

The Transfer of Information during the Evaluation Process: A Key Factor for Successful Evaluations?

Marie Gervais, Ph.D.

Professor

Laval University, Québec City, Canada

marie.gervais@msp.ulaval.ca

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Background

- 10-year period (1996-2006)
 - 5 years → Evaluator in a variety of fields
 - 5 years → Director of research and evaluation with the provincial government
- A critical look at 25 evaluations
 - Different scopes and levels of complexity
 - Steps and strategies used
 - 1 year post-evaluation (for 12 of these evaluations)



Objectives

Transfer
of
Information



Usefulness

Comprehension
Appropriation
Use



Decision



Action



A few unpleasant experiences



- An evaluation that took three years, but ended up on the shelf since decisions about the program in question had been taken many months previously
- A report that went straight to the recycling bin because it pointed out major flaws in a program's performance and would have raised questions about the way public funds were spent
- Systemic obstruction by certain stakeholders determined to preserve the status quo in the face of negative preliminary results



- An evaluation report that was ultimately buried by the commissioners because some of its findings were considered “too sensitive” and ran counter to policy directions
- A report impossible to follow up on because its recommendations required major changes on the part of external partners
- Upper management turnover at an organization that killed interest in an evaluation and its findings



Some findings

- A gap between stakeholder needs and expectations and the evaluation process
 - Divergence between stakeholder concerns and evaluation team interests
 - Difficulty in predicting the benefits to users
- Lack of understanding of the methodological aspects of the evaluation
 - Presence of time constraints - Users with shorter-term needs
 - Requirements related to methodological rigor
 - Overloaded work teams
- Insufficient upper management support for implementation of findings
- Concern or dissatisfaction with the results of the evaluation
 - Fear that the results may be misused
 - Reports that don't meet user expectations



A few positive and
satisfying experiences



- Active involvement by an organization executive on the steering committee, sending a clear message regarding the importance of the evaluation
- Recommendations enhanced by preliminary discussions with various stakeholders
- Changes implemented within a program before the final evaluation report was even released
- Supplementary budget allowing the evaluator to stay on and monitor the implementation of changes to the program



Factors affecting use



Evaluation
Subject / Approach / Process

Time

Context

Historical / Political / Cultural / Institutional / Operational

**Production
of
information**

**Transfer
of
information**

**Use of
information**

Decision / Learning / Innovation / Change

Values / Needs / Concerns

Stakeholders

A few proven practices



1

- Opt for an approach centered on intended users and intended uses
 - Who are the stakeholders?
 - What is the key information?
 - What will the information be used for?



2

- From the start, think transfer, promotion, and appropriation of evaluation results
 - Negotiate these points in the evaluation's mandate
 - Releasing results doesn't guarantee they will be put to good use!



3

- Maintain communication with key stakeholders
 - Two-way communication
 - Active stakeholder involvement in all stages of the evaluation process
 - Liaison and communication mechanisms
 - Steering committee → Key stakeholders
 - Liaison officer / Key contact
 - In the field / With decision makers
 - Sharing of expertise on evaluation project



4

- Choose the best way to disseminate results
 - Nature of the results
 - Target audience
 - Frequency
 - Key moments for transmitting information
 - Methods of distribution
 - Flexibility in terms of time



5

- Plan on mechanisms for dealing with potentially sensitive information
 - Avoid surprises
 - Lay the groundwork



6

- Learn to speak the "language" of the key stakeholders
 - Logic A / Logic B / Logic C / Etc.
 - Avoid specialized professional jargon
 - Translate into easily understandable and accessible language → Issues, stages, results, and recommendations



7

- Ensure the credibility of the evaluation team and the evaluation process
 - Use a quality evaluation process that is adapted to the needs of the users
 - Ensure that managers and practitioners understand the need for methodological rigor
 - Build trust



8

- Maintain the momentum behind the evaluation
 - Stakeholder interest in improving the situation
 - Receptivity
 - Taking responsibility
 - Sustained commitment to the process and mechanisms
 - Support from upper management
 - Favorable political climate



9

- Communication, communication, communication
 - Regular and constructive communication between stakeholders and the evaluation team
 - Evaluator's key skills
 - Communication, translation, mediation, and education
 - Information must be relevant, credible, high-quality, useful, accessible, up-to-date, timely, and presented in an easy-to-understand format



10

- Don't just aim to release results, but to make sure they are used!
 - Be aware of changing political, organizational, and human contexts
 - Adapt!
 - Make the results useful
 - Capacity to influence decision making
 - Real potential for practical application
 - Usefulness of even minor results



○ Guiding change

- Maintain an interest in the evaluation, even after the process is complete
- Be available to help interpret the results and put them into action
 - Acceptability / Taking ownership of results
- Develop reflexive habits
- Examine possibilities for training prior to implementation



Thank you!

