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KPI mapping for small businesses- sustainable competitive advantage: Electrical engineering sector - electrical equipment

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Abstract

Small business operations drive approximately 43.5% of economic development within the United States. The impact of key performance indicators (KPIs) on achieving long-term competitive advantage represents the central discussion of this article which analyzes small business performance in electrical engineering. The research analyzes historical data combined with existing market patterns and import numbers and projected revenue development in the electrical equipment sector to reveal boosts in local manufacturing potential. Industry analysis through Porter's Five Forces gets priority in this article while it examines competitive strategies including cost leadership and differentiation with focus strategies and their potential risks. The article introduces KPI mapping as a strategic tool that helps reduce strategic complexities while improving departmental control over efficiency, quality, innovation, and customer responsiveness of technology quality control logistics and sales departments. Business intelligence solutions to track key performance indicators are analyzed in detail in the context of electrical equipment manufacturing together with actionable intelligence for small businesses competing in the market.

Keywords: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); Sustainable Competitive Advantage; Electrical Equipment Sector; Competitive Strategies; Small Business Growth

1. Introduction

The economic growth of the United States has become dependent on the success of small businesses (SBA, 2024). As of 2024, small businesses account for 99.9% of all businesses operating in the United States and contribute significantly to the economy, accounting for 43.5% of the total GDP, which is almost half of the country's gross domestic product (SBA, 2024).

In order for small businesses to be successful in the electrical engineering sector the business key performance indicators (KPI) must be identified. Designing a successful business strategy for an electrical engineering company requires professional certifications accompanied by work experience. Additionally, the overall business strategy should include a generic strategy and a competitive strategy.

2. Electrical Equipment-Market Research

2.1. Historical Data Analysis

The definition of electrical equipment includes equipment that has been manufactured in order to generate electric power, distribute electric power, or use electric power, lighting equipment, appliances for household purposes that use electricity, and signaling equipment (Statista, 2024).`HT

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The data in the figure from the past five years shows the revenue generated by the electrical equipment market in the United States. There is growth in this market but it is rather slow.

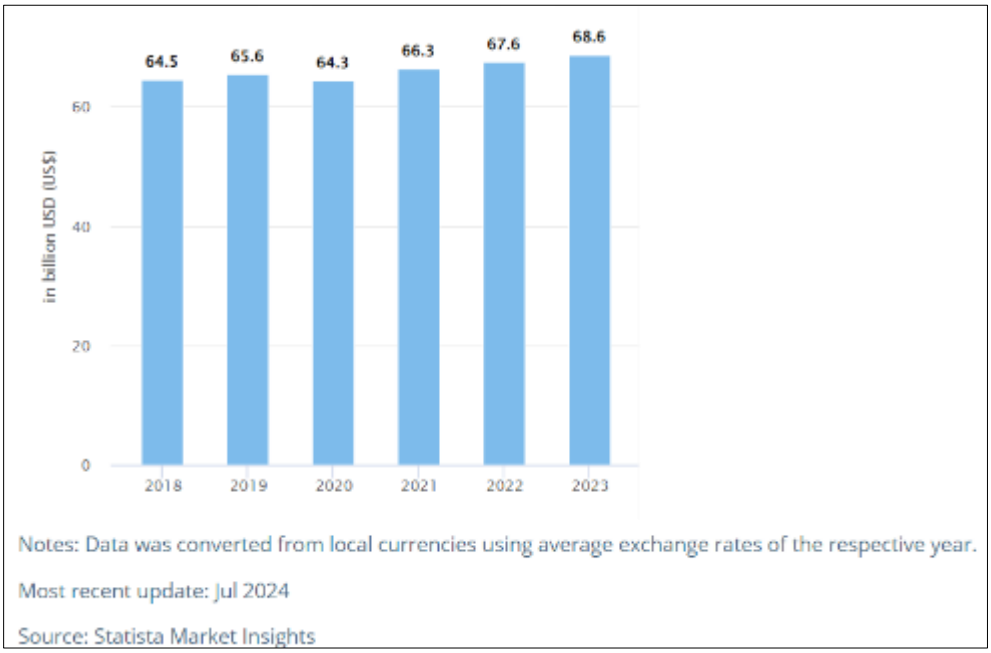


Figure 1 Revenue Generated by Equipment in the United States'

