

Sharing internal best practices

A summary of

D'Adamo, M. Kols, A. (2005). A Tool for Sharing Best Practices. The INFO Project. United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Global, GH/POP/PEC, Grant No. GPH-A-00-02-00003-00. Retrieved from: <http://www.k4health.org/toolkits/km/tool-sharing-internal-best-practices>



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Categories:

Method, Communication, Knowledge dissemination, Knowledge exchange, Knowledge management

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Method

Relevance For Public Health

This method was not specifically developed for use in a public health context, however the steps are transferable to public health organizations. For instance, this resource may help public health units replicate successful physical activity programs in different settings, with different teams of practitioners or with different populations, as part of an integrated strategy.

Description

[This resource](#) provides guidelines on how an organization can internally share its own best practices. Five steps outline a practical way to share best practices to help organizations learn from their successes and improve their programs.

Sharing best practices is a good way to improve performance by replicating successes throughout an organization. Other benefits include:

- raising the overall quality of services;
- avoiding duplication of effort or "reinventing the wheel";
- minimizing the time to redo work because of poor quality; and
- cost savings through increased productivity and efficiency.

Sharing internal best practices (BPs) can be an important adjunct to other improvement approaches, many of which focus on identifying and solving problems. Initiatives that promote internal BPs focus on what people are doing right, raise morale and make achieving excellence seem possible. These types of bottom-up approaches also encourage more learning within the organization than do top-down approaches, such as setting standards. Much more can be accomplished if an organization develops systematic processes to identify and share the practices that work best for them.

There is no universally accepted definition of a best practice. At a minimum, a best practice must:

1. demonstrate evidence of success;
2. affect something important (e.g., contribute to the organization's mission or program goals); and
3. have the potential to be replicated or adapted to other settings.

This tool recommends creating a supportive environment to ensure the successful implementation of best practices, including:

- **people** to facilitate identification and sharing of internal best practices;
- **processes and tools** designed to share knowledge through reports, electronic discussions and face-to-face meetings; and
- **commitment** to take the time needed to identify, document and share best practices.

There are three key categories of facilitators and barriers to sharing best practices internally (Simard & Rice, 2007):

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1. organizational context
2. the diffusion process of sharing information internally
3. management-related factors.

Specific organizational factors that aid in sharing best practices internally include the following:

- **experience** in sharing successes and failures, where organizations focus on evaluation
- **structure** that fosters communication and working together across different units within an organization
- **organizational culture** that values learning and collaboration and that supports knowledge sharing among different units, rather than 'silo' thinking and competitive relationships
- **absorptive capacity** where organizations have the resources and skills to change practice, and staff and management are oriented to learning.

Implementing the Tool

Who is Involved?

Any interested participants could be involved in learning and sharing best practices. Sharing internal best practices is especially useful when organizations include multiple units, divisions or people who do similar work and thus can learn from one another. Ideally, a best practices team or coordinator will take the lead.

Steps for Using Tool

Key steps in identifying and sharing best practices are:

- 1. Look for successes:** Assign a best practices team or coordinator to take charge of this process to establish routine procedures to look for internal successes. For example, an "after-action" review is a structured debrief of what happened during an event or project to learn from the experience.
- 2. Identify and validate best practices:** Identify which practices account for the success of top performing people. For example, determine whether environmental or personal factors, rather than internal practices, account for a unit's success. Using internal benchmarking to compare the performance of different units in an organization may be useful, especially when they perform similar activities.
- 3. Document best practices:** Write a description of the best practice and maintain a central repository. Direct people to the developers of a practice and to related communities of practice so they can learn from other people's hands-on experiences.
- 4. Create a strategic plan to share best practices.** Design and carry out a strategic plan to share knowledge about internal best practice with the potential users who can most benefit from it. This includes identifying and recruiting the support of people who can help create demand for a best practice and promoting on-the-job learning. Communities of practice bring people with a shared professional interest together to exchange insights and experiences.
- 5. Adapt and apply best practices.** This last step is to help people apply best practices in their own settings, which may be different than in the place where the practice was first developed. For example, guidelines could be developed on how to adapt a best practice to different settings.

Page 15 lists several useful points on "lessons learned" on sharing internal best practices.

This tool describes two health services case studies:

1. Documenting and disseminating best practices at the delivery of improved services for health (DISH) project, Uganda (www.ugandadish.org/practices.shtml): This eight-year (1994-2002) project focussed on reproductive, maternal and child health in Uganda. The project succeeded in improving the quality, availability and use of reproductive, maternal and child health services in the twelve districts it served. An outside facilitator conducted a full-day meeting of staff and stakeholders to define best practices for DISH, select which practices to document and develop a dissemination plan.

2. Disseminating lessons learned at Britain's National Health Service: The NHS Clinical Governance Support Team (CGST) systematically captures learning from local development teams and shares it throughout the country. Employees in any public health organization could use this tool to share best practices.

Evaluation and Measurement Characteristics

Evaluation

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Has not been evaluated

Validity

Information not available

Reliability

Information not available

Methodological Rating



Unknown/No evidence

Tool Development

Developers

Margaret D'Adamo
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Method of Development

This resource was developed by the INFO Project. Based at the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Center for Communications Program, the INFO Project (<http://www.k4health.org/toolkits/info-publications>) aims to support health care decision making in developing countries through international leadership in reproductive health knowledge management.

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2005

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Resources

Title of Primary Resource	A Tool for Sharing Internal Best Practices
File Attachment	None
Web-link	http://www.k4health.org/toolkits/km/tool-sharing-internal-best-practices
Reference	D'Adamo, M. & Kols, A. (2005). <i>A Tool for Sharing Best Practices</i> . The INFO Project. United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Global, GH/POP/PEC, Grant No. GPH-A-00-02-00003-00. Retrieved from: http://www.k4health.org/toolkits/km/tool-sharing-internal-best-practices
Type of Material	Toolkit
Format	On-line Access
Cost to Access	None.
Language	English
Conditions for Use	Not specified

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Title of Supplementary Resource	The practice gap: Barriers to the diffusion of best practices.
File Attachment	None
Web-link	http://www.springerlink.com/content/x0657775276134u3/
Reference	Simard, C. & Rice, R.E. (2007). The practice gap: Barriers to the diffusion of best practices. <i>Information Science and Knowledge Management</i> , 12, 87-123. DOI: 10.1007/3-540-71011-6_4. Retrieved from: http://www.springerlink.com/content/x0657775276134u3/
Type of Material	Journal article
Format	Periodical
Cost to Access	Journal article purchase
Language	English
Conditions for Use	Not specified

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