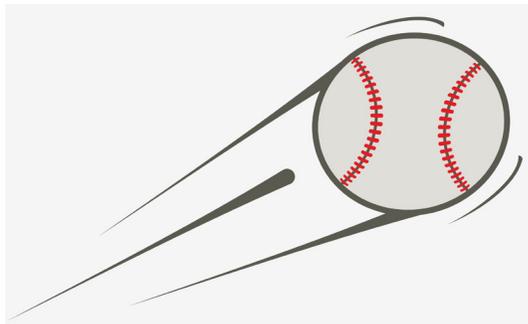


CATCHBALL



DEFINITION

- The “throwing and catching of balls” in baseball
- A give-and-take information-sharing activity between an organization’s hierarchy
- A critical component of the Hoshin Management (strategic planning) process where leaders deploy goals, objectives, strategies, and budgets to managers for interpretation and review, and the managers provide feedback, thus insuring alignment in direction, strategy, and resources.

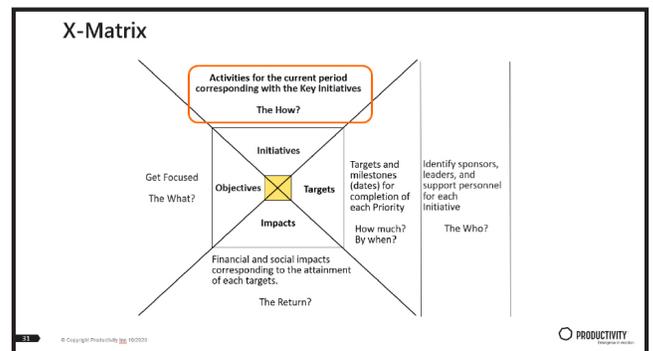


CATCHBALL IN CONTEXT—THE BIG PICTURE

The power of Catchball can be seen in the Hoshin Kanri (policy deployment) process. Policy Deployment is a leadership-driven, strategic planning and deployment process critical to a Lean Enterprise’s business development cycle.

The process begins with the leadership team setting strategic goals and establishing key growth and improvement objectives that are then cascaded down throughout the organization.

Meetings ensue as the tactical plan is communicated across the organizational levels through the use of structured X-Matrices. The process gives managers (employees) the opportunity to review, provide feedback, and reach buy-in.



CATCHBALL

CATCHBALL IN ACTION

It is during the cascading of organizational goals that the **Catchball** process comes into play, creating local ownership through two-way, top-down/bottom-up communication: Leadership presents proposed objectives and milestones to managers, who in turn construct their own matrices, translating leaders' objectives into initiatives and milestones for their business unit, department, or team.

The act of objectives being thrown back and forth between leadership and management (hence the name, Catchball), facilitates ongoing communication between organizational levels, and helps ensure ownership. This process ties leadership aspirations and organizational goals to improvement initiatives and daily work.

A snapshot of the 5-steps of Hoshin Kanri, and where Catchball fits in, illustrates the process in action:

1. Understand the Business Case
Define key objectives and strategic initiatives.
2. Corporate Diagnosis & Navigational Framework
Assess/establish current state, identify areas of breakthrough improvement.
3. Establish Targets to Improve and Milestones
Establish monthly targets to improve and align with initiatives. Create long-term (3-5 year) and short-term (6-18 month) action plans.
4. The X-Matrix, Cascading Objectives, & Catchball
Begin Catchball process by deploying matrices down the organization and awaiting feedback/comment. Ensure buy-in from all involved.
5. The Action Plan
Execute the plan. Review and adjust as needed, and repeat the cycle (annually).