2.2. Current Value and Future Predictions

As of 2024, the electrical equipment sector generated a revenue of approximately 69.7 billion USD (Statista, 2024). The future prediction is a steady growth in this market, but again a slow one.

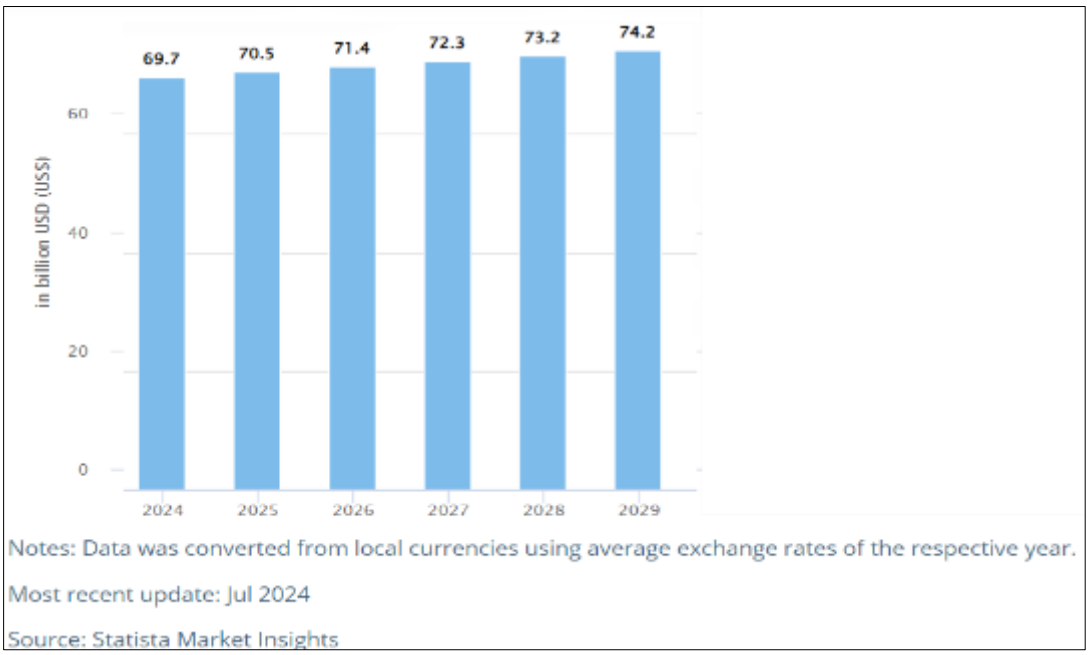
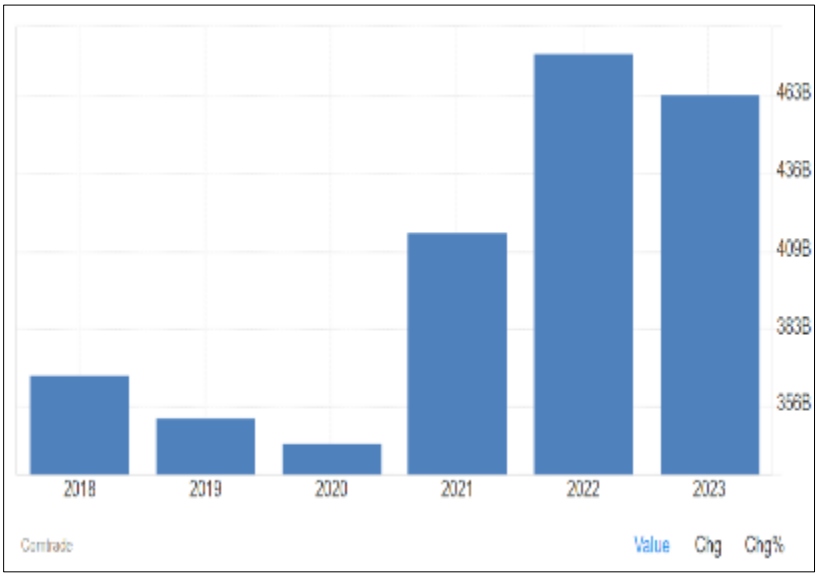


