

Benchmarking for Forest research Institutions

By Mario F. Broggi, WSL

Folie: Is my institution fit for future challenges?

Introduction

Nearly everyday we can read in the news papers about closing-down, fusions or reorganization of enterprises. For quite a while we thought this was going to happen only to private enterprises and never to public institutions. Two years ago N. Koch told us about reorganization plans in his institute and this year we hear about Germany, how they trim their forestry administration and research stations. All of us, we are confronted with an ongoing demand for increasing the efficiency and/or productivity and to satisfy our customers.

To face this challenge we have to ask every now and than: how fit is our institution compared with others?

Folie: compare yourself with the best peer

What does benchmarking mean?

Benchmarking is the process or the challenge to compare one institute with others, to define indicators and to set them into relation with not just anybody's but with the best of our peers.

Benchmarking is a part of the quality management of an institution. Here we have to recall some fundamentals or maxims of the Total Quality Management:

- Orientation towards the customer: finally our customers (other researchers, administration, politicians, practitioners) judge the quality of our work
- we need to have the control of our processes: we only achieve good results if we cope with our processes.
- continuous improving of our processes: based on the critical factor this has to be an annual aim.
- involving of all collaborators: all our collaborators are aware of taking part in the improving process.

To be able to continuously improve the quality of our processes and products we need information. The best value we get by comparing ourselves with the “class winner”. This class winner has not compulsively to be from the same “trade”. We can find them in agriculture, in other research branches or even in industry. We only need to know very clearly our core processes and their factors of success.

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Benchmarking process

Let me give you just a quick overview on the most important steps of a benchmarking process.

- 1 Decide what shall be compared
 - identify the most important customers
 - identify the core processes, which have to be evaluated

- 2 know everything about your core processes
draw the flow charts
define indicators
define the relevant factors for success.
- 3 understand the respective processes of the benchmarking partner
identify the class winner
analyse his processes
visit the benchmarking partner
- 4 Compare the factors
identify the reasons why the peers processes are better
adapt the essentials for your institution
- 5 Definition of the aim to become the class winner
inform the your institution about these essentials
define action plans
- 6 Implementation and monitoring
define indiactors
define target values for the indicators
ensure the control

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Summary

- Benchmarking is a process to compare oneself with more successful peers.
- Benchmarking is a bilateral process. It is not an affair of spying but an open discussion between peers.
- it should lead to a win-win-situation
- it results in an improvement of the core processes.