

CREATIVE KPI MODEL: A BEHAVIORAL APPROACH TO EVALUATING THE PERFORMANCE OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to design a behavior-based Key Performance Indicator (KPI) model for visual communication designers at Ruang Creative Surabaya, as an effort to create a more objective, adaptive, and contextual performance evaluation system that addresses the characteristics of the creative industry. The research method used was a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving eight visual communication designers and two managerial representatives selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participatory observation, and document analysis. Data were then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and validated through triangulation and member checking. The results indicate that visual communication designers' work behavior patterns can be grouped into six main performance dimensions: work quality, punctuality, initiative, collaboration, personal qualities, and creativity. These six dimensions were then formulated into a behavior-based KPI model with different weightings to balance the quantitative and qualitative aspects. The study's conclusions confirm that the implementation of behavior-based KPIs can increase the objectivity of performance evaluations, strengthen people management, and maintain a balance between productivity and artistic freedom in creative organizations.

Keywords: Behavior-Based KPI, Visual Communication Designer, Creative Industry, Performance

INTRODUCTION

The creative industry has become one of the most dynamic sectors contributing to economic growth, innovation, and employment creation in both developed and developing countries. According to UNCTAD (2022), the global creative economy contributes approximately 5–6% of the world's GDP, while in Indonesia, the sector accounts for about 6.28% of national GDP, positioning it as a key driver of economic diversification and competitiveness (Indonesian Creative Economy Agency, 2019). Within this ecosystem, visual communication design plays a central role in shaping brand identity, influencing consumer behavior, and fostering innovation through visual narratives that bridge creativity and market needs. In today's competitive business landscape, creative organizations are increasingly expected to demonstrate not only artistic excellence but also measurable performance outcomes. Research on organizational creative capabilities emphasizes that creativity within organizations is not merely an individual trait but a managed capability encompassing leadership, structure, and supportive systems (Larequoi, 2024). Effective creative management requires balancing freedom of expression with strategic alignment. Moreover, creativity is now being evaluated using innovative computational methods, including multimodal affective data modeling, which allows researchers to measure emotional and behavioral components of creative performance (Zhang et al., 2021). These developments indicate a growing need for management systems that integrate both the qualitative nature of creativity and the quantitative rigor of performance measurement.

Despite this evolution, performance measurement within creative industries continues to face conceptual and practical challenges. Traditional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), typically grounded in quantitative metrics such as productivity, cost

efficiency, and output volume, fail to capture the multidimensional and interpretive nature of creative work (Harrison et al., 2022; Caves, 2020). Creative professionals—particularly visual communication designers—tend to exhibit distinct behavioral patterns such as high autonomy, flexible working styles, and resistance to rigid structures (Mumford, 2003; Hartanto, 2018). While these traits foster originality and innovation, they often create difficulties in designing fair, transparent, and motivating performance appraisal systems. Performance management theory emphasizes that effective KPIs should be measurable, contextual, and aligned with organizational objectives (Schaltegger et al., 2023; Brudan, 2010). However, in creative sectors, many KPI frameworks remain output-oriented, neglecting behavioral and cognitive elements critical to creative performance (DeFillippi et al., 2007). Recent studies reinforce the importance of integrating managerial and creative dimensions in KPI design. For instance, Nunes, Alexandre, and Gaspar (2024) demonstrated that KPI dashboards that incorporate real-time feedback loops and multidimensional performance indicators significantly improve employee engagement and strategic alignment. Similarly, Gräve (2019) emphasized that KPI relevance depends on context—metrics that are meaningful for analytical domains such as social media may not fully apply to creative environments, where subjective interpretation, aesthetics, and innovation play dominant roles.

In Indonesia, many creative agencies still rely on informal or subjective evaluations, often based on client satisfaction or supervisor judgment, rather than structured behavioral indicators. This creates inconsistencies in assessing designer performance and limits opportunities for professional development. Ruang Creative, a visual design agency based in Surabaya, illustrates this issue. As competition intensifies in the local creative economy, the company faces difficulties in monitoring designer performance due to unconventional work behaviors, such as irregular schedules, nonlinear creative processes, and resistance to strict managerial control. Interviews with management indicate that such patterns often lead to project delays, inefficiencies, and client dissatisfaction, despite the high artistic quality of outputs. These conditions underscore the need for a more balanced and contextualized performance management system. A behavior-based KPI model offers a potential solution by incorporating qualitative indicators that reflect how designers approach their tasks, collaborate with peers, and express creativity within organizational goals. By focusing on *what designers do* rather than merely *what they produce*, behavioral KPIs allow for more objective, fair, and constructive evaluations.