Figure 2 Projected revenue by Electrical Equipment Manufacturing in the United State(based on historical data from statistics)

2.3. Imports-Data Analysis

As of 2023, the United States imported 463.36 billion USD worth of electrical equipment. This means that there is so much opportunity available for local manufacturers, especially in the Golden State of California to grow in this sector. The average value of imports over the past five years is 403 billion USD, there doesn't seem to be a stark decrease in this value by looking at the historical trends.



Source: United States Imports of Electrical, Electronic Equipment - 2025 Data, 2026 Forecast, 1991-2023 Historical

Figure 3 Value of Electrical Imports to the United States

3. How to Capitalize on Potential Opportunity-

3.1. Industry Analysis

Porter defined five forces to analyze the industry, of which supplier power and buyer power are two dominant forces that play a significant role in the operation of an electrical-equipment small business organization. However, it is essential to identify how organizations can find a balance between buyer power and seller power, and it comes with strong subject expertise and experience. While the other three forces such as entry barriers, threat of substitutes, and competitive rivalry certainly exist, they can be overcome. To control these external macro factors, a competitive strategy has to be chosen.

3.2. Competitive Strategy

There are three competitive strategies defined by Porter, cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy, and focus strategy. Identifying a strategy from one of these dimensions is crucial for the success and profitability of a small business firm (Snider, & Davies, 2018). A combination of two strategies can also be used but it requires preciseness and understanding, else there will be a risk of derailing.

Cost leadership strategy involves charging customers low prices by offering standard/undifferentiated products, efficient operations, or through economies of scale (Banker, Ma, Pomare, & Zhang, 2023). The differentiation strategy involves offering customers products/services that have unique value. The differentiation can be through innovation, efficient systems engineering, customization, or value chain activities. Differentiation strategy has a positive relationship with organizational performance such that the differentiated products/services enable the company to place a premium price, or offer superior products/services at a competitive market price (Islami et al., 2020) The focus strategy involves identifying the niche market or market segment that would be keen to invest in the differentiated product or service (Snider, & Davies, 2018).

3.3. Differentiation-Value Chain

One of the ways to adopt a differentiated strategy is by designing value chain activities that are tightly controlled and monitored. To create value there has to be a wedge between cost price and selling price. Cost price is the opportunity

cost of producing commodities or services and selling price is the price that consumers are willing to pay for those commodities or services (Sheehan, & Foss, 2009). Value chain is therefore a term that consists of all activities involved in creating value for the buyers. It is essential to identify each of the value chain activities and form a perfect link. However, there will be a cost to perform the necessary activities. To be profitable there has to be a margin between the cost price and the selling price and it is essential to identify how profitability can be achieved (Sheehan, & Foss, 2009). Establishing a bridge between seller power (cost price) and buyer power (selling price) is therefore crucial

3.3.1. Cost Leadership Risks

The rising cost of raw materials, and supply chain activities decrease the profit delta.

3.3.2. Differentiation Risks

Replicating differentiating features with cheaper alternatives.

3.3.3. Focus Strategy Risks

Fluctuations in the niche market, search for new technology, etc.

