

# **Towards performance dialogue in public administration – the case of city of Tampere**

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Evolving priorities and management philosophies have a significant impact on information flows and knowledge structures in public administration. Strategic management and management control are challenged by the fact that public services are increasingly provided by networks of hybrid organization structures where more than one, public, private or nonprofit, organization is dependent on another to perform a task (e.g. McGuire, 2002a; 2002b; Christensen and Læreid, 2011). This adds ambiguity to public performance management (Vakkuri, 2010), results to cultural tensions (McGuire, 2006) and in many ways questions the ability of an individual manager to master the complexity of public performance.

In this paper, we will seek answers to a research question: how to foster performance dialogue and support performance improvement in municipalities. The paper reports results of an interview study carried out in the city of Tampere, Finland. Managers who participated into a certain type of learning forum (cf. Moynihan, 2005; 2008) were interviewed in order to recognize the main strengths and weaknesses of the approach. More widely the study connects to the literature on performance information and seeks novel ways for improving the use of performance information in public management. Practical management questions are posed: what kind of routines would enhance the use of performance information and how these routines could be integrated to management practice?

The paper contributes in two ways. First, it brings some light to the perceived inability of public organizations to engage in goal-based learning. Second, it illustrates the steps taken in the city of Tampere in creating a holistic knowledge-based management agenda.

**Keywords:** management control, performance information, knowledge management