

# Benchmarking:

## Finding and Implementing Best Practices



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# Goals of the session

- ❖ Understand what benchmarking is and is not
- ❖ Delineate benefits of benchmarking
- ❖ Describe 4 step benchmarking process
- ❖ Discuss pitfalls and stumbling blocks
- ❖ Provide further resources

# Realities / Caveats

- ❖ This is not a two day seminar/training
- ❖ It is a thorough *overview* of the process, benefits, and pitfalls of benchmarking



*What are your  
expectations?*

*Why are you here?*

# Outline

- ) Introduction
  - i) Goals
  - ii) Realities and caveats
  - iii) What benchmarking is and is not
  - iv) Why benchmark?
  - v) Overview of benchmarking process
  
- ) Steps in the benchmarking process
  - i) Planning
    - (a) What to benchmark?
    - (b) Picking the first candidates / processes
    - (c) Picking the team and defining roles and responsibilities
    - (d) How do you find the “best” practice?
    - (e) Why should they tell you anything?
  
  - ii) Collection
    - (a) Screening potential benchmarking partners
    - (b) Examining processes – both yours and theirs
    - (c) Examining implementation and enablers
    - (d) Means of collecting data
    - (e) Site visits tips
    - (f) Site visit / remote analysis pitfalls
    - (g) Avoiding data collection pitfalls
  
  - iii) Analyze
  
  - iv) Adapt
    - (a) Formulate and develop implementation strategy



# Essence

- ❖ Who here thinks they are the best (or at least exceptional) at some aspect of running camp?
- ❖ Who thinks they could benefit from learning how someone else is doing some aspect of running camp better?
- ❖ Benchmarking is the practice of being humble enough to admit that someone else is better at something, and being wise enough to learn how to match or even surpass them at it.

# Benchmarking is...

- ❖ A systematic and disciplined process of examining your own processes
- ❖ Finding who is better or best
- ❖ Learning how they do it
- ❖ Adapting it to your organization
- ❖ Implementing it
- ❖ Doing it continuously

# Benchmarking definitions

- ❖ Process of continuous improvement without reinventing the wheel
- ❖ Process of *identifying, understanding, and adapting* outstanding practices from any organization to help your camp improve it's performance and outcomes
- ❖ Process of continuously comparing your camp against other organizations anywhere in the world to gain information on philosophies and policies, practices, and measures which will help your camp take action to improve its performance

# Definition by way of example

## Camp Examples

- ❖ Environmental education
  - ❖ Technology and scheduling
  - ❖ Alumni relations
  - ❖ Orientation
  - ❖ School-camp partnerships
  - ❖ Leadership training
- Chewonki Foundation  
Coleman Day Camp  
Aloha Foundation  
Trail Blazers  
Breakaways program  
Universities or the C.C.L.

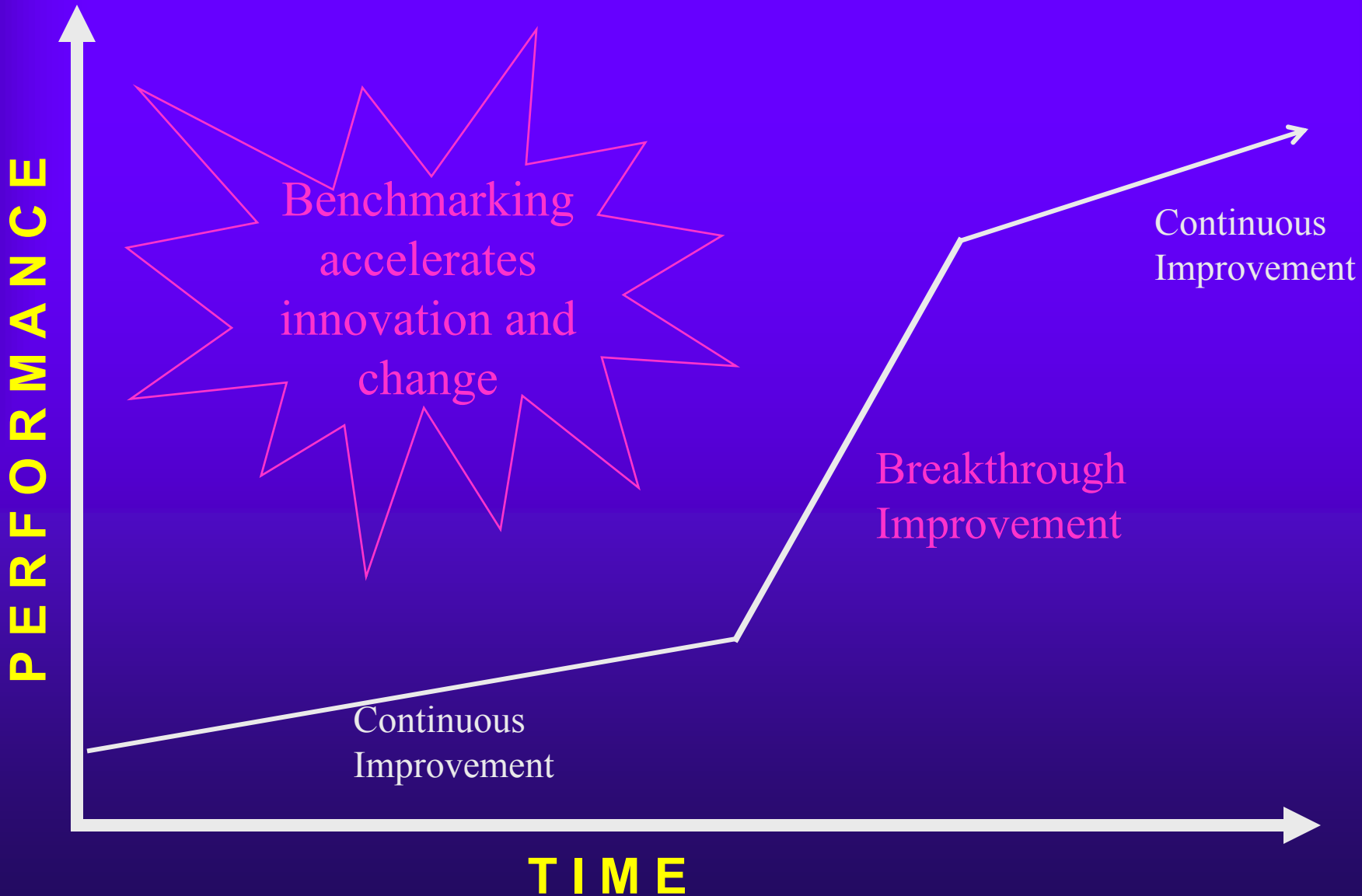
## “Out of the box” industry benchmarking

