

## THE EVIDENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT QUIZ

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How much of an evidence-based manager are you? These questions are designed to help you think about how you and your organization go about making decisions about how to solve the people management problems you face.

For each question, please circle the response that best reflects your opinion and experience.

1. We make decisions by looking at what other organizations and our competitors are doing  
*A. Not at all accurate      B. Quite accurate      C. Very accurate*
  
2. Before any decision is taken we carefully and systematically evaluate internal data and evidence to better understand the nature of the problem  
*C. Not at all accurate      B. Quite accurate      A. Very accurate*
  
3. Professional journals such as *People Management* and *Personnel Today* and *Harvard Business Review* play a role in helping us identify solutions to our problems  
*A. Not at all accurate      B. Quite accurate      C. Very accurate*
  
4. We sometimes introduce new practices or policies without having first identified a particular problem we are trying to solve  
*A. Not at all accurate      B. Quite accurate      C. Very accurate*
  
5. We use consultants to help us make decisions about how to solve our problems  
*A. Not at all accurate      B. Quite accurate      C. Very accurate*
  
6. It is easy to get hold of good quality internal data and evidence about people management issues in our organization  
*C. Not at all accurate      B. Quite accurate      A. Very accurate*
  
7. Internal politics and power struggles influence the way we make decisions about introducing policies and practices

*A. Not at all accurate*                      *B. Quite accurate*                      *C. Very accurate*

8.        When making a decision about how to solve a problem we examine research evidence published in academic journals

*C. Not at all accurate*                      *B. Quite accurate*                      *A. Very accurate*

9.        We evaluate the effectiveness of the new policies and practices we introduce

*C. Not at all accurate*                      *B. Quite accurate*                      *A. Very accurate*

10.      We use academics to help us make decisions about how to solve our problems

*C. Not at all accurate*                      *B. Quite accurate*                      *A. Very accurate*

11.      We spend time identifying and exploring a wide range of possible solutions to the problems we face

*C. Not at all accurate*                      *B. Quite accurate*                      *A. Very accurate*

12.      We use benchmarking and best practice to help us decide what we should be doing

*A. Not at all accurate*                      *B. Quite accurate*                      *C. Very accurate*

13.      If we make mistakes in our decision-making we try to learn from them

*C. Not at all accurate*                      *B. Quite accurate*                      *A. Very accurate*

## Scoring and explanation

In general, the more As you circled the more of an evidence-based manager and organization you are.

*Question 1* is about copying what other organizations do. In general, this is regarded as an unhelpful decision making-practice because organizations are very different from each other and usually require specific and tailored solutions.

*Question 2* refers to the use of internal data in making decisions. Doing this is vital to EBM.

*Question 3* is about using professional journals to help identify solutions to problems. While such journals are useful in some ways they are not generally good sources of information about solutions as they tend to focus on new fads and fashions or report the results of one-off research studies rather than tried and tested solutions or systematic reviews of a body of evidence.

*Question 4* is about the ‘solution in search of a problem’ issue where organizations introduce new practices without being clear about what the problem is they are trying to fix.

*Question 5* concerns the use of consultants. While consultants can be useful for some purposes there are few EBM-oriented consultants around. Few consultancies gather systematic evidence about the effectiveness of their advice, products and services and few engage with research evidence. The next time a consultant makes a recommendation ask them for the evidence behind it.

*Question 6* is about how easy it is to get hold of internal evidence. If it is very difficult to obtain it or understand it then it becomes very difficult to practice EBM.

*Question 7* considers the role of politics in decision-making. The more politics drives the decision the less room there will be for evidence.

*Question 8* is about using evidence published in academic journals. While the research published in such journals can be difficult to interpret, of poor quality, and not directly relevant to your problem looking for it and critically evaluating it can help with decision-making.

*Question 9* concerns the extent to which new practices are evaluated. This too is essential to EBM: You need evidence about what is working, what isn’t and why.

*Question 10* is about the use of academics in decision-making. While academics may sometimes be trying to sell an idea, they should ideally be relatively neutral and also be aware of or be able to get access to evidence from research. Though, of course, you need to be as critical and questioning of their advice as you would be of anyone else.

*Question 11* is about whether you spend time trying to identify a wide range of possible solutions. This is important to EBM as focusing on just one or two solutions

means you may miss others and also shape your interpretation of the problem to fit the one or two solutions you're looking at.

*Question 12* concerns benchmarking and best practice. In general, both of these are unhelpful to EBM. What other organizations do is, in itself, irrelevant. What is important is what works. Copying what others do only makes sense if you know that what was done was effective and is likely to be in your context.

*Question 13* concerns learning from mistakes. This is essential to EBM. Finding out that something doesn't work is a vital piece of evidence which needs to be incorporated into future decision-making.