

## **WEEK 11 – DETERMINING WHAT IS SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION: LESSONS LEARNED**

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As the esteemed Dr. Hansen always says, statutes don't pay attention to practical issues or difficulties, they just say, implement this.

So what makes for successful implementation? Our list keeps growing, but here's a sampling of what we see as important lessons learned.

First and foremost, consider the effects of a policy change. Often, it starts with the idea that the system is broken and it needs to be fixed. This kind of thinking results in ill-conceived policy, bombastic rhetoric, and unhappy consequences.

Second, if we're going to be successful at policy-making, then we need to integrate implementation considerations into policy planning and decision making processes. This begins with a caveat, be careful of what you wish.

It is relatively easy to enact policy. However, when implementation is not considered in the asking or the formation of policy, dissatisfaction ensues.

Third, there is a lot of discussion on what works and what doesn't work. However, there is little structured reporting on policy implementation that addresses the resultant effects of the changes, both successes and failures.

Most reports play two games when an implementation fails or is perceived as failed. The blame game is looking for a scapegoat, whether it is an individual or an organization. The other is truth and consequences, where we see the aftereffects of poor communication and attempts to reframe an event when there is less than successful policy implementation, or a special interest group refusing to see anything positive in the outcome.

Fourth, every report should be learning opportunity, using lessons learned in creating report this time to improve planning for the next time. A good postmortem on planning as process should identify organizational, management and communication issues that need to be resolved or used as exemplars of good planning.

Fifth, every useful postmortem wants stakeholder perspectives. Find out what the stakeholders want in a policy change. Work to create consensus on outcomes from a suggested change. Take advantage of their expertise and knowledge to improve policy formulation and implementation.

Finally, find ways to keep relevant people throughout the organization informed about the changes and ongoing issues and benefits.