This study therefore aims to design a behavior-based KPI framework for visual communication designers at Ruang Creative Surabaya. Drawing on behavioral theory (Madigan et al., 2020) and creativity models (Corcuera Atienza, 2022), the research identifies observable behavior patterns that characterize high-performing designers. These patterns are then categorized into six performance dimensions—quality of work, timeliness, initiative, cooperation, personal qualities, and creativity—which form the foundation of the proposed KPI model. Theoretically, this study contributes to performance management literature by integrating behavioral and creative perspectives into KPI development. Practically, it provides a managerial tool that helps creative agencies maintain a balance between organizational discipline and artistic autonomy. Contextually, the research enriches the understanding of performance evaluation in Indonesia's creative industry, presenting an empirical framework that can be adapted by similar organizations seeking to optimize both productivity and innovation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design conducted at Ruang Creative Surabaya from March to July 2025. This approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of the work behavior patterns of visual communication designers within their real organizational context (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018). The research focused on identifying and analyzing designer behavior patterns that were subsequently formulated into behavior-based Key Performance Indicator (KPI) dimensions, including quality of work, timeliness, initiative, cooperation, personal qualities, and creativity. The study involved eight visual communication designers and two managerial representatives one creative director and one human resource manager—selected through purposive sampling based on their minimum one-year work experience and active project involvement. Data were collected through three main techniques: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis of internal company reports, project briefs, and evaluation notes.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, supported by *member checking* and peer debriefing to confirm data credibility (Hafidulloh & Mochklas, 2024). The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) through systematic steps of data reduction, coding, categorization, and theme generation, allowing patterns of behavior to emerge naturally from the data. The overall research flow consisted of five key stages: (1) identifying research problems and objectives; (2) reviewing relevant literature on performance management and creativity; (3) collecting primary and secondary data; (4) analyzing and validating findings through triangulation; and (5) designing a behavior-based KPI model for visual communication designers. This structured sequence ensured a coherent methodological process that moved from conceptual exploration to empirical validation, producing a practical and contextually grounded model for performance evaluation in the creative industry.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the qualitative case study conducted at Ruang Creative Surabaya, data from interviews, observations, and document analysis were analyzed through a thematic analysis process following the stages of data reduction, coding, categorization, and theme generation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The triangulation of methods ensured that the findings represented the real behavioral patterns of visual communication designers in their work context.

Table 1.
Results of interviews and observations

KPI Dimensions	Interview/Observation Findings	Interpretation/Behavior Patterns
Quality of Work	“Often I have to revise because of small details, but it is important for client satisfaction.” (W1)	Designers emphasize precision and adherence to the brief .
Timeliness	Observations show that some designers work overtime to meet deadlines .	Time management is still a challenge, but there is a commitment to completing on time.

Initiative	"I usually try to provide alternative designs so that clients have a choice." (W2)	Designers tend to be proactive in providing additional ideas beyond the client's requests.
Cooperation	Observations show intensive team discussions in brainstorming .	Teamwork and internal communication are essential parts of the creative process.
Personal Qualities	"I try to be disciplined, even though my working hours are flexible, my main responsibilities must still be completed." (W3)	The values of integrity and responsibility are visible even with flexible work patterns.
Creativeness	Observation results: designers often conduct visual exploration and try new styles.	Creativity emerges through the exploration of ideas and visual innovation.

Source: Processed research results (2025)

Description:

- W1, W2, W3 = interview source code.
- Interpretations are obtained from thematic analysis of interviews & observations.

As shown in Table 1, interview and observation data confirmed these behavioral dimensions. Designers emphasized precision and adherence to briefs (*W1*), indicating strong concern for quality of work. Although timeliness remained a challenge, observations revealed their commitment to completing projects on time, even through overtime. The initiative dimension emerged through designers' proactive efforts to propose alternative design concepts (*W2*). The cooperation dimension appeared in frequent brainstorming sessions and collaborative discussions among teams. Personal qualities, such as responsibility and integrity (*W3*), were evident despite flexible working hours, while creativity manifested through continuous exploration of new visual styles and innovative concepts. These six dimensions were derived from iterative theme refinement and validated through member checking, ensuring their accuracy in representing actual behavioral tendencies at Ruang Creative.