- ❖ Hospital admitting
  - ❖ Gun shell case manufacturing
  - ❖ Southwest airlines gate time turnaround
  - ❖ Xerox shipping
- Ritz Carlton  
Maybelline Lipstick  
Indy pit crews  
L.L. Bean

# Benchmarking is NOT

- ❖ Only competitive analysis and benchmark cataloging
- ❖ Number crunching
- ❖ Site briefings and tourism
- ❖ Just copying or catching up
- ❖ Spying
- ❖ Quick and easy

# Why benchmark?



# Simple idea, profound results

- ❖ More than 30 organizations (out of over 110) reported an average \$76 million first-year payback
- ❖ Experienced benchmarkers averaged \$198 million
- ❖ 550 points out of 1000 for Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award

# Organizations who consider it vital to their survival and growth

- 
- ❖ AT&T
  - ❖ American Cancer Society
  - ❖ American Express
  - ❖ Anderson Consulting
  - ❖ Cisco
  - ❖ Dow Chemical
  - ❖ Ernst and Young
  - ❖ General Motors
  - ❖ Harley Davidson
  - ❖ Intel
  - ❖ Johnson & Johnson
  - ❖ Kellogg
  - ❖ Lucent
  - ❖ Maytag
  - ❖ Nortel
  - ❖ PricewaterhouseCoopers
  - ❖ Qualcomm
  - ❖ Reuters
  - ❖ Sandia National Laboratories
  - ❖ Texaco
  - ❖ 3M
  - ❖ UPS
  - ❖ US Postal Service

# Create a learning culture

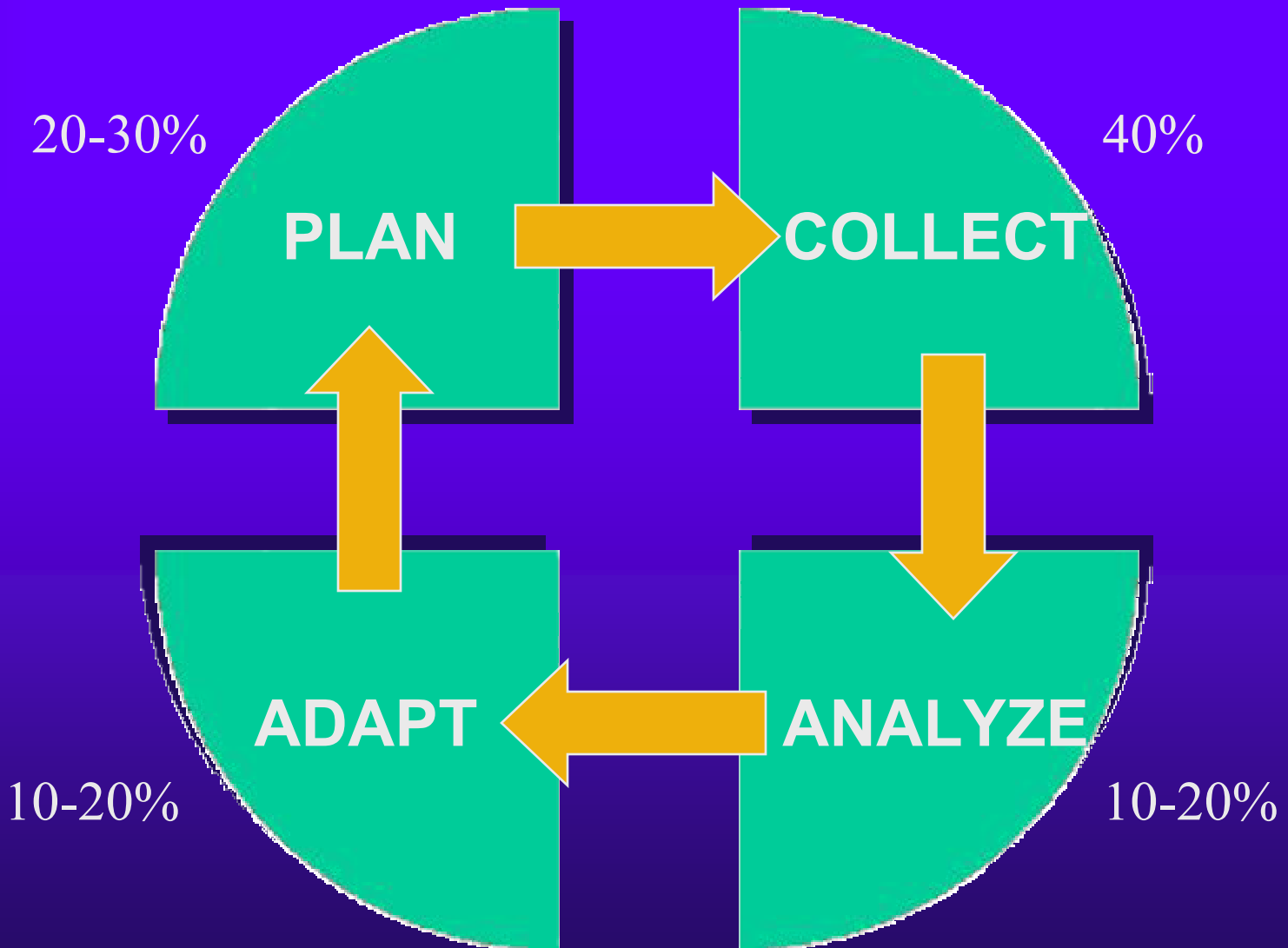
## Credo

“We continually seek to improve; we haven’t cornered the market on good ideas; our existing systems, methods, and ideas are continually open to change; change is good and we welcome it; we continually look outside ourselves for fresh inspiration; we freely adapt and adopt the most useful ideas we find; we want to meet and beat the best known performance in any process.”

