

The first method is characterized as a mandate for obtaining resources, such as when a granting agency requires the adoption of practices as a condition for receiving grant funds. Mandated practices typically arrive in the “one size fits all” variety; therefore, they do not adequately consider an organization’s history, culture and values. As an organization’s culture and values define the accepted behaviors and norms of the working environment, practices that are not congruent with the attributes are generally rejected by those responsible for implementation. Moreover, mandated practices fail to account for workforce expertise and resource availability. Thus, an organization may find itself without the technical and financial wherewithal to implement a practice. In addition, mandated practices ignore local expertise and stakeholders neglecting the benefit of first-hand knowledge of local problems and local support. Thus, the likelihood of successful adoption is low.

The second method is typified by an organization seeking to improve itself by merely copying best practices used elsewhere; such as adopting procedures recommended by an international professional organization. While this second method improves upon the first because it is initiated by the organization, the method has similar pitfalls to the first method; these being, failure to consider the organization’s history, culture, values, capacity, use of local knowledge and stakeholder input. Once again, the likelihood of successful adoption is low.

The third method consists two stages. The first stage is recognizing that a best practice is an innovation. Innovations are newly introduced practice to an organization even though the practice may have a history of being performed elsewhere. For example, performance measurement systems exist at many governments throughout the world. Yet, if a particular local government has never used a performance measurement system, and then seeks to implement one, it is considered an innovation to that organization.

For an innovation to be successfully transferred from one party to another, a trustful relationship must exist. The trustful relationship must exist because implementing an innovation is risky business, and failures can have undesirable consequences. Thus, we are more likely to listen to, and take action on, an innovation from a trusted party who is aware of our background and organization before we risk its implementation. Trustful relationships are built through ongoing collaboration where information is exchanged over time between parties.

Once an innovative practice has been successfully communicated, the second stage of the process must be successfully navigated. This second stage consists of tailoring the innovation to comport with the history, culture and values of the organization. Careful attention must be paid to these organizational attributes because they determine what is acceptable in terms of behavior and outcomes. In other words, these attributes will determine how the workforce will implement the best practice and how stakeholders will react. Best practices that align well with an organization’s culture and values are much more likely to be successfully implemented because they reinforce one another. The existing governmental structure must also be considered to ensure that the appropriate levels of authority and responsibility exist to implement the practice. In addition, adequate resources such as workforce training, new equipment, etc., must be available to support the changes resulting from implementing the best practice. As importantly, the use of local knowledge is vital for success as it provides first-hand guidance on how a best practice should be tailored to address local conditions. Also necessary is effective dialogue with

local stakeholders to obtain input and ensure that the purpose of the practice is understood. And lastly, the practice should be monitored and needed adjustments made accordingly.

Successfully transferring expert knowledge, otherwise known as best practices, is not easy — in fact, it is hard work. Recognizing the conditions necessary for fostering the successful adoption and implementation of best practices provides increases the chance of success.

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