Table 2.
Job Description Results Description and Competency Standards for Visual Communication Designers

Job Description (Job Description)	Required Competency Standards
Designing design concepts according to client needs	Creative thinking skills, visual communication understanding, brief analysis skills
Create graphic designs (posters, logos, digital media, etc.)	Mastery of design software (Adobe Illustrator , Photoshop , CorelDraw), visual technical skills
Manage project work time to meet deadlines	Time management, work discipline, ability to prioritize

Perform design revisions based on client input	Adaptability, effective communication, openness to criticism
Collaborate with creative teams and other divisions	Teamwork skills, coordination, interpersonal communication
Maintain aesthetic quality and design consistency	Accuracy, attention to detail, professional aesthetic standards
Developing new ideas for design innovation	Creativity, design trend research ability, innovation orientation
Maintain work ethics and professional responsibility	Integrity, responsibility, commitment to work standards

As summarized in Table 2, the work of a visual communication designer requires a combination of technical competencies (software mastery, visual skills), managerial competencies (time management, discipline), and personal competencies (integrity, adaptability, creativity). These competencies were translated into measurable indicators and later used as the foundation for KPI formulation.

Table 3.
KPIs of Visual Communication Designers in Ruang Creative

KPI Dimensions	Performance Indicators	Weight (%)	Target / Assessment Criteria
Quality of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design conformity to brief - Accuracy - Visual aesthetics 	25%	≥ 90% of design results meet brief and internal quality standards
Timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timeliness of project completion - Time management 	20%	≥ 85% of projects completed by deadline
Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing alternative ideas - Proactively seek solutions - Design exploration 	15%	A minimum of 1-2 alternative creative ideas are offered for each project.
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teamwork - Communication with clients - Cross-divisional coordination 	15%	≥ 80% collaboration runs smoothly based on team & client evaluation
Personal Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discipline - Responsibility - Integrity 	10%	Arrive on time, maintain work ethics, and complete tasks without intensive supervision.
Creativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Originality of ideas - Innovation - New design concept 	15%	There must be a minimum of new innovation elements in ≥ 70% of the projects handled

From Table 3 above, each dimension was assigned specific indicators, weightings, and performance targets to ensure a balance between quantitative and qualitative aspects. The quality of work (25%) and timeliness (20%) dimensions received the highest weights, as they directly influence client satisfaction and organizational reputation. Meanwhile, initiative (15%), cooperation (15%), creativity (15%), and personal qualities (10%) were emphasized as complementary qualitative aspects reflecting the unique character of creative professions.

The model was validated through discussion with management representatives and feedback from participating designers. The findings confirmed that performance evaluation based solely on quantitative indicators (such as project count or delivery time) was inadequate to represent creative work outcomes. The proposed behavior-based KPI model provides a more comprehensive and context-sensitive approach, integrating observable behavior, creative contribution, and teamwork performance. Overall, the results demonstrate the effectiveness of the qualitative case study design in generating contextual insights. The use of thematic analysis allowed for the systematic transformation of empirical behavioral data into structured KPI dimensions, ensuring that the final model is both evidence-based and practically applicable to the management of creative professionals.

Visual Communication Designer Work Behavior Patterns

The results of the study show that the work behavior patterns of visual communication designers at Ruang Creative can be mapped into six main dimensions of performance: quality of work, timeliness, initiative, cooperation, personal qualities, and creativity. These dimensions emerged consistently in interviews, observations, and documentation, thus representing a true representation of the work characteristics of designers in creative design agencies. In the quality dimension of In their work , designers emphasize the importance of precision, design alignment with the client's brief , and aesthetic quality. One respondent said: *"Sometimes I spend more time on small revisions, but that's what makes the client satisfied."* (W1). This aligns with the literature that places work quality as a primary factor in assessing the performance of creative professionals and is reinforced by the findings of Budiyanto and Mochklas (2020) that work quality is strongly influenced by leadership, organizational culture, and work motivation. Timeliness is also a crucial factor, as late project completion directly impacts client satisfaction and the company's reputation. Observations show that although designers often face deadline pressure , they remain committed to completing their work on time. One designer stated, *" Deadlines make me nervous, but they actually motivate me to stay focused on completing the project."* (W4). This supports time management theory, which emphasizes discipline as a determining factor in productivity, and aligns with research by Hafidulloh, Iradawaty, and Mochklas (2021), which emphasizes the importance of discipline in improving performance.

