

The Most Significant Change Tool

EXERCISE DESCRIPTION:

The Most Significant Change technique is a form of participatory evaluation. It is participatory because many project stakeholders are involved both in deciding the sorts of change to be recorded and in analyzing the data. It is a form of monitoring because it occurs throughout the program cycle and provides information to help people manage the program. It contributes to evaluation because it provides data on impact and outcomes that can be used to help assess the performance of the Initiative as a whole. Essentially, the process involves the collection of significant change (SC) stories emanating from the field level, and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. The designated staff and stakeholders are initially involved by ‘searching’ for project impact. Once changes have been captured, various people sit down together, read the stories aloud and have regular and often in-depth discussion about the value of these reported changes. When the technique is implemented successfully, whole teams of people begin to focus their attention on program impact.

EXERCISE HOW-TO:

Steps	Questions
1. Raise interest amongst key stakeholders and get their commitment to participate	
2. Define the domains of change	What has broadly changed in people’s lives?
3. Determine the reporting period – over the past year, six months, 3 months etc.	
4. Collect the significant change stories from participants.	During the last 6 months, in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place for participants in this program?
5. Select the most significant stories. Every time stories are selected, record criteria used to select them.	From among the stories selected, what do you think was the most significant change of all?
6. Feedback the results of the selection process. Include stakeholders to review the process, stories selected and assess the domains of stories	From among the stories selected what do you think was the most significant change of all?
7. Verify the stories.	Who told the story? Who captured the results? When and where did the story take place?
8. Quantify the results	
9. Conduct a secondary or meta-monitoring analysis	
10. Revise the system based upon lessons learned	

Source: <http://mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>

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