4. Risk Elimination- KIPs for Sustainable Competitive Advantage

A sustainable competitive advantage can be gained through a strategy that helps to obtain profitability that's above the average in the industry (Shawabkeh, K. A. (2024) It is essential to move away from traditional approaches and look into creative ways of bridging the gaps. It can also be derived from collaborations and shared resources.

One of the assumptions associated with key performance indicators (KPIs) is that everyone is familiar with the term, it is a one-size-fits-all or it is a standard template of parameters. Contrary to that belief, identifying KPIs is a process, it has to be appropriate and relevant to the business that it is being applied to. KPIs are specific and need to align with the interests of an organization and are required to be unique to each of the departments that make up the organization (Nunes, F., Edgar, A., & Pedro, D. G. (2024)

Differentiation can be achieved by providing superior efficiency, superior quality, superior innovation, and superior customer responsiveness or after-sales service (Nunes, F., Edgar, A., & Pedro, D. G. (2024). These four parameters form the four pillars of KPIs as shown in figure 5.

Figure 4 is an example of the various departments that could exist in an organization such as Technology, Quality, Logistics, and Sales and Marketing. Each of these departments can be mapped to a KPI or a combination can also be used. This creates a unique strategy. Using business intelligence software such as Power BI, the performance can be monitored through visual graphics (Nunes, F., Edgar, A., & Pedro, D. G. (2024)

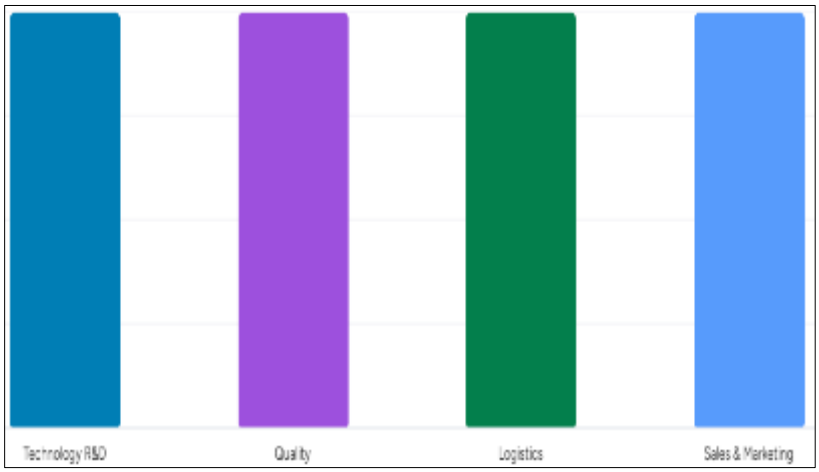


Figure 4 Departments in an Organization

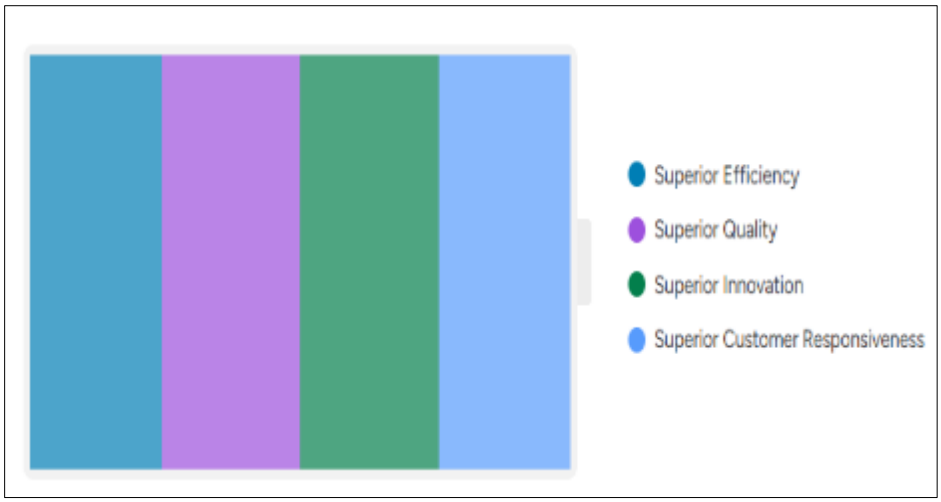


Figure 5 The four pillars of KPIs- Small Business Focus

4.1. Superior Efficiency

For any small business operating in the electrical equipment sector efficiency represents a fundamental requirement for operational success. Your business reaches peak operational efficiency through well-optimized processes and waste reduction alongside optimal resource usage.