initiative dimension is evident in the tendency of designers to provide design alternatives beyond client requests. One respondent stated: *"I usually add other design options, so clients feel they have a choice."* (W2). This behavior illustrates proactivity , which according to the literature is one of the characteristics of superior performance in the creative industry. A recent study by Choi, Glăveanu , and Kaufman (2020) proposed a contemporary creativity model that not only includes aspects of *person, process , product , and environment (4Ps)*, but also extends it to social, affective, and contextual domains. This supports the finding that designers' initiative and creativity in Creative

Space emerge in response to the environment, motivation, and social interactions. This is also supported by Mochklas et al. (2023) found that motivation and training contribute significantly to boosting MSME productivity. Cooperation is reflected in the practice of brainstorming and intensive team collaboration. In a team discussion, one designer emphasized: *"When we brainstorm together, ideas usually develop faster than when we work alone."* (W5). This reinforces the view that creativity rarely emerges individually, but develops through social interaction (DeFillippi et al. , 2007). Corcuera Atienza (2022) via *Octahedral Creativity The framework* also emphasizes that creativity is not only born from individuals, but is strongly influenced by the social environment, motivation, and supporting facilities.

Meanwhile, personal qualities such as integrity, responsibility, and discipline demonstrate that while the creative industry is known for its flexibility, ethical work standards remain a key determinant of success. One respondent asserted: *"Even though working hours are flexible, I try to remain disciplined. The important thing is that my responsibilities are fulfilled."* (W3). This aligns with recent research by Cahyati et al., (2024), which emphasized that a strong organizational culture and consistent work discipline contribute to improved employee performance. Finally, creativity is at the heart of a designer's work. Exploring new ideas, conceptual originality, and visual innovation are the hallmarks that distinguish this profession from other, more structured jobs. One designer added: *"If you keep using the same style, it feels monotonous. I like trying new trends to keep the results fresh ."* (W6). This finding aligns with the findings in *The Turn. toward Creative Work* (Harrison , Rouse , Fisher, & Amabile , 2022), which emphasizes that creativity is not only determined by the results, but also by how creative workers engage in the ideation process in a supportive social context. In addition, the *Creativity study or Creativity ? Why? context Matters* (2022) also showed that the context of ideation including working conditions, team interactions, and the organizational environment significantly influences creativity. Noerchoidah et al. (2022) emphasized that *knowledge Sharing* in the creative industry increases job satisfaction and supports the birth of innovation. Overall, these findings confirm that designer performance can not only be measured by quantitative results, but also needs to pay attention to qualitative aspects such as creativity, initiative, collaboration, and personal integrity, which are the foundation of success in the creative industry.

Behavioral Pattern-Based KPI Design

These six behavioral dimensions were then formulated into a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) design. Unlike KPIs in the manufacturing or administrative sectors, which tend to be quantitative, this KPI design emphasizes a balance between quantitative aspects (timeliness, number of projects, target achievement) and qualitative aspects (creativity, initiative, collaboration). This aligns with recent literature on Balanced Performance. Scorecard, such as *Balanced Review scorecard: trends, developments, and future directions* (Schaltegger et al., 2023), which emphasizes the need for the BSC to be holistic, encompassing not only outputs but also processes that support the achievement of results as well as the integration of sustainability and technology aspects. Determination of KPI weights shows that quality of Work (25%) and timeliness (20%) were the top priorities, followed by initiative (15%), cooperation (15%), creativeness (15%), and personal qualities (10%). This weighting reflects the balance between market demands (clients prioritize quality and timeliness) and the company's internal needs to maintain creativity and teamwork. One respondent stated:

"If KPIs only assess how quickly a project is completed, it doesn't feel fair. Creativity should also be valued." (W7). Another respondent added: "In my opinion, KPIs should be clear but not too rigid, so that we can still be creative without feeling limited by numbers." (W8). This statement reinforces the urgency of designing behavior-based KPIs, so that qualitative aspects are not overlooked in designer performance evaluations.

From a theoretical perspective, this approach is in line with recent research on *behavioral training and performance management*, as conducted by Maguire, Harper, Gardner, and Luiselli (2022), which emphasizes the use of behavioral training and direct supervision in maintaining worker performance and safety standards. Furthermore, Bauwens et al. (2024) found a strong performance management system and the influence of transformational leadership to be factors that strengthen innovative behavior and compliance within an organization. Thus, recognizing creativity and initiative through behavioral KPIs can increase designers' motivation to innovate. This model also supports Brudan's (2010) view on *performance management*. *Management* must be adaptive and contextual, making it relevant for the creative sector, which demands high flexibility. Therefore, designing behavior-based KPIs in Ruang Creative serves not only as an evaluation tool but also as a strategic tool for maintaining a balance between designer productivity, creativity, and job satisfaction. The findings of this study reinforce previous studies that emphasize the importance of integrating creativity into performance management systems. In this context, behavior-based KPIs in Ruang Creative can be seen as a mechanism to balance individual (initiative, creativity), team (collaboration, communication), and organizational (quality, timeliness) factors. Furthermore, this study extends the studies of Mejia, D'Ippolito, & Kajikawa (2021) and Mumford & England (2022), which show that creative workers require greater autonomy in their work and an organizational environment that supports the development of creativity.