# Further benefits

- ❖ Provides a sense of urgency
- ❖ Get a change effort off the ground
- ❖ Disciplined, systematic process of discovering what works
- ❖ Encourages striving for innovative excellence and breakthrough thinking
- ❖ Prevents reinventing the wheel
- ❖ Forces examination of own processes, which often leads to improvement in and of itself
- ❖ Create a better understanding of the industry

# Process overview



# Overview of planning stage

- ❖ What to benchmark?
- ❖ Picking the first candidates / processes
- ❖ Picking the team and defining roles and responsibilities
- ❖ How do you find the “best” practice?
- ❖ Why should they tell you anything?

# What to benchmark? (1 of 4)

Use ACA's professional development framework

## ❖ Strategic management

- Target population and diversity
- Leadership
- Strategic planning
- Mission / Purpose

## ❖ Camp community management

- Transportation
- Site and facilities
- Food services
- Health and wellness

## ❖ Operational management

- Marketing
- Business and finance
- Risk management

## ❖ Program management

- Human resources
- Design and activities
- Participant development and behavior

# What to benchmark? (2 of 4)

## Baldrige criteria

- ❖ Leadership
- ❖ Strategic planning
- ❖ Customer and market focus
- ❖ Information and analysis
- ❖ Human resource development and management
- ❖ Process management
- ❖ Business results

<http://www.baldrige.org/>

# APQC's Process Classification Framework

## *Operating Processes*



## *Management & Support Processes*

8. Develop and Manage Human Resources

9. Manage Information

10. Manage Financial and Physical Resources

11. Execute Environmental Management Program

12. Manage External Relationships

13. Manage Improvement and Change

# What to benchmark? (4 of 4)

## Outcomes of a camp experience

- ❖ Leadership programs
- ❖ Self-esteem
- ❖ Environmental attitudes, awareness, and behaviors
- ❖ Emotional intelligence
- ❖ Moral reasoning and values
- ❖ Creativity
- ❖ Skill areas – tennis, archery, soccer, et cetera

## Examples of more concrete areas

- ❖ Staff recruiting methods
- ❖ Every component of training (behavior management, leadership, group process, staff manual, etc.)
- ❖ Other camps' and organizations' web sites
- ❖ How administrative development takes place
- ❖ Tripping programs
- ❖ Staff perks
- ❖ Year round operations

# Picking the first candidates (1 of 2)

- ❖ What are your greatest strengths (offer to benchmarking partners) and where are your opportunities for greatest improvement?
- ❖ Where can you realistically make a change?
- ❖ What is most central to your vision and mission?

# Picking the first candidates (2 of 2)

## ❖ Pick scope

- How many processes to benchmark
- How many benchmarking partners

## ❖ Set aside time and resources



# Picking the team and defining roles & responsibilities

- ❖ Team leader
- ❖ Benchmarking expert
- ❖ Expert in process area of interest
- ❖ Data expert
- ❖ Writer / educator
- ❖ Camp expert

# How do you find the "best" practice? (1 of 2)

Metrics are often not done, not kept, or not public

- ❖ Examine conference programs

Tri-state, National, Mid-states, New England, & Cal-West

- ❖ Tap knowledge of ACA national and sections

- ❖ National consultants

- ❖ National businesses

- ❖ *Camping Magazine*

# How do you find the "best" practice? (2 of 2)

- ❖ Peer nomination
  
- ❖ Eells awards
  
- ❖ Announce search:
  - Camp Professional Discussion Group
  - *Camping Magazine*, section newsletters, & Camp Line
  - SPRENET – Society for Park and Recreation Educators
  - Adventure education listserv
  - Outdoor research listserv

# Why should they tell you what they know?

- ❖ Common interest in helping children
- ❖ Altruism
- ❖ You share something they need – social exchange.  
Fair exchange of ideas
- ❖ “I’m soo far ahead of your, you’re toast!”
- ❖ Not competing for the same market
- ❖ Pride
- ❖ Ethical concerns aside
  - Code of conduct
  - People usually don’t give away recipe for Coke – not giving away the family jewels

# Overview of collection stage

- ❖ Screening potential benchmarking partners
- ❖ Examining processes – both yours and theirs
- ❖ Examining implementation and enablers
- ❖ Means of collecting data
- ❖ Site visits tips
- ❖ Avoiding data collection pitfalls