- **Operational Streamlining:** Non-software manual resources merge with automation tools plus lean production methods to optimize business processes for small enterprises. Real-time resource monitoring becomes possible with Power BI and ERP systems employed as part of technology implementations.
- **Supply Chain Optimization:** Supply chain management excellence delivers beneficial raw material acquisitions at reduced prices and maintains ordered stock while fulfilling deadlines for delivery. Operational performance remains efficient through this cost-reduction measure.
- **Energy Efficiency:** The electrical equipment market benefits from adopting energy-efficient manufacturing methods that support sustainability targets while decreasing manufacturing expenses.
- **Performance Metrics:** Production lead time along with cost per unit and inventory turnover function are essential KPIs to support efficiency improvements.

An efficient operation reduces operational expenditures while making room for price competition which supports the cost leadership methods described in this article.

4.2. Superior Quality

The electrical equipment market builds customer trust and brand loyalty through the fundamental factor of quality.

- **Product Quality:** Superior quality represents the ongoing supply of durable equipment that delivers reliable functionality and high-performance levels. Obeying market rules combined with technical evaluations and certified electrical engineering staff leads to excellence.
- **Process Quality:** Quality control processes with strong implementation throughout the entire value chain work to eliminate defects while optimizing customer satisfaction results.
- **Quality Assurance Systems**: The quality benchmarks that ISO 9001 provides help organizations establish comparative standards for service delivery and product performance. Organizations that follow such standards maintain market compliance while establishing higher levels of credibility.
- **Customer-Centric Metrics:** Measuring quality effectively depends on Key Performance Indicators which include three metrics: defect rate customer complaint resolution time and warranty claim frequency data.
- The approach outlined in the article serves small businesses through its differentiation strategy which enables them to create distinctive value in their competitive sector.

4.3. Superior Innovation

- A business's innovation power separates it from competitors and maintains industry leadership in competitive markets.
- **Product Innovation:** The production of innovative electrical devices which consist of energy-effective products and smart systems enables targeted marketplace entry while fulfilling modern consumer requirements.
- **Process Innovation:** Production efficiency and cost reductions become possible through enterprise adoption of manufacturing technologies including 3D printing as well as robotics and automated AI predictive maintenance systems.
- **Collaborative Innovation:** Through strategic alliances between businesses, research institutions, and technology providers successful product development breakthroughs lead to groundbreaking innovative solutions.
- **R&D Investment:** Organizations that invest in research and development funding preserve constant advancement while searching for new market potential.
- **Innovation Metrics:** Companies use three strategic metrics including new product launches and research and development spending together with product development speed to monitor innovation achievement.

Businesses leveraging superior innovation practice both differentiation and focus strategies so they can serve dedicated customer segments with distinctive values.

4.4. Superior Customer Service

Customer satisfaction and retention rise through exceptional service which leads businesses to reach enduring success.

- **Personalized Support**: Successful customer relations emerge when organizations supply customized solutions combined with prompt supportive services that adapt to unique customer requirements. In sectors devoted to electrical equipment strict adherence to technical guidance remains essential.
- **After-Sales Service:** During after-sales phases, businesses should deliver all-encompassing support that consists of setup assistance combined with maintenance assistance coupled with repairs in order to increase customer satisfaction.
- **Customer Feedback Systems:** Through proactive feedback collection from customers companies can both enhance their service quality and create stronger client relationships simultaneously.
- **Digital Engagement:** CRM tools allow businesses to monitor customer connections while monitoring their preferences assuring smooth communication and speedy issue resolution.
- **Service Metrics:** The evaluation of service effectiveness depends heavily on key performance indicators (KPI) including Net Promoter Score (NPS) and customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores together with first-call resolution rates.

