Best Practices & Other Things Everybody Knows

Tools For Operators · https://jeffreysummers.com/docs/best-practices-other-things-everybody-knows/

Somebody in a room says the words best practice, and the conversation stops. Nobody asks best at what, best where, best against which problem, or best according to whom. The phrase does the arguing for itself, which is precisely what it was built to do.

It is the most effective two-word sales instrument in the restaurant industry, and it is doing something specific to your operation every time it gets used.

What A Best Practice Actually Is

A practice is a way of doing work. It is best relative to something -- a volume, a room, a cast, an equipment set, a menu, a cost structure, a standard somebody ruled.

Best practice is that phrase with the relative half removed.

What is left is a claim of superiority with the operation deleted from it. Not a claim that the practice worked somewhere, which would at least be checkable. A claim that it is best, unqualified, which cannot be checked at all because the thing it would have to be measured against was struck out to make the phrase portable.

The inference: **this practice works in good operations; therefore this practice is the correct practice for your operation.**

The Phrase Is The Instrument

This one is different from a form or a benchmark, because there is no artifact. Nothing gets delivered. Nothing costs ninety-nine dollars.

What the phrase does is end the read before it starts. An operator considering a change asks what should we do here, and the answer arrives as the best practice. There is no step in that exchange where anybody looks at the building.

It also reverses the burden. Normally the person proposing a change has to justify it. Attach the phrase and the operator has to justify not adopting it, and the only available argument sounds like an excuse. Now the operator is defending his own building against a phrase.

And it launders authority. Best according to whom is never answerable, because the phrase is designed to have no author. It is what everybody knows, which means nobody is accountable for it and nobody has exposure if it is wrong in your room.

Where The Phrase Gets Its Power

Consensus feels like evidence. A practice repeated by enough people acquires the texture of a proven thing. Repetition is not evidence, it is repetition, and it is free.

It is unfalsifiable as stated. There is no test for best. There are tests for did this carry load in this building, but the phrase has no building in it.

It converts the middle into the standard. Whatever most competent operations do becomes the practice, so the phrase's actual content is the industry's average behavior. Adopting it aims you at the middle on purpose.

It travels without its constraint. Every practice was built around a limit -- a piece of equipment, a volume, a person who could not be trusted with a decision, a market condition that has since passed. The limit does not travel. The practice does.

It outranks a ruling. You decide something about your operation. Somebody answers with the best practice. Your decision now looks like a preference and theirs looks like a fact, and the operation does what the phrase says.

It is the cheapest thing a counsel can say. No read required, no exposure carried, no accountability if it fails in your building. A consultant who leads with the phrase has told you he did not look.

The Tell

Ask one question and the instrument collapses: best at what, in what kind of operation, against what problem, and what did it cost the places that ran it.

A real practice survives that question and gets more useful under it, because the answers tell you whether your building has the same problem. A best practice does not survive it, because every part of the answer was removed at manufacture.

Second question, just as fatal: what is this practice working around. Every operating practice exists to get around something. If nobody can name the thing, you are about to install a workaround for a problem you may not have.

What Replaces It

Ask for the read, not the practice. What did you see in my building, and what did it tell you. The people worth listening to lead with that and you will know inside ten minutes.

Ask what it is working around. Then check whether that thing is true here. Most of the time it is not, and the practice is solving a problem you do not own.

Ask what it costs. Every practice costs something -- time, flexibility, a decision your cast can no longer make, a Guest experience that gets slightly more uniform. The phrase never carries a price and there is always one.

Ask what happens if you do the opposite. Some of the strongest positions in this business are built on doing the thing the industry does not do. If the answer is that nothing bad happens, you may have found an area where the practice is habit rather than physics.

Test it small, in your building, against your own read. One shift, one station, one daypart. What your building reports back is worth more than what the industry reports.

Keep what carries load, and write down why. A practice you tested and kept is no longer a best practice. It is your ruling, and now it has a reason attached that your cast can state.

What Changes Tomorrow

Write down five things your operation does because that is how it is done. Not things you decided. Things that arrived -- the way product gets received, the way the schedule gets built, what your review criteria measure, how the pre-shift runs, what happens when a table goes badly.

Next to each one, answer two questions in writing. What is this working around, and is that still true here.

You will get three kinds of answer. Some are working around something real and still present, and those stay. Some are working around something that used to be true in your building and is not anymore, and those are pure drag on every shift. And some, nobody can say, which means the practice has been running your operation on authority nobody can locate.

Start with the third pile. Put it in front of the people who actually run it and ask what they would do instead. That conversation produces something no phrase can, because it comes from people standing in your building.

Digging Deeper

Every term in my framework lives in the Knowledge Base: kb.jeffreysummers.com

Terms used here: [Sameness Machine], [Default Architecture], [Designed Architecture], [Default Gravity], [Counsel Class], [Ordinary By Design], [Safest Mediocre Execution], [Stale Thinking], [Question Dumb Shit], [Constraint Inheritance], [Meaningfully Differentiated Value], [People Constraint], [Product Constraint], [Perspective Constraint], [Constraint Architecture], [Constraint Inheritance]

More of my work on this, all of it in the Knowledge Base:

- 126 Next Practices Not Best Practices -- my name for the whole position
- 038 The Operator Who Manages From The Report -- the read this instrument replaces
- 022 The Compounding Loop -- what a practice has to feed to be worth keeping
- 3405 The Habits Always Translate -- why the practice travels and the result does not
- 0034 Eating Your Own Dog Food -- the test before adopting anything

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