# Screening potential benchmarking partners

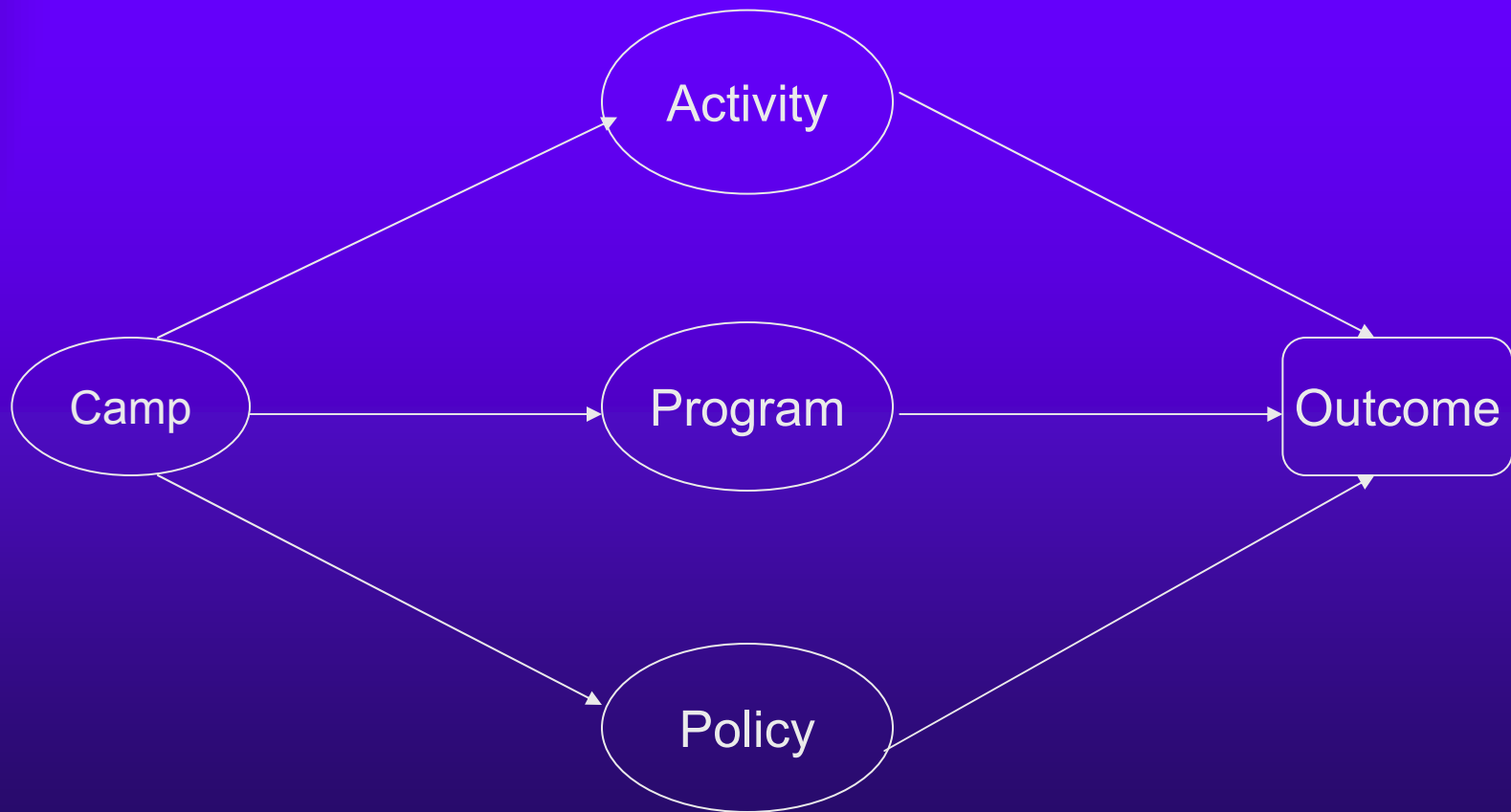
- ❖ Educate potential partners about benchmarking process
- ❖ Communicate
  - Why they were chosen
  - Purpose and objectives – including deliverables
  - Plans – including timeline
  - Ethical guidelines
  - Resource requirements for study  
time, money, staff, etc.
- ❖ Assess both their ability (roughly) and willingness

# Examining processes - yours and theirs (1 of 5)

What camp has

What camp does

What effects does camp have?



# Examining processes - yours and theirs (2 of 5)

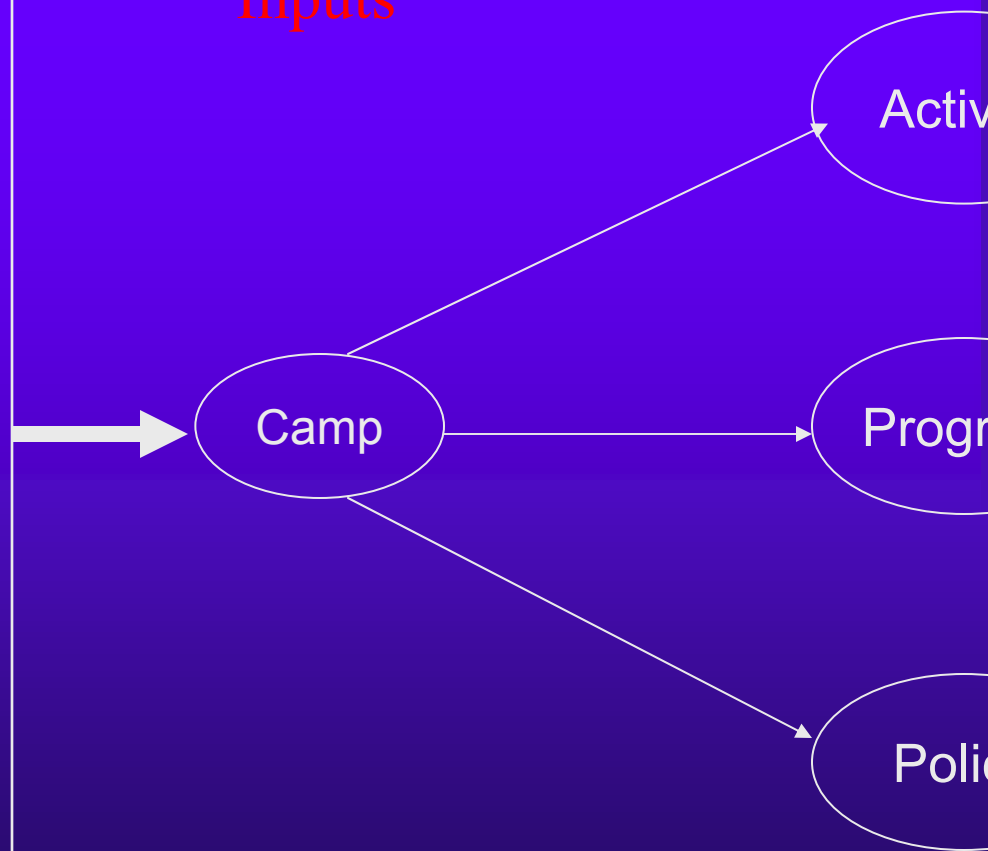
## Inputs

- ❖ Orientation (training)
- ❖ Low ratio (3:1)
- ❖ Natural resources
- ❖ Facilities
- ❖ Session length
- ❖ Quality of staff
- ❖ Organizational hierarchy / structure
- ❖ Staff motivation
- ❖ Microcosm community
- ❖ Safe, supportive environment
- ❖ Experiential learning
- ❖ Exceptional leadership on every level
- ❖ Adequate finances
- ❖ Individual treatment plan

