Why leading practices matter

What’s in this Success Insight?

ServiceNow has invested deeply in supporting implementations with leading practices, delivered to customers through Now Create and ServiceNow’s Customer Success Center.

This Success Insight shows why leading practices are critical to the success of your implementation. It can be tempting to rely on your team’s past experience, or ‘tribal knowledge.’ But as the Now Platform delivers new capabilities and innovation, your use of leading practices is critical to achieving fast time-to-value, and to reduce implementation risk. Leading practices ensure your implementation is industrial, not artisanal.

1. Leading practices are a speed boost.

Speed – measured in time-to-implement and time-to-value – is key to delivering a strong return on your ServiceNow investment. Yet many teams can slow their implementations by ‘reinventing the wheel,’ relying on their own experience and resources to define their implementation methodology, create new project artifacts, and make critical implementation decisions.

The question you should ask is whether the time that a team spends in ‘reinventing the wheel’ is time well-spent, or time that delays value realization. In many cases, the team may be focused on creating ‘perfect’ project artifacts, when leading practices repositories offer the same, readymade project artifacts at a ‘good enough’ level. In these cases, teams are missing the opportunity to speed their implementation, using readymade practices and artifacts, for the sake of ‘perfect.’

Send a strong message before kickoff that teams should avoid reinventing practices and artifacts already in use by thousands of successful customers – and which should speed your time-to-value.

Practitioner insight

Successful customers define simple, explicit ‘golden rules’ at the start of their implementation projects, typically articulated by the executive sponsor. Golden rules are guidelines that everyone can understand when making decisions or taking actions during an implementation. Use ServiceNow leading practices – exceptions can only be approved by project leads is an example of a golden rule you can define to support implementation.
2. The time you spend understanding leading practices is an investment in avoiding implementation risk.

In his book The Checklist Manifesto, author and doctor Atul Gatwande points to the powerful role that checklists play in high-risk environments, like surgical operating rooms or airplane cockpits. The moral is simple: even highly trained experts should rely on standard, thorough checklists to guard against risk.

Leading practices provide the same safeguards: any complex activity, like a major system implementation, will carry risk no matter how expert the implementation team. You don’t want your team experts worrying whether or not they’ve covered the basics— their expertise should be focused on managing the more complex, context-specific issues, decisions, and stakeholder engagement activities that will emerge across your project. Think of it like this—you don’t want your airline pilot figuring out a flight plan while airborne. You want her to focus on the weather system that’s emerged ahead, and how she’ll navigate it.

3. The investment you make in leading practices is an investment in your team.

Given ServiceNow’s potential reach in your organization, it’s likely that some of your team members will be supporting their first implementation project, or supporting implementation of a project they haven’t encountered before. Your team will learn a great deal throughout the project, but team members need to learn the right way, not through trial-and-error. Leading practices can act as ‘just in time’ learning aids that support the growth of your team’s expertise as they support implementation. You can facilitate this learning and growth with a few simple techniques:

- **Make leading practices the centerpiece of weekly ‘lunch and learns’** – Allocate time each week for an explicit, dedicated focus on team learning. This doesn’t need to be long. You can allocate thirty minutes to a team ‘lunch and learn’ in which you assign a team member to research and present a set of leading practices directly relevant to your project. ServiceNow also provides a repository of leading practice videos that can be included in weekly ‘lunch and learns.’

- **Embed leading practices in team development goals** – Managers should ensure that team members have simple, explicit development goals tied to your implementation project. Frame leading practices as a means by which your team members can realize these goals. Managers can assign specific practices for learning, and use regular 1x1s to discuss key learning insights.
Concluding takeaway

When you embark on an implementation project, it can be tempting to rely solely on team expertise, to ‘reinvent the wheel,’ or ignore team development. But this can result in slowdowns, introduce unnecessary project risk, and make your team’s learnings haphazard. The time you spend engaging with ServiceNow’s leading practices is an investment in an industrialized implementation, based on the experience of thousands of successful customers. Use them to speed your implementation, guard against risk, and build team expertise quickly.

Additional resources

- Now Create project methodology
- Customer Success Center

If you have any questions on this topic or you would like to be a contributor to future ServiceNow best practice content, please contact us at best.practices@servicenow.com.