CATCHBALL BEST PRACTICES

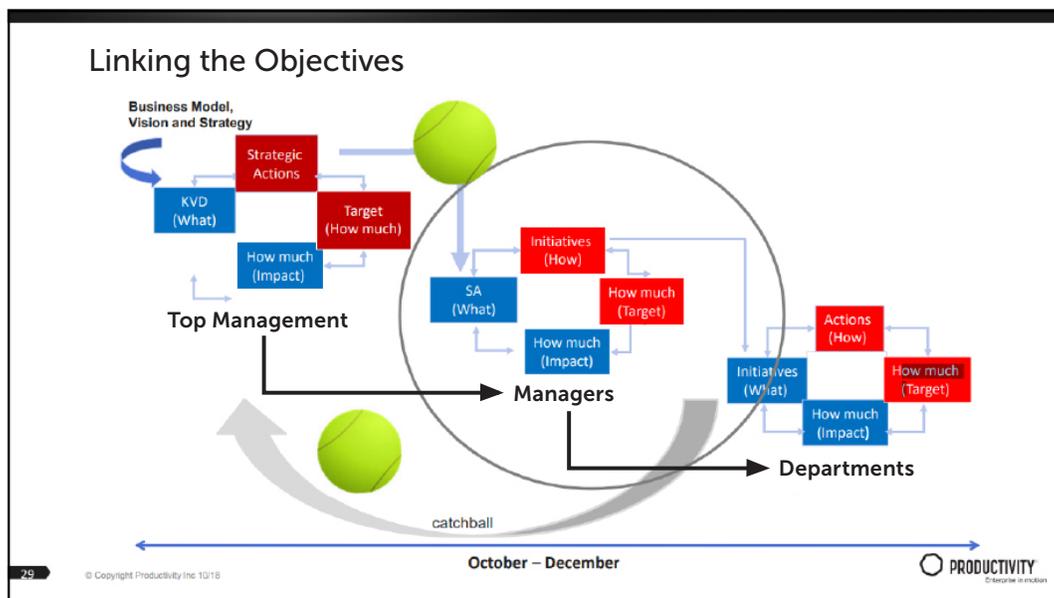
Catchball is a simple process, but not necessarily easy in practice; it is most streamlined and successful when fundamental best practices are noted and adhered to. Here are a few tips to be mindful of as you prepare for and engage in your Catchball process:

Getting started:

- Leadership team is committed-to and well-versed in the Catchball process
- At the highest level, strategy is locked in, tracking metrics (KPIs) are defined, and scorecards to share progress have been established
- "Vital Few" are identified and communicated to help prioritize targets and objectives

Throughout the Catchball process:

- Catchball is used to disseminate and communicate strategy and identify gaps in current to future state
- Leadership and team members are open-minded and flexible to new ideas, and willing to negotiate with others up and down the organizational hierarchy
- Detailed planning and facilitation help ensure a timely exchange of information, consensus, and closure
- The opportunity to teach, coach, and mentor is seized whenever possible
- Real-time, fact-based data (from Gemba) is used



CATCHBALL

80/20 AND THE VITAL FEW

The beauty of Catchball is in its inclusiveness. Active information sharing and negotiation allows for a wide variety of ideas to be presented that might otherwise be overlooked. Keeping the number of initiatives manageable is critical to success. Choosing which initiatives to focus on can be simplified by following The Pareto Principle or 80/20 Rule, a universal principle Joseph Juran referred to as “The Vital Few”—those initiatives that will have the biggest impact on the organization.

BENEFITS OF CATCHBALL

When done properly, you can expect increased efficiency, as demonstrated by:

- organizational alignment, a bridge between strategy and action.
- clearly-defined objectives on which to act, and measurable targets.
- improved communication, information-sharing, meetings, morale, and performance, as workers contribute and become part of the process.
- movement from silo to Lean thinking.
- increased new ideas.
- reduced cycle-time in the strategic planning process.
- improvement projects and daily work tied to organizational goals.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

Avoid rushing the process. Allow teams time to process and provide feedback so consensus is achieved. Read on for additional red flags to watch out for to be sure you are on the right track:

- Leaders not dedicating enough time to Catchball practice sessions
- Top-down/bottom-up targets are unrealistic/unachievable — too many projects
- Appropriate people are not included in the process
- Absence of cross-functional management’s ownership

CATCHBALL ABUSE—PARENTS BEWARE

Deviation from Catchball's intended use is on the rise. Alarmingly, misuse takes place among 8-15 yr. olds in the home. These tweens and teens have stumbled upon this tool as a way to ping-pong between parents to plead their case in order to get a desired outcome, i.e., permission to go to a movie on a school night, attend a questionable party, go to a previously banned concert, etc. This pseudo Catchball process continues until one parent, unbeknownst to the other, caves to the unrelenting pressure. Don't fret, parents, there is a solution! If you suspect Catchball abuse, deploy a common teen "answer without answering" tactic: the eye roll, the shoulder shrug, or the walk away. Goodbye know-it-all, hello cure-all.

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES

“If you could get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time.”

Patrick Lencioni

“What we need to do is learn to work in the system, by which I mean that everybody, every team, every platform, every division, every component is there not for individual competitive profit or recognition, but for contribution to the system as a whole on a win-win basis.”

W. Edwards Deming