What camp has

What camp

## Inputs



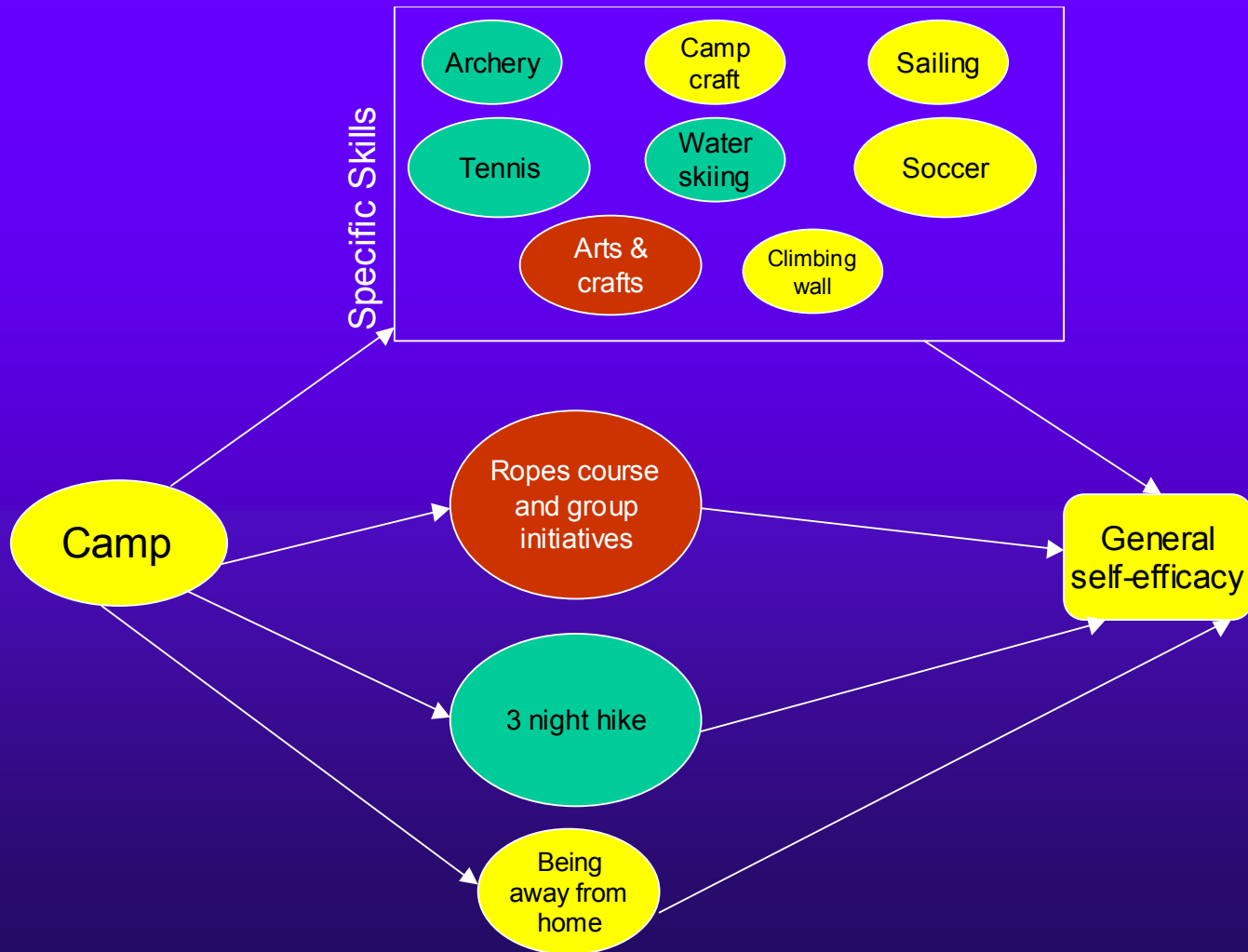
# Examining processes - yours and theirs (3 of 5)

size = importance

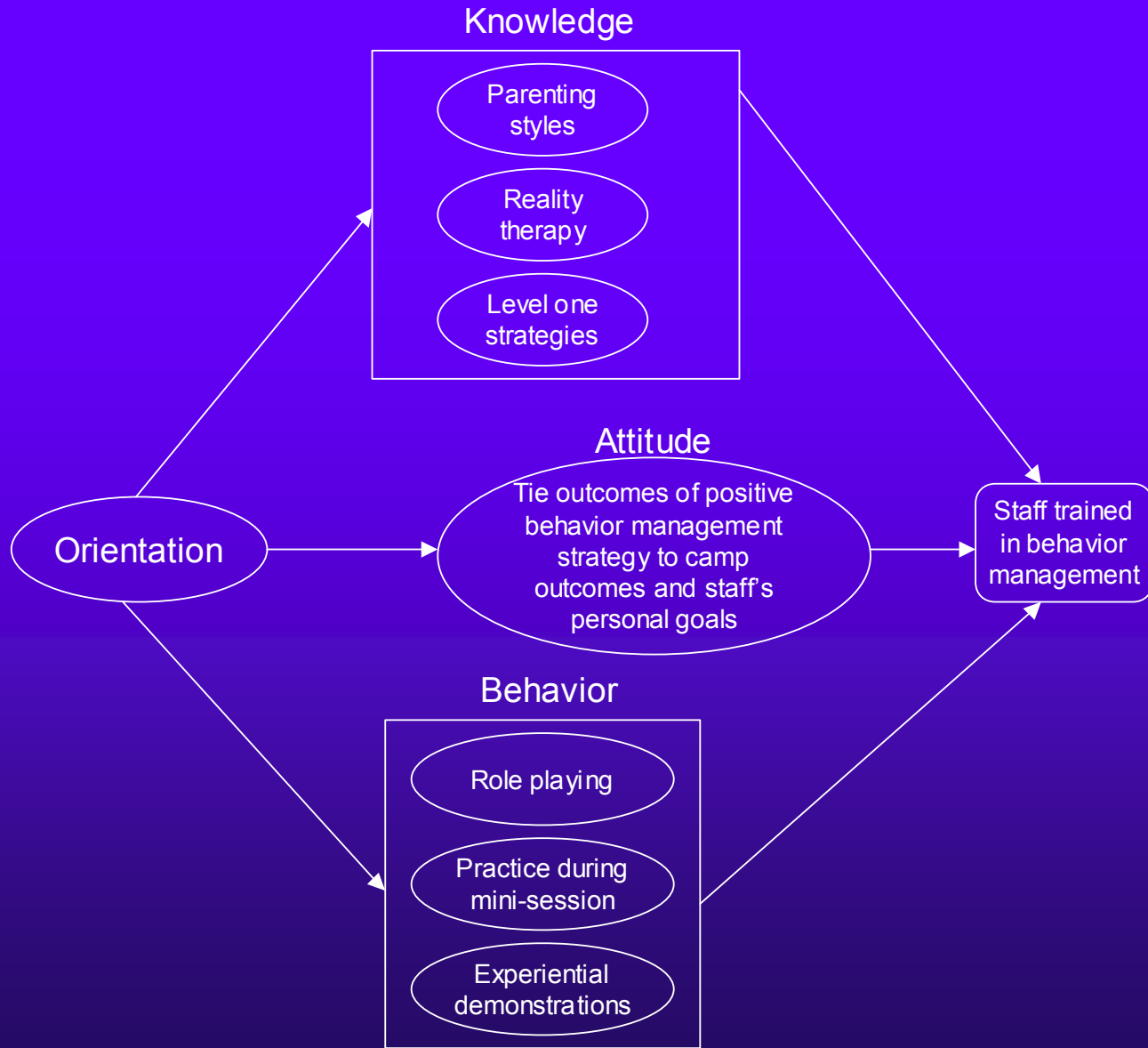
(based on theory and time and resources. Also, importance is on average, not for individuals)

