

In addition to infrastructure issues, there are process-oriented issues, such as the naming system used by the information author or acquirer. If the information will be used immediately and not archived, the naming system used by the author has little relevance. However, if the information is likely to be repurposed, a controlled vocabulary or at least an agreed-on system should be used to label the information. For example, white



TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Validating Best Practices

Collecting and disseminating best practices may be difficult, but validating their contribution to the bottom line is even more challenging. Even with a database, an intuitive, easy-to-learn front end, multiple points of access, and a streamlined process for capturing best practices, the system may lay dormant unless the quality of data stored in it can be validated. That is, simply because a knowledge worker submits what he or she thinks is a best practice doesn't mean it should be disseminated throughout the organization. This situation exists on the Internet, where anyone can start a web site and self-publish information on any subject, even though he or she may have no expertise in what is being presented. What one knowledge worker considers a pearl of wisdom may be viewed as ludicrous or simply wrong by another.

The solution used most often in industry parallels that used in academia, where articles submitted for publication in a print or online journal are first peer-reviewed by experts in the area. In many cases, the original article is either rejected outright or accepted provisionally with editorial and content changes. Similarly, ideas submitted from employees go through a screening process. However, instead of outright rejections which might simply state that the topic has been covered or that it's being covered by some other method, to encourage future submissions, employees can be sent a gracious letter or e-mail thanking them for their submission.