

Do you follow best practices?

What are best practices?

Best practices are the ones that are the most effective in providing results you want. And every industry has its own best practices. Additionally, your organization might have its own best practices, which include administrative and managerial tasks (e.g., how to invoice, how to handle hiring and firing, how to establish budget priorities, etc.). Best practices are guidelines. They serve as a map in getting things done the right way.



If you don't have best practices, you may not have best results

Take an administrative task like invoicing, for example. Do

you follow a rule about invoicing? Perhaps you invoice every time a project is completed, or you invoice every two weeks, or once a month. You probably understand that unless you invoice regularly, you may not get paid regularly. I once worked at a communications agency where the invoicing was handled by the very disorganized president (who was a horrible micro-manager and could/would not delegate these types of tasks). She invoiced clients whenever she got around to it. And guess what? That affected cash flow for the agency, and even angered clients who were getting billed for work done months earlier. This agency president was not following invoicing best practices, and it was making her agency suffer financially.

An effective communications strategy incorporates your industry/organizational best practices.

Say you are building a brand new website. You will need to consult with or engage a website developer. That will ensure you are following best practices for user experience (UX), design, the admin of the website and other website issues. But you will also need to know what should be included from a communications perspective, and may need to consult with someone for that (some website developers have this capacity). And lastly, but certainly not least, you have to understand and incorporate your industry and organizational best practices. Perhaps in your industry it is a best practice to quote firm pricing upfront. Then, you would show prices on your website.

What happens when you don't follow best practices in communications?

There are examples galore of organizations that don't follow communications best practices. There are plenty of restaurants whose websites don't include menus or have menus that need to be downloaded as PDFs (which is a real pain on your smartphone, where most people are looking this stuff

up). The best practice is to include menus that are easily accessible and readable on mobile. Another best practice is to make sure to include important information such as hours and location (and yet, many restaurant websites don't). What happens here is that potential diners may not choose to check out your restaurant.

There are many organizations that send email marketing pieces that are made up of all images and not text (I've written about this before). The industry best practice is to include the important information in a text format. The result of not following the practice is that recipients will not be able to see the information, and your email is a waste.

Experts know and use best practices

Here's the thing: You are an expert at your organization's priorities and inner workings. You know your best practices. You may also know your industry's best practices. But chances are, you are not an expert at writing, design, website development, crisis communication, SEO, public relations or any specialized communications field. That is why hiring and working with experts in those fields makes for a better result.

The bottom line here is that if you want to achieve the best results from your communications efforts you have to follow communications best practices. Experts will know those best practices. Winging it or worse, thinking you know the best way when you don't, will result in poor performance from your communications.

