

Now What?

Using Assessment Results to Improve Practice



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Outline

- Analyzing data
 - Qualitative data
 - Quantitative data
 - Making sense of data
- Communicating results
 - Target audience(s)
 - Formats
 - Combining qualitative and quantitative data
- Improving practice
 - Lessons from *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001)
 - Creating an assessment cycle



At the end of the workshop, you will be able to...

- ☐ Describe the process of analyzing qualitative and quantitative data
- ☐ Explain the importance of “storytelling” when reporting assessment results
- ☐ Identify strategies for using assessment results to improve practice
- ☐ Name the key elements of assessment cycles

Analyzing Data

Examples of data

- Responses to a survey that asks students to rate their level of agreement (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) with the following statement: *I have confidence in my ability to develop relationships with others who are different from me.*
- Responses to a survey that asks students to define leadership in their own words.

Examples of data

- A pile of rubrics that rate students ability to state two barriers to physical activity after a fitness consultation

	Does not meet	Meets
Student can state two barriers to physical activity	<i>Cannot state two barriers to physical activity</i>	<i>Can state two barriers to physical activity</i>

- Notes and recordings from a focus group in which students responded to the following question: *Based on your experience as an official, what do you consider to be the key components of effective communication?*

Approach to analysis depends on the nature of the data

- Qualitative data

- Responses to a survey that asks students to define leadership in their own words.
- Notes and recordings from a focus group in which students responded to the following question...

- Quantitative data

- Responses to a survey that asks students to rate their level of agreement (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) with the following statement...
- A pile of rubrics that rate students on their understanding of the importance of physical activity

Qualitative data analysis

- The process:
 - Organize the data
 - Give the data a “onceover,” noting initial impressions
 - Categorize the data
 - You can (a) determine the categories ahead of time, (b) allow the categories to emerge from the data, or (c) do both
 - You may end up with “categories of categories” (i.e., categories and subcategories)
 - This is an *iterative* process

Qualitative data analysis

- The process (continued):
 - Determine the relative significance of each category by counting the number of times it occurs
 - Note responses that do not fit into the categories
 - Find compelling quotes to include in your assessment report
 - Take a step back
 - *What do the data tell you about your assessment question?*
 - *What are the limitations?*
 - *What are the implications? Does it lead you to make changes or confirm your approach (or both)?*
 - *What, if anything, will you change about the assessment process?*

Qualitative data analysis

- *“Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in linear fashion; it is not neat. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data”* (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; as cited in Elkins, 2009).

Quantitative data analysis

- The process:

- Organize the data

- Give the data a “onceover,” noting initial impressions

- Four analytic strategies:

- *Description* (frequencies, percentages, mean, median, mode, range, standard deviation)

- *Differences* (participants vs. non-participants; do certain participants do better than others?)

- *Change* (pre/post)

- *Expectations* (do students meet our

Quantitative data analysis

□ The process (continued):

- Alone, neither measures of central tendency (e.g., mean, mode, median) nor measures of variability (e.g., range, standard deviation) tell the whole story

□ Consider:

- Group 1 scores: 190, 195, 199, 200, 200, 201, 205, 210
- Group 2 scores: 0, 10, 20, 200, 200, 380, 390, 400
- Scores from Group 1 and Group 2 have the same central tendency but different variability

- Just reporting the mean can be misleading. For example, average salary for State of Iowa employees is \$51,000. What role might Kirk Ferentz's salary

Quantitative data analysis

□ The process (continued):

- Conduct other *useful* calculations (e.g., sums, percentages)
- Take a step back
 - What do the data tell you about your assessment question? (What?)
 - What are its implications for policy and/or practice? (So What?)
 - What, if anything, will you change about the program or process? (Now What?)

□ Other considerations:

- Use online survey design software (e.g., Websurveyor), Microsoft Excel, or SPSS to make calculations
- For help with statistical analysis (e.g., *statistical*

Communicating results

Determine your audience(s)

- ☐ Administrators
- ☐ Partners/collaborators
- ☐ Students:
 - ☐ Potential users/participants
 - ☐ Past users/participants
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Funding sources
- ☐ Faculty members
- ☐ Referral sources
- ☐ Colleagues (don't assume that they already know!)
- ☐ Community members
- ☐ Others?



Target communication to your audience(s)

- ❑ What information is most relevant to _____?
- ❑ What communication format might be most effective?



keep it simple

- In communicating to decision-makers, keep in mind...
 - Central nuggets
 - Focus on implications (the So What?)
 - They receive immense amounts of information
 - Bullets
 - Connect results to outcomes (goals)
 - Anticipate questions and provide answers

Communication format

- ☐ Report
- ☐ Poster or flier
- ☐ Presentation
- ☐ Newsletter
- ☐ Student newspaper
- ☐ Website
- ☐ Others?

*Flier from
University of
North Carolina,
Wilmington*



**We've heard *your* voice...
and taken *action*.**

CHANGE #1

You said: "An internship is important to my career future"

We responded: The number of internship listings on SeaWork has doubled since last year.