A high-quality service mindset acts as a leading competitive differentiator because it creates exceptional customer interactions that establish loyal relationships.

4.5. Technology Department

- **Superior Efficiency:** Technology department members deliver process simplification through their implementation of automation tools while leveraging cloud computing technology and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. Installation of these automated systems minimizes manual mistakes while simultaneously speeding up operational processes and improving whole-system performance efficiency.
- **Example:** The monitoring of energy consumption at production facilities uses data analytics tools.
- **Superior Quality:** AI technology alongside machine learning programs enables manufacturers to run automatic quality evaluations in real-time, predict equipment requirements, and spot production defects. The system verifies products to make sure they deliver above industry requirements.
- **Example:** Companies can enhance electrical equipment evaluation through IoT sensors installed during production activities.
- **Superior Innovation:** Fundamental technology enables organizational innovation across products and processes which advances the organization through modern product development and improved manufacturing methodology.
- **Example:** Creating efficient electrical products while incorporating smart functionalities into existing products.
- **Superior Customer Service:** Technology delivers customer support through CRM systems as well as chatbots and self-service platforms which guarantee customers receive prompt accurate assistance.
- **Example:** Customers can receive remote technical help using an application interface designed for support purposes.

4.6. Quality Department

- **Superior Efficiency:** Quality department efficiency stems from its work in designing optimized quality assurance workflows that minimize document generation while maximizing production resource utilization.
- **Example:** Organizations should use Six Sigma or lean techniques for identifying and eliminating processing inefficiencies.
- **Superior Quality:** The quality control department focuses on stringent testing activities to meet ISO 9001 certification requirements while implementing quality regulations throughout the production sequence.
- **Example:** The organization updates quality protocols on a regular basis using feedback acquired directly from clients.
- **Superior Innovation:** Working together with R&D allows the quality team to develop innovative products that maintain high standards of durability and safety while maintaining product reliability.
- **Example:** Through collaboration with engineers we develop environmentally conscious electrical equipment.
- **Superior Customer Service:** Quality assurance creates direct benefits for customers through the delivery of flawless products and fast and effective product performance support.
- **Example:** Providing customers with detailed product manuals and warranty-backed assurance.

4.7. Logistics Department

- **Superior Efficiency:** Logistics systems achieve optimal supply chain performance through appropriate inventory control combined with transportation path selection and delivery schedule optimization which brings down expenses and speeds up delivery times.
- **Example:** The implementation of route optimization software enables product delivery at an accelerated pace.
- **Superior Quality:** Member of the logistics team ensures products receive safe handling during transportation which helps protect their quality throughout transit and storage.
- **Example:** demand-sensitive electrical components depend on temperature-controlled storage systems for effective preservation.
- **Superior Innovation:** Logistics innovations which include blockchain supply chain monitoring and autonomous delivery systems provide increased operational dependability along with speedier deliveries.
- **Example:** Real-time shipment tracking helps improve delivery accountability
- **Superior Customer Service:** The logistics department enables customer satisfaction through both speedy product delivery and current tracking systems and open return solutions.
- **Example:** We have introduced a service that lets local customers receive their orders within one day.

