activities that include programs and field trips. Ask us how well we do this, and we'll say we're creating awareness. Ask us how we know that, and we'll say because people attend our programs and field trips. This circular thinking keeps us from improving what we do because we don't really know how well we're doing it.

Managing outcomes means that we could solve this dilemma (presuming that we wanted to) by using a "logic model" that features objectives, activities, and outcomes. If we went beyond objectives and activities by measuring the outcomes of what we do, we could improve our delivery methods. One way of doing this might be to survey our customers (those who attend our activities) to find out what they think about what we do and how we do it.

What would it take for an organization to take this "leap of reason?" In my opinion, it would, first, take someone in the organization to champion outcomes thinking. Second, the organization

would have to be willing to measure the information it really needs, not what is already available. Third, it would have to be willing to create reports and data summaries it could easily utilize in making decisions. Fourth, it would have to be willing to make some decisions based on that data. Fifth, it would have to be willing to implement those decisions.

I don't think this "managing to outcomes" approach would require a special program or use up one more member. I believe that once an organization has implemented performance management, it would become imbedded in the organizational culture. Then leaders would be able to look at the data and say, "Okay, here's what we need to do to make an improvement."

As a facilitator, I help organizations that want to grow using three approaches: team building, action planning, and strategic planning. Managing to outcomes is another way. I'm going to try it!