

Results Based Leadership Benchmarking

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1. Preparation	2. Observation	3. Comparison	4. Application
<i>What are my leadership results? What do I want to learn? What am I looking for?</i>	<i>What did I see? What were the leaders doing? How were they doing it?</i>	<i>How does what I am seeing compare to my leadership? What insights do I have about my leadership?</i>	<i>What insights can inform my own leadership? What action will it take to apply those insights?</i>

1. Leadership Benchmarking

Leadership benchmarking is a method used to prepare for and learn from leaders and on visits to organizations. It provides a common language and a framework for seeing, understanding and observing the impact of leadership approaches and tools.

Holograms create wonderful images for the distribution of information in organizations... Most organizations acknowledge that when a customer comes in contact with anyone from the organization...the customer experiences the total organization for good or ill. Under the laser light of these 'moments of truth' the organization becomes visible... In a hologram, every part contains enough information, in condensed form, to display the whole.

Ken Wilbur, 1985

Leadership benchmarking is made possible by this property of organizations. An encounter of any set of people under any circumstances is illuminating. During a site visit, it is possible to see a cross-section of the organization and have an even richer opportunity to see leadership teams and know them by what they have created.

2. Four Steps

a) Preparation – what is my focus?

Preparation consists of developing a purposeful focus for the leadership benchmarking experience and familiarizing yourself with the leader and the organization. Develop your purposeful focus by answering the following question: “What am I trying to accomplish?” The “what” can be at the person, role or system level and is defined by where you are in your leadership journey. Familiarize yourself with a leader’s resume and accomplishments or an organization’s annual report and marketing materials to sharpen the focus of your observations and questions.

b) Observation – what did I see/hear in areas of focus?

Observation is the essence of the benchmarking experience. It is the opportunity to use your purposeful focus to consciously notice as much about the guest leader and/or the organization as you can. In observation, you are striving for a clear-sighted view of facts. Facts include what you see and what you hear. Powerful observation clearly distinguishes the “facts” from your conclusions or judgments about what you see and hear. In the process of observation, you are answering the following questions with as much concrete, specific and descriptive information as possible:

- What did I see?
- What did I hear?
- What are the people doing?
- What do the people say about what they are doing?

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c) Comparison – how is my leadership/organizational approach similar or different?

The utility of benchmarking is created during the third step of comparison. In this step, you are organizing the information gathered during observation to answer the following questions:

- How does this compare to my organization or my own leadership?
- What have I observed that might inform my own leadership choices (either to try out what I have seen OR specifically not do what I have seen)?
- What might be useful to apply back home?

A comparison process that is grounded in specifics and is rigorous about both your own organization or leadership and what you are benchmarking is more likely to lead to insights that lead to application.

d) Application – what insights can I apply back home?

The benefit of benchmarking is created during the fourth step of application. In this step, you are making choices about what you will do and how. Based on the judgments you made during your comparison, you move to application by answering the following questions:

- Are there ideas or insights I might use in my own organization or leadership development?
- What do I need to do to adapt or customize these ideas for my use?
- What steps will I take to implement these ideas or adopt them?

It is in application that the possibilities identified during benchmarking are used to accomplish something back home.

3. Tips

- ✓ In leadership benchmarking, suspend judgment. This is not about good or bad; it is an opportunity to see an organizational slice of life. The intentions and choices of the leadership team are as informative as the results.
- ✓ Issues you feel deeply about may trigger you and overwhelm your ability to gather information. Improve observation by being conscious of your triggers and then hold a more neutral stance.
- ✓ First see the possibilities and then choose the areas you want to explore for application.
- ✓ Choose a few manageable actions to do now and learn about the viability of your choice from the experience of application.
- ✓ Challenge yourself to choose ideas and approaches that you don't already know how to do.
- ✓ To apply a leadership approach, first identify the core elements of the approach and then imagine what each of these elements might look like in your own environment. Address change at the person, role and system levels by clarifying:
 - The idea or approach
 - The intended impact
 - The actions to be taken over the next two weeks to implement the idea or approach
 - The fear and resistance that may be encountered
 - What can be done to address fear and resistance

4. Benchmarking Matrix

Leader's Focus	How does it look in Leader's organization?	How does it look in the visited organization?	What might be useful to apply back home?