4.8. Sales and Marketing Department

- **Superior Efficiency:** The sales unit and marketing team benefit from digital tools that enhance operational performance through CRM platforms alongside social media analytics and email automation systems that support lead management while simplifying marketing formats and measuring customer engagement behaviors.
- **Example:** The company automates its process of sending follow-up email communications to prospects.
- **Superior Quality:** A focus on quality within marketing communications enables the sales team to promote products as superior and trustworthy which builds customer trust.
- **Example:** Marketing materials should display quality certificates together with direct customer feedback.
- **Superior Innovation:** Product successful marketing through innovation requires incorporating AI capabilities combined with data science and real and virtual reality technologies to deliver tailored customer engagements and enhanced product demonstrations.
- **Example:** Real-time Augmented Reality (AR) enables customers to witness electrical equipment within their actual environments.
- **Superior Customer Service:** Sales forces and marketing departments boost customer care through their active support and accurate information delivery as well as their prompt resolution of pre- and post-sale customer inquiries.
- **Example:** Live customer assistance through chat support becomes available on the business website.

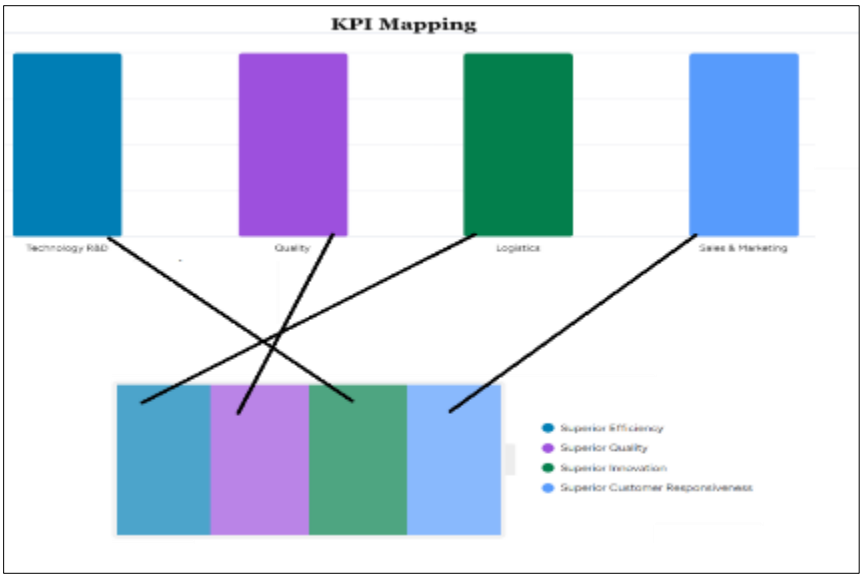


Figure 6 The KPI Mappings

5. Explanation of the KPI Mapping

5.1. Technology Department

Operational efficiency gets improved through technology department actions that also generate innovation as well as service customer needs through solution support. KPIs for this department focus on system reliability, innovation metrics, and cost efficiency

5.1.1. Key KPIs

- **System Uptime (%) –** Measures the reliability and availability of critical systems.
- **IT Support Resolution Time (Hours)–** Tracking the speed at which technical problems find their solution is part of this KPI.
- **R&D Spending (% of Revenue) –** Tracking the company's spending on product development and innovation through evaluations forms an essential part of business strategy.
- **Automation Adoption Rate (%) –** The automation measurement system calculates efficiency through the percentage of effective processes.
- **Cybersecurity Incident Response Time (Hours) –** SYS-001 tracks security threat response times as one of its functions.

5.1.2. Mapping to Pillars

- **Superior Efficiency:** Automation and optimization of processes.
- **Superior Innovation:** Investment in R&D and implementation of advanced technologies.
- **Superior Customer Service:** Faster information technology resolutions result in superior service for end-users.

5.2. Quality Department

The quality department maintains responsibility for verifying that products and services fulfill industry regulations, customer demands, and industry standards. KPIs in this area focus on product reliability, compliance, and continuous improvement.

5.2.1. Key KPIs

- **Defect Rate (%) –** Measures the percentage of defective products during production.
- **Customer Complaints (%) –** An analysis shows the complaint frequency ratio against overall sales volume.
- **Audit Compliance Score (%) –** Measures adherence to industry regulations and standards.