Thank You
for your feedback and time
spent taking surveys about
your UNCW experience.


CAREER CENTER

When possible, combine quantitative data with qualitative data

“...I came to see you over a year ago for smoking cessation help and I used Chantix to quit. I wanted to let you know that next Wednesday will be the one year anniversary of my quit date, and I have not smoked since then. One year free! I just wanted to thank you for your help again. It's a great feeling to have accomplished it!”

Students who participate in tobacco cessation consultations at Health Iowa have a 40% cessation rate.

A couple of quotes...

"My job provided me with a sense of belonging.

It gave me a place where I was needed,
a place where I was accepted,
and a place I was expected to be."

--Student employee, Division of Student Services

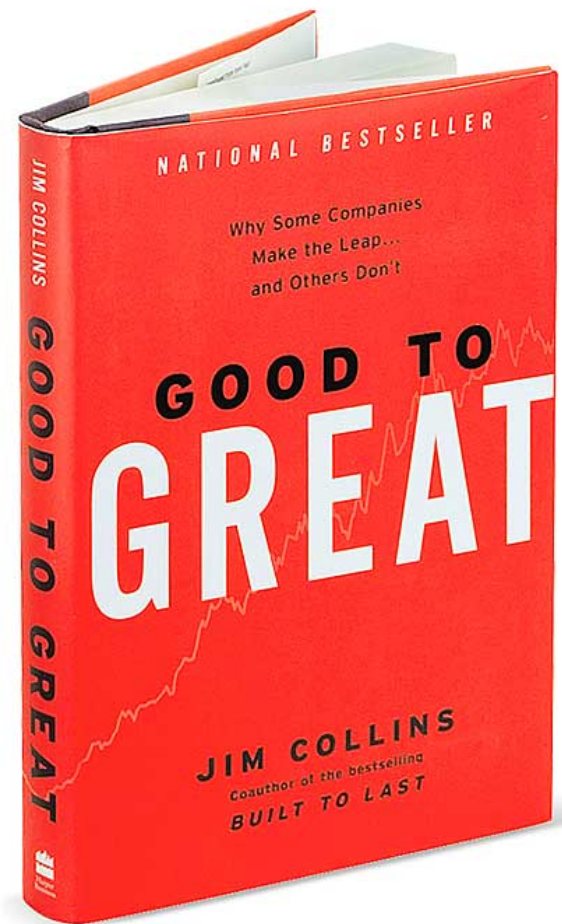
"Nobody ever marched on Washington because of a pie chart." -- Andy Goodman, Storytelling Expert

The Power of Storytelling

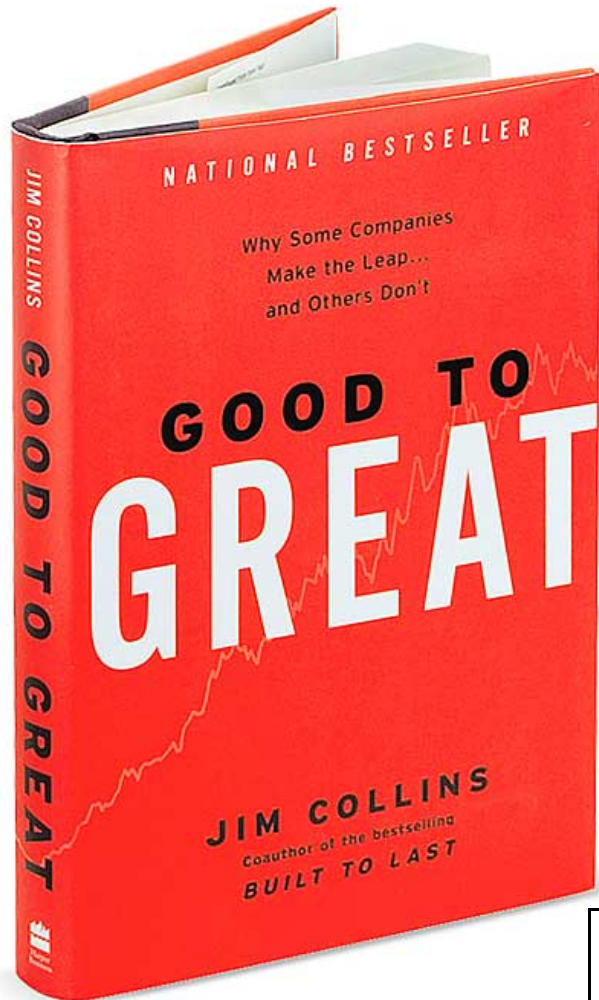
Improving practice

Lessons from *Good to Great*

- Collins (2001) compares companies that went from being good to being great with companies that failed to make the same leap
- Relevant conclusions: good-to-great companies “confront the brutal facts,” “have a culture of discipline,” and were transformed through a *cumulative* process



Creating “Great” learning experiences for our students



The “great” companies shared some common characteristics related to assessment:

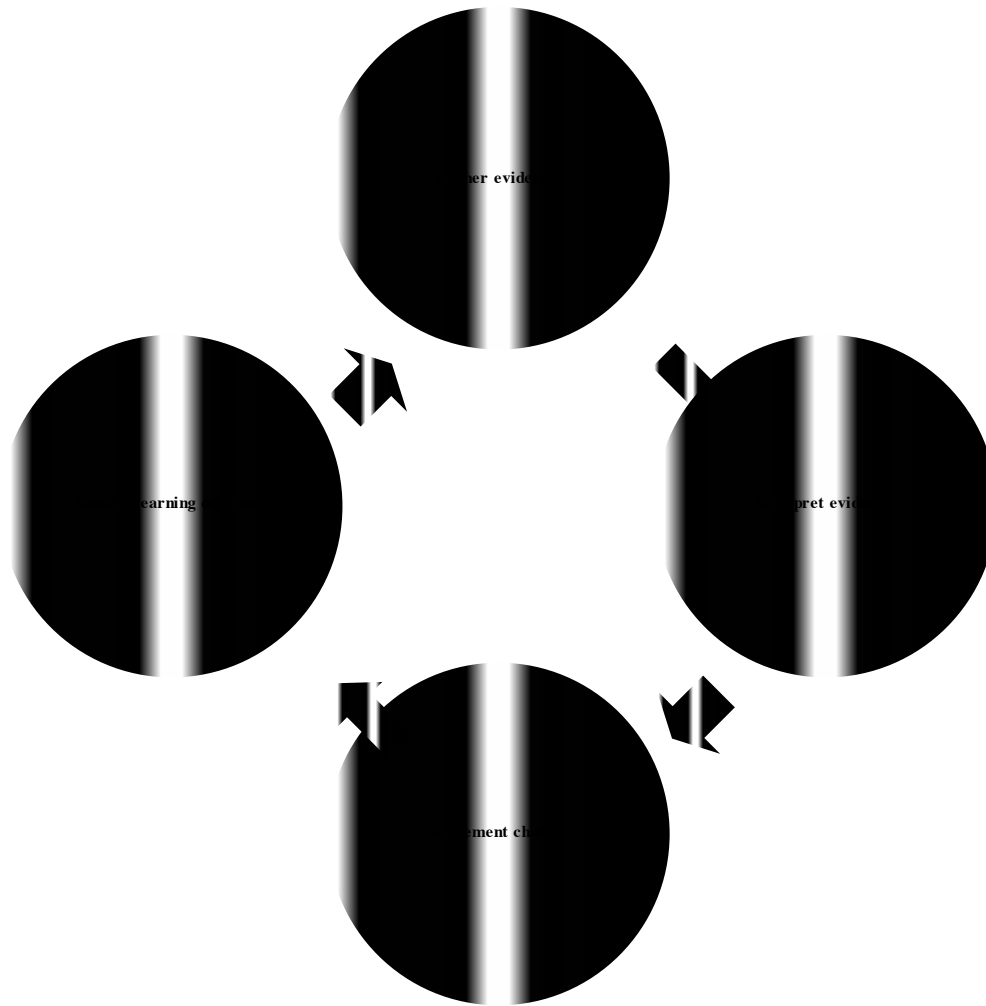
- A culture of disciplined thought and reflection
- Lack of resources did not mean lack of disciplined thought – it made rigor all the more important
- Looking at the “brutal facts”:
Autopsies without blame

“What matters is that you rigorously assemble evidence – quantitative or qualitative – to track your progress.”

Lessons from *Good to Great*

- ❑ Confront the brutal facts
 - ❑ Ask questions to gain understanding
 - ❑ Engage in dialogue and debate
 - ❑ Conduct autopsies without blame
- ❑ Foster a culture of discipline
 - ❑ *“Once you know the right thing, do you have the discipline to do the right thing and, equally important, to stop doing the wrong thing?”*
- ❑ Celebrate small successes
 - ❑ *“The good-to-great transformations never happened in one fell swoop. There was no*

Assessment – a cyclical process



After you implement change, the assessment process begins again, as you assess whether or not the changes you made had their intended effect

Creating an assessment cycle – the big picture

- The purpose of an assessment cycle:
 - It is difficult to assess “everything, all the time” – while everything is important, we are not in a position to act or make change on “everything, all the time”
 - An assessment cycle can help you determine what to assess and when, thereby making assessment more manageable



Creating an assessment cycle – the big picture

- Elements of an assessment cycle:
 - Timeline – be realistic
 - An organizing framework for determining what to assess and when
 - E.g., departmental learning outcomes, Undergraduate Learning Outcomes

Department Learning Outcome	Year(s) when outcome is assessed				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Every year

Take Home Points

- ❑ Small wins
- ❑ A confirmation is a finding, too
- ❑ No one knows your data better than you
- ❑ Focus on your central nuggets of findings and look for various ways to communicate this (numbers plus narrative)
- ❑ Be selfish - Focus on using your data first (for improving practice), before communicating it to stakeholders
- ❑ Make decisions based on information vs. instinct
- ❑ Help is available!

Questions?

