



Ignoring Evaluation as Adaptive Behavior: Using Multiple Evaluations to Shift Rational Choice

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Presented at the joint meeting of the American Evaluation Association and the Canadian Evaluation Society, Toronto Canada
October 24th – 30th, 2005

Overview

- Public has good reason to distrust evaluation
 - Findings are often discovered to be unreliable
 - People see that what works once may not work again
- Role of multiple cases

📄 Convincing skeptical audiences	Use of previous evaluations
📄 Robustness of intervention across settings	Multi-site evaluation
📄 Defining the innovation	Levels of abstraction
📄 Counter example	

- My objective is to
 - Provide examples I have found operative in my work
 - Provoke discussion to share experiences with others
- Issues as if they are independent. They interact in the real world of evaluation design, knowledge transfer, and decision making

Skeptical Audiences: Using Previous Evaluations

- Innovation example: Behavioral based safety (BBS)
 - Context-specific list of accident enabling behavior
 - On the job observation and non-threatening feedback
 - Data base of observations
 - Continuous improvement for process or system change
- Challenge to implementation in the railroad industry
 - Change-resistant audiences
 - Historically tense labor management relations.
 - Program success requires labor management cooperation
 - Highly regulated industry
- Evaluation challenge: Convince skeptical audiences to scale-up the program (assuming it works, of course)
 - Underlying theories (CI, and non-threatening feedback) proven in multiple other settings
 - Demonstrated success of BBS in many other industries
 - Strong evaluation design: stakeholder involvement, convincing logic model, multiple measures, longitudinal and cross sectional design, multiple qualitative and quantitative measures, process \rightarrow outcome link

Robustness Across Implementations: Multi-Site Evaluation

- Innovation example: Close call reporting system in the railroad industry
 - Knowledge of accident prone conditions can lead to safety improvements
 - Legal/regulatory/organizational considerations inhibit reporting
 - Even if problem known, corrective action needs supporting business process
 - Solution:
 - Anonymous reporting to trusted 3rd party
 - Decentralized problem solving
 - Trust in confidentiality
 - Salient safety issues need to be reported
 - Reporters need to see that action is taken
 - Action leads to accident reduction
- Challenge to implementation in the railroad industry
 - 3rd party reporting is high maintenance
 - Business case requires that many railroads participate
 - In each implementation, success requires each part to work and coordinate
- Evaluation challenge:
 - Test in four different railroads, 2 freight, 2 passenger
 - Measure success
 - Provide context-specific understanding of reasons for degrees of success (or failure)

Defining the Innovation: Levels of Abstraction

- Innovation example: Electronic Commerce Resource Centers (ECRC)
 - Nationwide network to assist small and medium-sized businesses to adopt electronic commerce
 - Few consistent services, each center tried to meet local needs
- Evaluation challenge:
 - Focus on system, not value of individual centers
 - Determine all likely impacts, survey allowed recipients to rate all
 - Self report only. No multiple measures, mapping process to impact, or comparing across implementations
- Multiple implementations required
 - not to improve methodology or faith in results,
 - but because definition of the innovation is meaningless outside of multiple cases

Counter Example Where One Case Will Suffice

- Innovation example: E-business system to improve payment and contract processing in the DoD – Electronic Document Access (EDA)
 - Fast access to all elements of a contract – modifications, invoices, etc.
 - All information in one place
 - Reduces wait time for getting information needed to process contract issues
 - Assures accuracy, reduces error
 - Reduces paper processing
- Used in many agencies and stages in the contract life cycle.
- Across all settings:
 - The innovation is the same (no local variation in what EDA is)
 - The business process for which it is used is the same
 - The link between innovation and outcome is the same
 - Outcomes are consistent
- Evaluation methodology:
 - Discover one good small-scale impact assessment done for local reasons
 - Use transaction processing volume, labor costs to scale-up to overall impact estimate