color = effectiveness

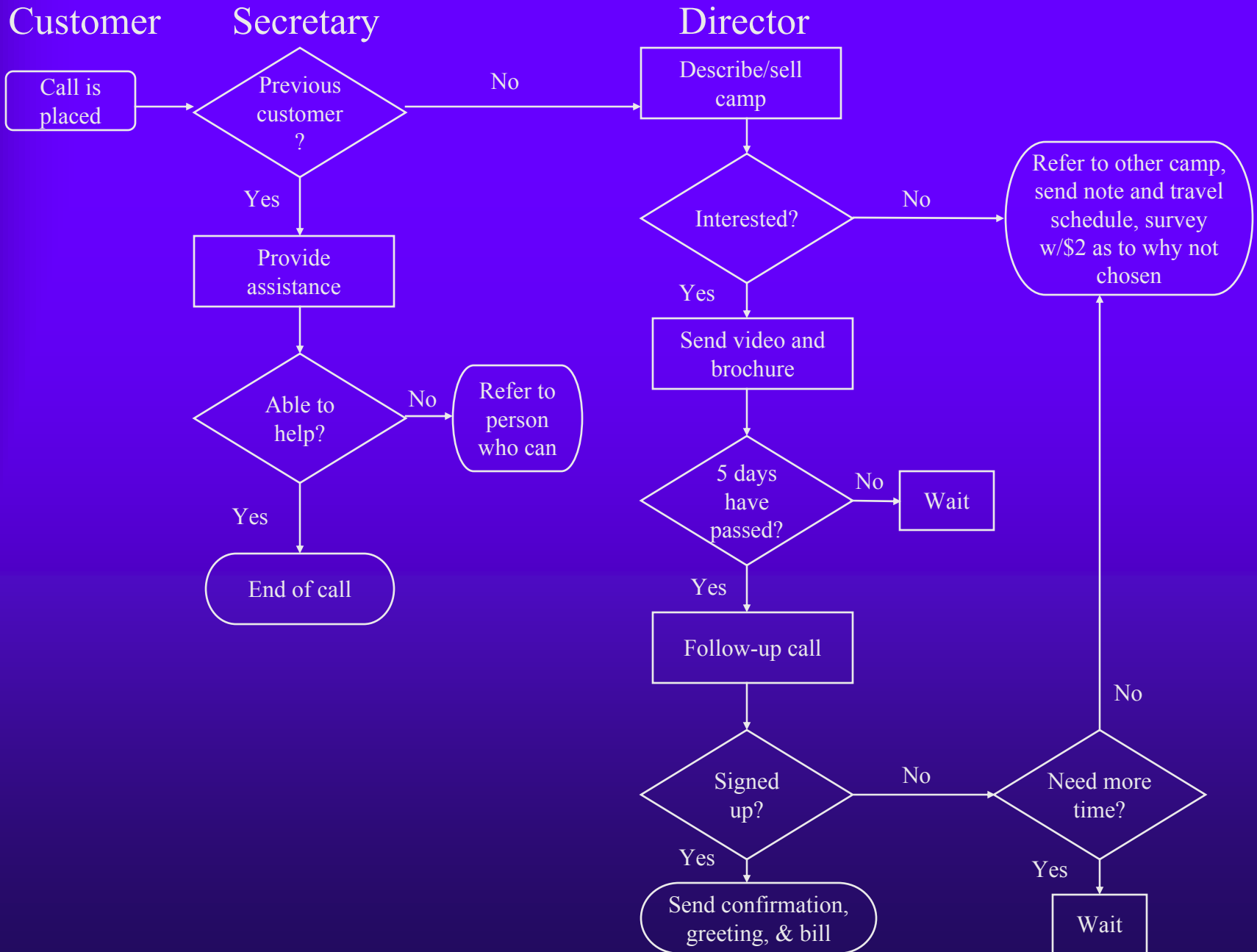
(on average, not for individuals)



# Examining processes - yours and theirs (4 of 5)



# Examining processes - yours and theirs (5 of 5)



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    - (a) Formulate and develop implementation strategy
    - (b) Monitor implementation and tweak process as necessary
    - (c) Communicate



# Examining implementation & enablers

- ❖ Examine the process components as they actually happen live at camp and assess to what degree they are functioning as intended
  
- ❖ Enablers = necessary or helpful preconditions
  - Professional video and brochure
  - \$7,000 a summer staff perk budget & above average salaries
  - Size or nature of physical property
  - Long-standing cultural traditions or norms
  - Serve at-risk youth and you serve “normal” children
  - 14 days of staff training
  - Decentralized, choice, non-competitive program

# Means of collecting data

- ❖ Hard records  
financials, demographics, paper records and descriptions, brochures, etc.
- ❖ Surveys
- ❖ Telephone interviews
- ❖ Site visit

# More on site visits (1 of 3)

## Before

- ❖ Coordinate the site visit agenda in detail with host company
- ❖ Identify areas of interest / processes about which you need to learn more
- ❖ Decide on your objectives and what specific things you want to learn during the visit (and what actions you might take as a result of the new information)
- ❖ Hold a preparation meeting with team
- ❖ Draft questions to have ready, but plan to be flexible. Send discussion guide to benchmarking partners. Bring typed answers (and process models) to all the questions to give to benchmarking partners
- ❖ Prepare binders for each team member
- ❖ Coordinate with team members to establish who will lead the questioning in each area, and who will document and follow through on commitments

