

Benchmarking: Study the Practice Before Adopting It

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Why this matters

Examine the practice behind another organization's good result and the conditions supporting it. Begin with a specific local problem, compare like with like and define an approved trial. A copied form or impressive injury rate does not establish a suitable local control.

Objective: Compare one external practice with local needs and define evidence for an authorized trial before recommending adoption.

Key hazards or failure points

Copying appearance without purpose; incomparable measures; missing resource requirements; success based on anecdotes; confidential material shared without permission; a trial bypassing required protection; no follow-up after a visit.

Practical controls

- Describe the local difficulty and how it is currently assessed. Select a relevant external practice with reliable information and permission to use it. Identify what is known about its actual implementation.
- Compare task, exposure, equipment, staffing, maintenance and applicable requirements. Ask what makes the practice work and what differs locally. Record unknowns rather than assuming the same result will follow.
- Obtain the appropriate review before any trial or adoption. Agree scope, governing safety criteria, comparison measures and a decision owner. Retain required controls; an experiment is not permission to expose people.

Verify It in the Field

Compare the external account with available implementation evidence. Check dates, definitions and conditions behind the claimed result. Record whether the local measure describes the same thing; injury totals alone cannot establish why a practice works.

Review the proposed local arrangement with workers and the responsible technical reviewer. Identify required instructions, resources and safe checks. Record approval, unresolved differences and the conditions that would stop the trial before exposure.

For an authorized trial, collect the agreed observations and required control-check results. Record criterion, safe method, checker and time. Compare the outcome with the local starting point and worker feedback; distinguish observed improvement from assumptions before approving wider use.

Stop and reassess

Hold adoption or the affected trial when requirements conflict, essential context is missing or protection is unverified. Stop for an unexpected hazard under the approved plan. Obtain review and required checks before continuing. Do not copy protected material, remove safeguards or recreate another organization's incident to test an idea.

Ask the crew

1. What local problem should this practice solve?
2. Which external condition is different here?
3. What evidence will support adoption or rejection after the trial?

Use the task plan and required specialist decisions before exposure.

Sources: DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2, pp. 71–72; OSHA Hazard Prevention and Program Evaluation.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/safety-benchmarking-practice-before-adoption

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