- **First-Pass Yield (%) –** The metric determines product success based on quality standards using first-pass yield calculations.
- **Employee Training Hours (Per Employee) –** The training programs for quality assurance have their duration documented here.

5.2.2. Mapping to Pillars

- **Superior Quality:** The system delivers superior products and services by maintaining both defect minimization and standard compliance performance.
- **Superior Innovation:** The implementation of feedback analysis and data analytics means better quality improvement initiatives for the organization.

5.3. Logistics Department

The logistics department maintains supply chain materials and product transportation while delivering efficient distribution and cost-effective operations that satisfy customer needs. The key performance indicators for logistics operations include delivery metrics alongside inventory management together with transportation expenditure system monitoring.

5.3.1. Key KPIs

- **On-Time Delivery Rate (%) –** The percentage of scheduled deliveries delivered on time represents this KPI.
- **Inventory Turnover Ratio(%) –** The turnover rate monitors how often stock sells and restocks within a set time.
- **Transportation Cost (% of Revenue)–** The organization measures transportation efficiency through an evaluation of spending effectiveness.
- **Order Accuracy Rate (%)–** The order accuracy rate computes delivery success rates which exclude damaged orders.
- **Warehouse Utilization Rate (%)–** Warehouse space usage efficiency becomes measurable through this Key Performance Indicator (KPI).

5.3.2. Mapping to Pillars

- **Superior Efficiency:** Transportation costs decreased and the inventory turnover improved as well.
- **Superior Customer Service**: Customers develop loyalty through both accurate orders and prompt shipping services.

5.4. Sales and Marketing Department

In their primary role, the sales and marketing department generates revenue and builds brand awareness while maintaining lasting connections with customers. The management of customer acquisition and retention and campaign success define the KPIs in this section.

5.4.1. Key KPIs

- **Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC)–** The Customer Acquisition Cost tracks what it costs to bring new customers through our doors.
- **Customer Retention Rate (%)–** Customer retention over time is measured by this KPI at the specified interval.
- **Sales Growth Rate (%) –** Measures the rate of revenue growth over time.
- **Conversion Rate (%)–** An assessment examines the ability to transform leads into productive sales by measuring conversion effectiveness.
- **Marketing ROI (%)–** The tracking system provides measurements of marketing campaign ROI performance.

5.4.2. Mapping to Pillars

- **Superior Efficiency:** The combination of performance-based marketing approaches delivers both thyROI metrics alongside reduced CAC expenditures.
- **Superior Quality:** Organizations need to fulfill their marketing-established customer expectations through their delivery performance.
- **Superior Customer Service:** Strategies that engage customers individually lead to customer retention.

6. Conclusion

The electrical equipment sector demands that small businesses achieve sustainable competitive advantage by implementing superior efficiency together with superior quality, superior innovation, and superior customer service in all major organizational departments. Alternatively, using KPI mapping it is essential to identify elements of the KPI map that best suit a business' mission. Businesses can monitor operational performance while filling performance gaps and securing operational enhancements through the use of KPIs that match Technology, Quality, Logistics, and Sales & Marketing. The Technology department drives essential changes to efficiency and innovation by delivering automation systems with reliable technology at cost-effective prices which enables businesses to stay competitive. Quality management functions as an essential element that sustains customer confidence while decreasing defects thereby permitting the company to construct its differentiation advantage. Operational efficiency through logistics management influences both competitive leadership and the timeliness of supply chain performance. The Sales and Marketing department maintains the connection between innovative production processes and customer satisfaction by helping businesses succeed in competitive market positioning. Systematic KPI monitoring alongside optimization enables small businesses to reduce potential risks in their selected competitive strategies which include cost leadership, differentiation, or focus model. Business objectives linked to appropriate KPIs produce enduring profitability and business resilience while improving market competitiveness in this dynamic sector. The adoption of a data-driven KPI framework represents the essential path through which small businesses can achieve success in the electrical equipment market by both maintaining excellent performance and satisfying customers perpetually.

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