



Ten Minutes of Your Time. Lasting Business Impact.

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"I wanted to be scared again... I wanted to feel unsure again. That's the only way I learn, the only way I feel challenged."

- Connie Chung, newscaster

What's On My Mind This Week

Aspiring to Excellence, Bosu-style

I'm an admitted fitness fanatic, so when I came across a new gadget called a [Bosu](http://www.bosu.com) (www.bosu.com) I didn't think it would be much of a challenge. Performing standard exercises while balancing on a half of a stability ball shouldn't be too tricky for a decent athlete, right? Wrong. In one session, the Bosu made me feel like a novice all over again. The exercises were the same, but now I was wobbling and off-balance throughout the entire routine. I was out of breath. I fell early and often.

You probably stumble across a "Bosu" every now and then in your business improvement initiatives - something that seems simple in theory but in reality tests your proficiency to the hilt. Once the difficulty is known, weaker players are discouraged, but the strong are challenged to get stronger. Do any of the following scenarios seem familiar?

- Although you've made excellent progress reducing defects in your process, you've kept a final inspection program in place "just in case". In order to maintain your industry-leading cycle times, the final inspection process must be eliminated. *Are you ready to ship without inspecting?*

- Customer shipping requirements are rigorously tracked - and often renegotiated. Your largest customer is willing to give you a greater share of its business, but demands performance penalties for any late shipments. *Can you commit to ship orders on-time without adding inventory?*

- For years, your industry has sold products at a small loss but generated ever-greater profitability through purchase financing. Your company is winning major orders by reducing interest rates and would like to announce zero-percent financing. *Can you turn manufacturing into an engine of profitability?*

Coming across a Bosu can be very jarring. In a nanosecond, you go from top of the world to beginner all over again. These new challenges can have that "one step forward, two steps back" feeling.

No matter how good you've gotten at managing change and improving performance,

otherwise mediocre pool can buoy an entire school's rankings, some neighborhood schools have successfully rallied to retain the rights to those students' scores long after they've moved on to schools with a more rigorous educational program. In some cases, the students have never even walked down the halls of the schools that now reap the benefits of their test-taking prowess.

Those of you who have been conducting business improvement initiatives for any amount of time will readily see the root of the problem: shady measurement processes yield shady data.

Schools are not alone in facing measurement challenges. At the start of any business improvement project, one must carefully scrutinize the data that will be the basis upon which conclusions are drawn and decisions are made. How to do this? Use a tool called Gauge Repeatability and Reproducibility, or Gauge R+R.

Gauge R+R basically protects you from drawing incorrect conclusions due to faulty data. For the test score example, Gauge R+R asks the question: how much of the difference between schools' test scores is due to a difference in measurement, and how much is due to a difference in student knowledge? With Gauge R+R at 100 percent, a difference among test scores is solely due to a difference in student knowledge. As Gauge R+R moves toward zero, differences among schools become more measurement-based than reality-based.

If the test scores pass the Gauge R+R test, a comparison of scores in Youngstown, Ohio and Salt Lake City, Utah would be a true comparison. True differences among schools could be identified, best practices discovered, and resources allocated where they provide the largest benefit.

Without applying Gauge R+R to your business, you just might find yourself praising the very division that is in greatest need of improvement, or adopting a "best practice" from your worst performer. Your measurement issues might not be getting ink on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*, but they are undoubtedly present. Pick a metric to improve, but first use Gauge R+R to test its trustworthiness.

About Take Ten Minutes

Take Ten Minutes is a weekly publication of [Philip Crosby Associates](http://www.philipcrosby.com) and [The Capability Group](http://www.the-capability-group.com).

The premise behind *Take Ten Minutes* is simple: take ten minutes out of every week to refocus and recommit to business improvement. *Take Ten Minutes* features quotes and interviews to inspire you. We also pull articles from today's headlines as examples of the power of the preventive culture (or the deep problems caused by not having one).

As the name suggests, *Take Ten Minutes* is relentless with the editing razor and keeps each

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