# More on site visits (2 of 3)

## During

- ❖ Follow the lead of your host concerning agenda and activity order
- ❖ Ask only those questions that you would be willing to answer about your own organization
- ❖ Be prepared to offer equivalent information in return for information you receive. Social exchange. This might be on a different process.
- ❖ Aim for accurate information; exercise care to not pursue minute detail. Think like a student... why, why, why, why, why...seek enablers
- ❖ Take notes
- ❖ Take pictures and video if benchmarking partners are amenable
- ❖ Summarize key points
- ❖ Document thoughts for later action
- ❖ Ascertain where your host company is in quality evolution, so you may calibrate your comparisons

# More on site visits (3 of 3)

## After

- ❖ Write a letter of appreciation to your host
- ❖ Send a copy of the trip report to the company you visited
- ❖ Follow-through on all commitments made to your host
- ❖ Conduct a debriefing session and develop an action plan as soon as possible after the visit. If visit is more than one day, debrief at end of each day to ensure you are gathering information you want and allow time to revisit if necessary.
- ❖ Document findings
- ❖ Compare current operations with findings
- ❖ Identify opportunities for improvement
- ❖ Develop recommendations and implications

# Careful data collection will avoid

- ❖ Reasons for gap not identified
- ❖ Interrelationships not understood
- ❖ Value of practices not determined



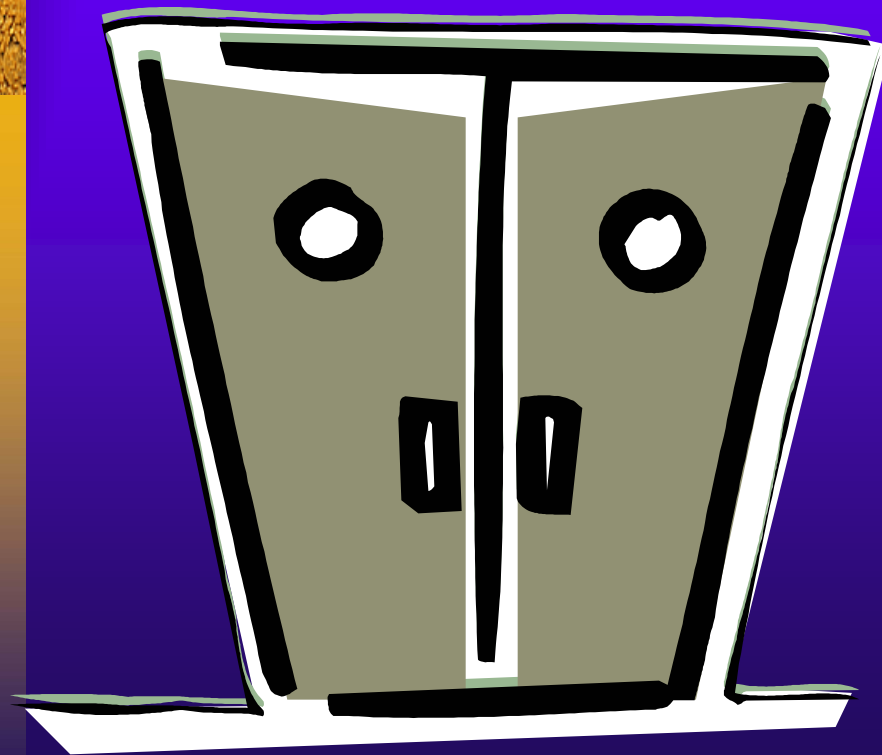
# Site visit / remote analysis pitfalls

- ❖ Bench-browsing
- ❖ Bench-touring
- ❖ Bench-copying
- ❖ Bench-slap

Bench-browsing

**Meandering through  
any company that will**

**cooperate  
and looking  
for “neat”  
ideas.**



# Bench-touring

Posing as a tourist  
and taking PR tours  
of competitors in  
hopes of discovering  
“what makes them  
so good.”



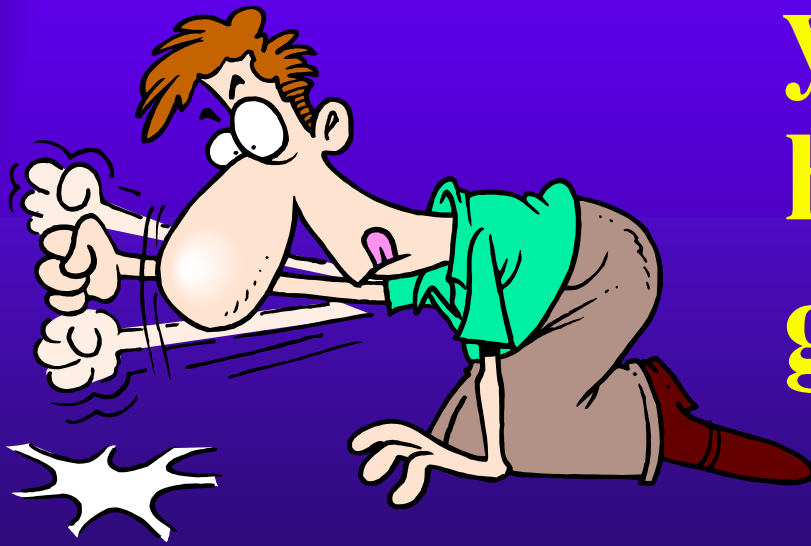
# Bench-copying

Learning about a “Best Practice” from an in-flight magazine and trying to “do exactly what they do.”



# Bench-slap

Hearing about a performance measure and demanding that your staff “work harder until they get as good.”



# Stage 3 = Analyzing the data

## ❖ Normalizing the data

- Scale of camps
- Age
- Operate in a different economy, geography, or other external non-equivalent factor

## ❖ Compare across camps

- Processes
- Implementation of processes
- Examine enablers present and absent

# Stage 4 = Adapt to your camp

Formulate and develop implementation strategy

- ❖ Determine if and how process will fit your camp (barriers and enablers)
- ❖ How can process be tweaked so that your camp becomes the best around?
- ❖ Link changes to camp's vision and mission
- ❖ Obtain feedback, buy-in, and support from key stakeholders – e.g., counselors, parents, board, campers, etc.

