

Evaluation in Business and Industry: Drawing Parallels With Other Forms of Evaluation

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Evaluation Tools are Powerful but Usable Only by a Select Few

- Power of evaluation lies in its tools and methods to find out what a program is doing, and why e.g.
 - Sampling methods to get representative findings
 - Research designs to inform about causality
 - Data reduction and structure discovery techniques to discover patterns
 - Measurement and instrument development for valid metrics
 - Qualitative methods to understand contextual meaning
- Tools are powerful, but unavailable to program staff who do not have the requisite esoteric knowledge

Importance of Knowledge Transfer

- Knowledge generation and use communities are different
- Much theory, technique and craft is devoted to bridging the communities
- *Or, evaluation can include program staff, and thus eliminate the need to construct bridges*

Pros and Cons of Staff Involvement

- Experts can deploy powerful esoteric methods, and often these methods are required
- The greater the reliance on experts the more difficult the challenge of utilization

Many Industrial Engineering Tools Spread the Use of Sophisticated Methods

- Sophisticated methods embedded in relatively easy to use tools
- Expert assistance needed, but assumption is that primary users are as close as possible to the problem
- Examples: quality function deployment, control charting, root cause analysis

The IE Approach is Not Universally Applicable

- Many reasons why IE tools are not appropriate, e.g.
 - Length of feedback loops between action and effect
 - Decision makers and doers are separate
 - Multiple sites with loose linkages
- But often they are, and even in those cases they are under used
- More effort needs to be put into advancing appropriate use

We Need to do More Than Add to the Tool Collection

- We can integrate the evaluation and IE traditions:
 - elevate information-generating capacity rises to previously unobtainable levels
 - *because* of that increase
 - utility will also go up
- Possible because traditional evaluation can increase the potency of IE methods
- I am advocating for a research agenda to make this happen

Examples of the Research Agenda

Assumption in IE Tool	Possible Contribution from Traditional Evaluation
We can accurately and consistently observe process variation	Test which elements of a program can be accurately observed, develop instruments, vet for reliability and validity
Program staff know best indicators of program behavior	Build, test theories of program action
Staff can determine appropriate upper and lower limits for important indicators	Test range of activity that results in acceptable outcome
Observation of trends and control limits indicate patterns of behavior	Application of time series analysis

Assumption in IE Tool	Possible Contribution from Traditional Evaluation
Program planners can apply expertise to know needs in a population	Needs analysis
Experts know what elements of a program will address particular requirements	Meta analysis, critical literature review
9/3/1 scores reflect "critical", "important", "not important" ratings	Psychometric methods to develop scales