Research Contribution

This research contributes from two main perspectives. First, this research strengthens the *people domain management* by presenting new insights and practical recommendations for managing the performance of visual communication designers through a behavior-based approach. Second, this research enriches the theoretical and practical aspects by adding to the academic literature on performance management in the creative industry while offering implementation implications for organizations in designing evaluation systems that balance quantitative and qualitative aspects.

a. People Management

In accordance with the research objectives, this KPI design can be used as a basic foundation for People Management for visual communication designers. A behavior-based KPI system allows companies to assess designer performance more objectively, reducing the subjective bias that is common in assessing creativity. Behavior-based assessments also provide more constructive feedback, as designers can understand specific areas for improvement.

Furthermore, the results of this study provide strategic suggestions for companies in designing People Creative and professional management. With clear KPIs, Ruang Creative can create an evaluation system that maintains a balance between organizational discipline and the designers' artistic freedom. This is crucial because a work environment that is too rigid

can stifle creativity, while one that is too loose can reduce productivity. Therefore, the KPI design serves as a tool to maintain a conducive, innovative, and professional work environment.

b. Research Contribution

The contribution of this research is divided into three aspects.

- *Theoretically*

This research extends the study of performance management by integrating behavioral and creativity perspectives into KPI design. Previous performance management literature tends to emphasize quantitative productivity aspects, while this research demonstrates that behavioral-based indicators can provide a more comprehensive picture of designer performance.

- *In practice*

The research findings provide an evaluation framework that can help creative design agencies balance the need for organizational discipline with designers' artistic freedom. With clear KPIs, companies have the tools to encourage designers to be more accountable to organizational targets without stifling their creativity.

- *Contextually*

This study enriches the discourse on the creative economy in Indonesia by presenting empirical evidence from a local design agency in Surabaya. The results show that behavior-based performance management practices are able to capture the complexity of creative work that cannot be fully measured with quantitative indicators. Thus, this study not only emphasizes the importance of creativity as a key asset in the design industry but also demonstrates how an appropriate evaluation system can support designer motivation, discipline, and collaboration. These findings also emphasize that human resource management in the creative industry requires a different approach compared to the more structured manufacturing or administrative sectors.

This research is also relevant for similar companies in other developing countries facing similar challenges in balancing productivity and creativity. The Surabaya design bureau can serve as a case study, reflecting real-world conditions where market pressures, resource constraints, and innovation demands coexist. By adopting a behavior-based KPI approach, organizations in developing countries can design more adaptive, contextual, and sustainability-oriented performance management systems. This also opens up opportunities for the development of creative performance management models that can be replicated across various global creative industry contexts, thus strengthening this research's contribution to international literature and managerial practice.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully identified the work behavior patterns of visual communication designers at Ruang Creative Surabaya, which consist of six key dimensions: quality of work, timeliness, initiative, cooperation, personal qualities, and creativity. These dimensions represent the distinctive behavioral characteristics of creative industry professionals, who must balance productivity, discipline, and artistic

freedom. Using a qualitative case study approach, data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis were examined using thematic analysis and validated through triangulation, resulting in an accurate and contextual mapping of designer work behavior. Based on these findings, the study developed a behavior-based Key Performance Indicator (KPI) model that serves as a more objective, adaptive, and context-relevant performance evaluation tool for creative professionals. The model places the greatest weight on quality of work and timeliness, while initiative, cooperation, creativity, and personal qualities complement the qualitative dimensions that reflect professionalism and creative contribution. Theoretically, this study enriches performance management literature by integrating behavioral and creativity perspectives into KPI design. Practically, the results provide managerial guidance for creative organizations to implement a performance assessment system that not only evaluates outcomes but also recognizes the process, behavior, and individual contribution to innovation and teamwork. Therefore, the behavior-based KPI model offers a strategic approach to improving *People Management* effectiveness and enhancing organizational performance within the creative industry.

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