# Adapt to your camp (2 of 3)

Monitor implementation and tweak process as necessary

- ❖ Are we where we expected to be?
- ❖ What can be tweaked so our processes and outcomes meet our benchmarking partners? How can we exceed them?
- ❖ (if appropriate) Did we save more money or create more wealth?
- ❖ Are there other organizations we should benchmark?
- ❖ How should the benchmarking process be updated for the next time?

# Adapt to your camp (3 of 3)

- ❖ Communicate findings to benchmarking partners and, if appropriate, camping community
- ❖ Repeat whole process or at least re-examine your own processes – how can they be tweaked so that there is continuous improvement?



# Stumbling blocks & Pitfalls

# Benchmarking Resistor

- ❖ **Over-my-dead body**
- ❖ **Fence sitters**
- ❖ **Januses**
- ❖ **Chameleons**
- ❖ **Termites**
- ❖ **Wanna-Bees**



# Stumbling blocks & pitfalls (2 of 4)

## ❖ Unmotivated to start

### ➤ Conceit / delusions of grandeur

“We’re so good (return rate, satisfaction, outcomes, etc.) that we can’t improve much.”

### ➤ WIIFM (what’s in it for me) – pay me

### ➤ DBU (doing business as usual) – inertia

“We’re fine and benchmarking is a lot of work.”

### ➤ BOHICA (bend over, here it comes again) – good idea #37

### ➤ NIH (not invented here) – if it’s not our idea, it’s not a good idea

“We’re different, and it won’t work here”

## ❖ Leadership isn’t on board and/or hasn’t communicated value to rest of organization. Has not been tied to organizational goals.

# Stumbling blocks & pitfalls (3 of 4)

- ❖ Not part of larger strategic plan
- ❖ Benchmarking is not part of the budget
- ❖ No responsibility or accountability
- ❖ No milestones or time tables
- ❖ Picked too many processes – project becomes unwieldy and time intensive
- ❖ For first few endeavors, benchmark a process/outcome that everyone is passionate about

# Stumbling blocks & pitfalls (4 of 4)

- ❖ Failure to involve process owner – A change imposed is a change opposed
- ❖ Own process is not understood well enough
- ❖ Lack of time
  - Community of practice – cracker barrel in detail, with specific jobs, reports, and membership as a privilege
  - Hire a consultant to do much of the process for you
- ❖ It's expensive
  - It's often more expensive not to
  - Can you afford (financially and ethically) not to serve your customers in the best manner possible?
  - Sell the results of the study

# In the end . . .

- ❖ Is it rocket science? No.
- ❖ Could you do it yourself? Yes, if you have expertise available to you
  - Read about benchmarking and you're probably okay
  - Must have a process expert
- ❖ Ideas are everywhere, the challenge is to habitually seek and adapt them
- ❖ It all comes down to a little humility and a lot of passion

# Useful web sites

- ❖ American Productivity and Quality Center

<http://www.apqc.org/>

- ❖ Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria

<http://www.baldrige.org/>

- ❖ American Society for Quality

<http://www.asq.org/>

# Books on benchmarking

- ❖ American Productivity and Quality Center. (1994). The Benchmarking Management Guide. American Productivity and Quality Center
- ❖ American Productivity and Quality Center. (2000). Benchmarking pure and simple. American Productivity and Quality Center.
- ❖ Balm, G. (1992). Benchmarking : A Practitioner's Guide for Becoming and Staying Best of the Best. Houston, TX: American Productivity & Quality Center
- ❖ Bogan, C. (1994). Benchmarking for Best Practices : Winning Through Innovative Adaptation. McGraw-Hill.
- ❖ Boxwell, R. (1993). Benchmarking for Competitive Advantage. McGraw-Hill.
- ❖ Camp, R. (1989). Benchmarking: The Search for Industry Best Practices that Lead to Superior Performance. American Society for Quality.
- ❖ Camp, R. (1995). Business Process Benchmarking: Finding and Implementing Best Practices. Productivity Inc.
- ❖ Harrington, J. (1996). High Performance Benchmarking: 20 Steps to Success. McGraw-Hill.
- ❖ Reider, R. (1999). Benchmarking Strategies: A Tool for Profit Improvement. John Wiley & Sons.
- ❖ Spendolini, M. (1994). The Benchmarking Book. Amacom.



*Questions*

*&*

*Discussion*

# Bonus Slides

- ❖ 8 slides better conceptualizing and defining benchmarking
- ❖ 2 slides on “if we just ignore and detract benchmarking, everything will be fine”

# Benchmarking - A Journey


- ❖ **Not a tool, but a process**
- ❖ **Not an end, but a means**
- ❖ **Not once, but continuous**
- ❖ **A way of life**

# "Best" Practices

- ❖ Not always "best" - but:
  - "better"
  - "exemplary"
  - "good"; "promising"
  - "successfully demonstrated"
  
- ❖ Solutions/approaches that achieve our objectives
  
- ❖ What's best in one setting is not necessarily best in another



Average  
is the  
bottom of good  
and the  
top of bad.



Benchmarking is that which  
makes the:

Strange familiar  
& the  
Familiar strange.

Not so much . . .

That man set foot on the moon

That we set eyes on the earth





"Fools say, 'Learn from  
your mistakes.'

I prefer to learn from  
the mistakes of  
others."

Bismarck

# R.D. Laing's "Knots"

The range of what we think and do  
is limited by what we fail to notice.

And because we fail to notice

*that* we fail to notice

there is little we can do


to change

until we notice

how failing to notice

shapes our thoughts and deeds.





**“I don’t go where the  
puck is. . .**

**I go where it’s going  
to be.”**

**Wayne Gretzky, Hockey**

# Singing their song on the way down

- ❖ “We tried that ten years ago.”
- ❖ “We don’t do things that way here.”
- ❖ “But, those companies aren’t like ours, we have different problems.”
- ❖ “We’ll change, but let’s do so slowly.”

# Psychology of Self-Deception

The mind can protect itself against anxiety by dimming awareness.

Creating blind spots: zones of blocked attention and self-deception.

Goleman, *Vital Lies*, p. 97