

Strategies: Best Practices

Did I say this before? Did I make it perfectly clear: I hate best practices. Well, now, wait a minute. Did I say before that, did I tell you that I really love best practices? Well, then I got it right, because I hate 'em and I love 'em. I love best practices, because, fundamentally, your success will be directly proportional to the fact that you're learning new things. And best practices are about people who do things incredibly well or departments that do things incredibly well, or companies that do things incredibly well.

On the other hand, I have a crystal clear memory of being engaged with a very, very big corporation in retail, and I remember the CEO or the EVP or somebody at the tippy-top of management coming before the group at a quarterly off-site meeting, or whatever it was, and saying, "We really got our best practice nailed down and our best practices are now going to become our policy."

Now, best practices are fabulous as a learning tool. They are useless to the point of being counterproductive when they become something that you mimic. And, unfortunately, or whatever, there is a fine line between the learning value and the negative of the mimicry value. The whole point of any organization, of any adult human being, whether it's an 18-year-old in a starting job in a printing company or what have you, is adapting, experimenting, learning, growing, and I really believe that.

Well, I sure as heck can do that better with 25 examples of people who do it better in our company or others, but if you tell me, "This is the way it shall be done," no way. Avoid it like the plague. Best practices? Fabulous and horrible.