

Best Practise

In an age of increasing deregulation, technological change and new competitive attitudes, businesses must become nationally and internationally competitive.

To do so, it is essential to pursue “best practices” (you might also hear continuous improvement) – comprehensive, integrated and co-operative approaches to the continuous improvement of all parts of an organisation’s operations. Leading-edge companies achieve world-class standards of performance in this way.

The following are general principles of best practice:

1. Develop a shared vision and strategic plan.

Central to achieving best practice is a vision of world-class performance, shared by everyone in the business, and translated into action through a strategic plan.

Remember, if your staff don't know what you're trying to achieve they can't help you to achieve it. Invite feedback – after all they are on the ground and know customers and suppliers so will have some great ideas to help you to achieve the business's goals.

2. Provide a flatter organisational structure.

Competitive businesses respond to customers’ needs in a timeframe acceptable to the customer. Flatter organisational structures are better able to deliver a quick response, because there are fewer layers of management from which approvals must be obtained.

Not sure how this works? Think of changes happening in the traditional Government department and how long it takes to go through. This is because of all of the levels of management required to approve a new system/process.

3. Work towards a co-operative industrial relations environment.

Best practice workplaces promote effective communication and consultation throughout an organisation structures.

Most important – keep staff informed of any changes happening, why and how the changes are going. Invite feedback to assist with a seamless transition.

4. Create a learning environment.

Two key qualities of a learning organisation are its commitment to continuous improvement, and recognition of the contributions of everyone in the organisation.

There's no better way to keep your staff's skills current than to have a learning organisation. This may include in-house training, or external workshops and courses.

5. Develop and implement innovative human resource policies.

Work Health and Safety, Equal Employment Opportunities, career path planning, new remuneration systems, flexible working hours, part-time work, work-based child care and literacy training are just a few examples of innovative workplace initiatives. But make sure you're compliant with Safe Work Australia and Fair Work regulations in anything you're implementing.

6. Focus on your customers.

Customers determine the success of any enterprise. Organisations responsive to customers' demands will profit in a variety of ways – increased market share, increased staff and customer satisfaction, and a reduction in the need for marketing.

You may like to have regular customer surveys or feedback boxes to obtain your customers' opinions and views.

7. Develop closer relationships with your suppliers.

Leading-edge organisations involve their suppliers as an integral part of their change processes. These links can cut inventories, create innovative opportunities, surveys and ensure a higher quality of end product. This is called supply chain management.



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8. Pursue innovation in technology, products and processes.

Market leaders have developed and employed integrated technology to ensure continuous improvement of production systems. Technology is not viewed in isolation, but as part of the whole system.

Again, this can only happen with a learning and a co-operative workplace environment. Keep staff skills current and staff informed of improvements planned.

9. Use performance-measurement systems and benchmarking.

If you really want to compete, you will have to match and improve on the performance of the nation's or world's best. Benchmarking is a tool for organisations committed to achieving high standards of performance.

10. Think "green".

Increasingly, the integration of environmental management to all operations is becoming a component of competitive strategy. Not only is it good for the environment (and your public image) it can be good for your bottom line.

11. Develop external relationships

Networks can enhance an organisation's competitive capabilities – through the sharing of information, by gaining access to services that individual organisations may not have been able to afford, in developing new technology or products, by exchanging staff to minimise costs associated with entering new markets, and so on. Nowadays, many of the larger organisations look to deal with only one supplier. But many smaller suppliers can't satisfy all that is required by the customer. If you have a network in place, you also have the opportunity for joint ventures which increase your capacity.

Networks can facilitate the pursuit of best practice programs.

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