

service, so don't be tempted to put your data on the shelf if you experience unwanted results or if the necessary changes seem like too much trouble. Remember, you asked for it and you'll have to live with the results if you don't make the changes.

Step Eight. Spread the word. Disseminate your results

How else can you build support if you don't tell others what you're learning and how the process is improving the visitor's experience?

Step Nine. Find sources of funding

Many if not most foundations require evaluation as part of a project and will provide the funding to implement it. Build evaluation into all grant projects or design it into corporate sponsorships. Add consultant fees or a staffing allowance to your operating budget.

Step Ten. Make evaluation someone's job; make it everyone's need

Who should conduct evaluation and what do they need to know? Bitgood & Carnes (1987) surveyed museum or zoo directors and subscribers to *Visitor Behavior* to determine their knowledge and attitudes toward exhibit evaluation. All respondents agreed that evaluation was important, but they differed on their expectations of evaluators. Most non-directors (76%) felt that evaluators must have sufficient knowledge, while many directors (54%) did not agree with this statement, displaying an "anybody can do it" type of attitude.

In a recent article Borun and Korn (1995) note that evaluators need objectivity. In placing evaluators on an organizational chart, they should answer to a high-level, neutral staff member not aligned with a specific department. The evaluator should not have a stake in the product being evaluated, and under no circumstances should the person responsible for the product being evaluated be in charge of doing the evaluator's performance review.

References

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The Institutionalization of Evaluation

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From the 1994 Visitor Studies Conference
Raleigh, NC

Summarized by Erica Reed

This paper offers a simple view of the institutionalization process and describes case studies of three institutions (High Desert Museum, Chicago Academy of Sciences, and Chicago Children's Museum).

Institutionalization of evaluation was portrayed as a three-stage process – *casual dating* (characterized by the use of evaluation without any long-term commitment to it); *going steady* ("implies that the institution or some part of it, has committed to integrate evaluation into the fabric of the institution, at least as far as the specific project goes"); and *getting married* (becoming so committed "that no matter what, it will continue to do evaluation").

Each of the three museums participating in this session was said to be *going steady* and seriously considering *getting married*. The Chicago Academy of Sciences used staff development (visitor evaluation workshops) and team building to strengthen the institutionalization of evaluation. During the *casual dating* stage, the Academy used exhibit development projects to increase staff responsibilities gradually and decrease the reliance on outside consultants. During the *going steady* stage, the management team led a series of projects. The major problem during this stage was overcoming staff fears of talking to visitors and putting unfinished prototypes out on the floors. The Academy is moving toward *getting married* where they need to improve their basic team, exhibit, and program development skills.

At the Chicago Children's Museum institutionalization began with a series of staff development and evaluation activities including a variety of workshops and other related functions for the staff. *Going steady* was characterized by a ten-phase plan for developing new exhibits at the remodeled facility. The process began with a concept paper and ended with "Fabrication, installation, testing... and ongoing evaluation and remediation." *Getting married* will require remaining invested in maintaining evaluation, and evaluating and revising the ten-phase process as necessary.

The *casual dating* stage at the High Desert Museum occurred over several years in which numerous evaluation projects of limited duration were implemented. During the *going steady* stage, Education Department staff received training from an outside consultant, and the museum's long-range Comprehensive Plan was implemented. Until the Comprehensive Plan is fully implemented, movement to the *marriage* stage will not be official. For this to happen all top administrative positions need to be filled, and the vast majority of the museum staff needs to have an understanding of evaluation.