

Benchmarking

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No matter how good your organization is, you cannot stop improving... and one of the best ways to keep improving is **benchmarking**.

You're a senior manager in a large company or a small-business owner. You've read a lot about quality-improving programs like benchmarking, a systematic way to identify and adopt superior business practices that can cut costs and increase customer satisfaction. You're ready to try it out. But how do you know which tools or technologies will provide you with the best results?

You could hire a well-known consultant in the field, who would visit your organization, listen to your needs and show you how to implement the benchmarking process. If you can't spend that kind of money, you could buy books or videos that describe the process in general terms, and then figure out how to make it work in your own particular case.

Or, you could buy an interactive computer software package that offers a customized, work-at-your-own-speed approach that encapsulates the consultant's expert knowledge, at the price of books and videos.

That's what LearnerFirst Inc. is now offering. It's just one example of the new world opening up in learning technology, thanks to computers. This LearnerFirst application is available for a fraction of the cost that you would spend on seminars, videos, or consultants. And the results you achieve are like having an expert consultant on-demand to guide you through the process.

In creating this application, LearnerFirst joined forces with James Harrington, the International Quality Adviser for Ernst & Young, and author of Business Process Improvement and The Improvement Process. Harrington's methodology involves 19 activities, such as identifying what to benchmark, developing measurements and data collection programs, and conducting research. Each of these in turn can involve several tasks to perform.

The LearnerFirst software lets users decide what aspects of the system they wish to use, and documents the information specific to their own organizations. They emerge with detailed plans and action steps customized to their own unique needs.

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Activities

Harrington's Nineteen Benchmarking Activities

1. Identify What to Benchmark
2. Obtain Management Support
3. Develop Measurements
4. Develop the Data Collection Plan



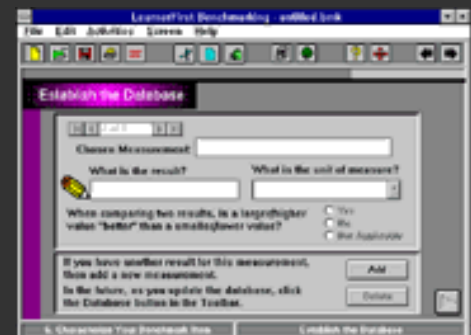
"An incredible way to learn and work on the benchmarking process to improve organizational effectiveness and the bottom line."

— Navin S. Dedhia, IBM, San Jose, CA



"Accomplished graphics, painstaking and logical sequences, excellent help dialogues and powerful report generation features will come as a pleasant surprise...Those who are not necessarily familiar with quality procedures will quickly learn, and James Harrington is an excellent teacher."

— European Quality Journal



"LearnerFirst Benchmarking will keep you constantly improving while your competition wonders what hit them...The program simplifies a complicated process by organizing and analyzing your company's information."

— Success Magazine

5. Review Plans with Location Experts
6. Characterize Your Benchmark Item
7. Collect Internal Published Information
8. Select Internal Benchmarking Sites
9. Collect Internal Original Research
10. Conduct Interviews and Surveys
11. Form a Benchmarking Committee
12. Conduct Internal Site Visits
13. Collect External Published Information
14. Conduct External Original Research
15. Identify Corrective Actions
16. Develop an Implementation Plan
17. Gain Management Approval of the Implementation Plan
18. Implement Changes and Measure Impact
19. Maintain the Database

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Expert

H. James Harrington, Ph.D., is the International Quality Adviser for the firm of Ernst & Young. He is also president of the prestigious International Academy for Quality. Dr. Harrington's career in quality is distinguished, including 40 years with IBM, where he became a senior engineer and project manager in Quality Assurance. He served as president and chairman of the board of the American Society for Quality Control. He is the author of *The Improvement Process*, *Business Process Improvement*, and three other books published by the ASQ's Quality Press.

System Requirements

- DOS 5.0 or higher
- Microsoft Windows 3.1, 3.11 or Windows 95
- An IBM-compatible computer with a 33 MHz 80386 or higher processor
- Windows-compatible mouse or other pointing device
- A standard VGA monitor (SVGA is preferred)
- Hard disk with at least 8 MB of free storage
- 8 MB RAM
- 3.5" disk drive for installation

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“(LearnerFirst Benchmarking) provided me with a solid structure for conducting and leading benchmarking studies with my clients.”

— Brian Lowenthal, The Benchmark Partners

“(LearnerFirst Benchmarking) is very easy to use, without devoting a great deal of time to going through the manual page by page. The ‘Most commonly-asked questions’ and ‘Examples of items to measure’ are very nice features.”

— Michael Cimino, Henry Ford Health System

“The LearnerFirst Benchmarking software is impressive at 2 levels: ease-of-use and completeness...It really covers the waterfront, helping you use strategic benchmarking to determine what to work on, then provides you the structure, the database, and the examples that de-mystify the whole process.”

— Robert Burlando, Sea-Land Service



“The program is very well laid out and easy to understand for anyone new to the benchmarking process. The logistical flow of the program ensures that you don’t miss a step and is a perfect way to document your progress throughout the process.”

— This program is a great value! Mark Blount, AT&T