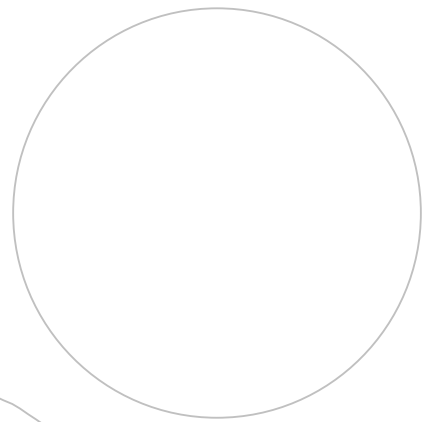




PROBE for Service

More about...



More about PROBE for Service

More about PROBE for Service has been designed to help you to get the most from the process of using this particular variant of PROBE best practice benchmarking. This document provides a step-by-step guide through the five stages of implementation.

What is 'PROBE for Service?'

PROBE is one of the world's leading organisational assessment and best practice benchmarking tools, used in over 40 countries to promote and support the pursuit of Business Excellence across all sectors. Thousands of organisations have benefited from PROBE's insights and contributed to its unique knowledge base, supported by facilitators and agencies committed to the spread of good business practices that deliver improved organisational performance.

PROBE for Service is a version designed for use by any organisation whose primary activity is the provision of services for customers/service users; and by organisations with other core activities - such as the manufacture of products, processing of material or construction of physical assets – which recognise the crucial importance of the service dimension of their business and wish it to be a focus of their benchmarking and improvement efforts.

PROBE is based on a simple and clear premise – the adoption of best practice leads to world class performance.

It is a diagnostic process designed to assess your key practices, those that drive your organisation forward, and to show how, by improving these key practices, you can impact on your business performance levels. The PROBE process consists of five key stages:

- **Preparation**
- **Understanding**
- **Analysis**
- **Reflection**
- **Action Planning**

Stage 1: Preparation

Choosing the scope of your PROBE benchmarking process

PROBE can be applied either to an entire organisation, or to a part of an organisation such as a department, team, site or unit. From the outset, the PROBE team needs to clearly define the scope of the 'organisational unit' upon which the benchmarking process will focus. Having made this decision, throughout this document and the PROBE questionnaires the terms 'the organisation' and 'your organisation' should be understood to refer to the chosen 'organisational unit'.

Team Selection

PROBE is a team process. You need to select a group of people within your organisation to participate. Select team members that represent different levels and functions, including different departments and teams. Try not to overload your team with too many people from a management level. A team that represents the whole organisation, in terms of seniority and functionality, will be able to generate results that reflect the reality of the current situation. This will provide the best possible basis for relevant and pertinent improvement activity.

For most organisations a team of 5-7 people is appropriate. An odd number of people in the team is preferable. Ideally, the team should consist of:

1	Director or equivalent
1-2	Senior Managers
1-2	Middle Managers
2	Others

For smaller organisations, where roles often cover many functions, a team of 3-5 covering the accounting/finance, sales and management and logistics/operations aspects of the organisation will suffice.

Stage 2: Understanding

PROBE for Service questionnaire

Once you have your team selected, each team member should be given a copy of the PROBE for Service questionnaire. This contains 52 questions each asking for a score of 1-5 (where 5= 'Best Practice') for a particular aspect of your organisation's practices/performance. Each team member should spend a minute understanding the question and recording their initial answer (score). If, after a minute, the question does not make sense or does not apply, leave it unanswered until the pre-meeting or Facilitated Workshop.

Pre-meeting:

Before you have your meeting with the PROBE facilitator, it is useful to get the team together for a short pre-meeting so that you can explain what your organisation wants to achieve from this best practice benchmarking exercise, the role the team will play, and the PROBE process. Whilst explaining the process, let the team know that you want all of them to contribute and to consider the points of others, and encourage open and honest debate.

The main purpose of this pre-meeting is to have a general discussion about the questions to ensure that there is a broad agreement on what they mean, and to discover to what extent there is already a consensus view on what each score should be. Do not get bogged down in too much discussion – this meeting is intended to be an introductory session where the team can further familiarise itself with the questionnaire and as a mechanism to save time where consensus scores that require no discussion in the Facilitated Workshop can be logged.

At the end of this meeting the team members should keep a record of their individual scores and the Team Leader should keep a record of any scores where there is already a consensus view and score.

Contextual Information questionnaire

At this stage, the Team Leader should complete the 'Contextual Information' questionnaire and return it to the PROBE Facilitator, to help the Facilitator to understand this background information in advance of the Facilitated Workshop.

Stage 3: Analysis

The Facilitated Workshop

At the time of agreeing to undertake a PROBE benchmark you will have agreed a date for your external PROBE Facilitator to meet with you and your team in a group session. Team members should bring along to this workshop their completed questionnaire and perhaps some notes on why they have certain scores logged on their copy. The facilitator will lead the team through the questionnaire and keep a log of the consensus scores agreed during this discussion.

During this workshop the facilitator will analyse your consensus scores and provide feedback. The feedback will be in the form of a presentation and discussion based upon a number of graphical outputs. These will show how your organisation compares against the World Class Best Practice Model that underpins PROBE, and how it compares with other organisations in your own sector, and globally against a relevant subset of the thousands of surveys that are held on the PROBE database.

An example facilitation day timetable (approximate timings):

- 09:30 Arrival of the facilitator; introductory discussion with Team Leader (team not required at this point)
- 09:45 Site tour with the Team Leader
- 10:15 Introduction (team required from this point)
- 10:30 Facilitation of questionnaire
- 12:30 Facilitator prepares the results and feedback (team not required)
- 13:15 Feedback to team*
- 14:00 End of session

* if appropriate, members of the organisation's senior management team could be invited to attend the feedback session. There may be pros and cons to this, and whether it is appropriate will depend on local circumstances – if possible, the Team Leader should discuss this with the PROBE Facilitator before the date of the Facilitated Workshop.

Stage 4: Reflection

The PROBE for Service written report

Within 2 weeks of the facilitated session, you will receive a written report that will summarise the findings from the Facilitated Workshop. It will include narrative explaining the PROBE world class best practice model, your organisation's comparative position against this model and against peer organisations contained in the database. The report also provides a record of the consensus scores from your team and a copy of the graphical outputs used by the Facilitator to provide feedback at the end of the Facilitated Workshop.

At this stage, you may choose to circulate the report to members of the PROBE Team and to other colleagues including senior managers. The report is an opportunity to reflect on the findings that have emerged from your PROBE benchmark.

Stage 5: Action Planning

At the same time as you agreed to the benchmarking Facilitated Workshop you may also have put an Action Planning date into your team's diaries. This half day session will give you and your team an opportunity to re-visit the findings from your benchmarking session and to begin the process of addressing areas for improvement identified by the feedback and the written report.

The purpose of the session is to produce a realistic and workable action plan that will be deliverable and achievable. So, whilst it is important that the team that participated in the benchmarking process are involved in the Action Planning session, it may also be helpful to invite other decision-makers to contribute to this session.

Time Requirements

To get the maximum benefit from PROBE, the team members will need some time away from their normal duties to participate fully. Each team member will require, approximately,

Questionnaire: 1-2 Hour(s)
Pre-Meeting: 3-4 Hours
Facilitated Workshop: 4-5 Hours
Action Planning: 3-4 Hours
Total: 11-15 Hours over a 3 - 4 week period

Other Requirements

For the Facilitated Workshop, and again for the Action Planning session, the following is required

- Conference room large enough for team + one facilitator
- Data projector and screen
- Flipchart stand, paper and pens



PROBE for Service



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