

## ***Looking for a Best Practice?***

***By Paul Sheirich***

There is a lot of advice on best practice these days, and I think it's because everyone has an opinion on it. Every article I read typically gives pretty sound and solid advice. I find myself nodding my head and agreeing with them. Mind you, I have my own opinion, so I might not agree with everything they say. The objective is to find the practice that works best for your business.

It's an obvious fact that if there were a single best practice to follow, there wouldn't need to be so much written. We would all just pick up and move on with THE best practice for manufacturing widgets, running a call center, for software development, or . . . whatever.

At a high level, it's probably not a great stretch to say that's true. In fact, I know you can search online for a best practice in pretty much whatever field or process you need, and you will find some really good advice. You'll also find plenty of books and software tools that will help you out, friends and business associates have often "been there - done that" and they can certainly help, and of course consultants will always be a great source. It's likely that you will find a common thread among that advice, and that common thread is what you can takeaway as the best practice.

Of course, the devil is in the details.

### **Factors for success**

Your industry, compliance factors, staff levels, staff experience and skills, tools and technology in place, tolerance for risk, and time-to-market criteria are all key factors that will influence your ability to successfully implement your practice. Your practice needs to work within all these areas to be successful.

In my experience, your people are the most critical component. Your practice needs to make sense to everyone (or most everyone), or it won't be successful. Typically people don't like change, they know the way they've been doing it, and they don't want new controls around how they get their work done.



I've found getting people involved to work out the details is an effective way to overcome objection. Having your team come up with the details of the implementation of a best practice gains buy-in and increases the desire to see success.

Don't forget to put some metrics in place to measure the success, or to identify areas that need improvement.

Set your goals + timelines for selection and implementation of your best practice, and move on it!

### **Best Practices can have impact**

About six years ago I implemented a formal Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) process to help ensure projects went through a formal requirements, design, development, testing, and deployment phase. We had been running fairly well with an informal process, but as we increased staff to keep up with corporate growth and demand on IT from end-users and the auditors, I felt we needed a better practice around our SDLC. It took awhile, but we increased end-user satisfaction with our delivered product functionality by 90% because the process helped ensure

everyone understood what was to be delivered, and post implementation bugs went down by 85%. More work was needed with regard to ensuring expectations were 100% in alignment, and testing still needed improvement, but the progress we made was significant. The quicker you get your best practice in place, the quicker you'll begin to reap the rewards.

A couple of factors that I think helped was to form a standards committee comprised of staff, not management, and adherence to the SDLC standards was directly tied in to the year-end bonus.

Once your best practice is in place, the best advice I can offer is to practice it until it becomes a habit. Don't be afraid to "tweak" the process, but work to be consistent.

### **Other References:**

These references are intended to give you a flavor for the variety of best practice thought that exists among industries and with regard to approaching your implementation of a best practice for your business. They are not an endorsement of any one approach.

[Tips for implementing Best Practice Initiatives](#)  
[A Definition of Best Practice](#)  
[Managing Best Practice Implementation](#)  
[Best Practice Database](#)

This article is also published on [www.viewfromit.com](http://www.viewfromit.com).

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### **About the Author**



Paul Sheirich has spent nearly thirty years in IT, and has broad expertise in all aspects of program management and software application development in both large and small corporations.

Paul currently is an Associate with [Collective HR Solutions](#), and General Partner with [Global ProManagement](#).

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