Have we Made a Difference?
Measuring Evaluation Influence

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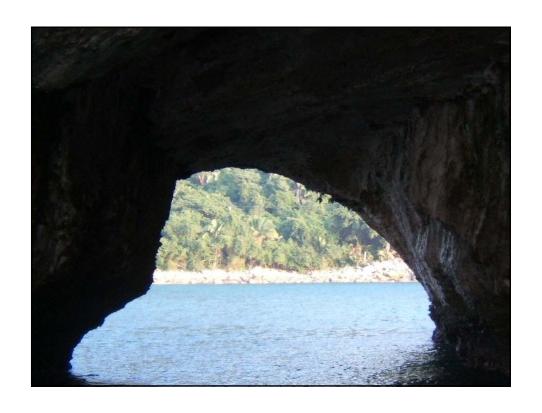- Slides and tools: www.cathexisconsulting.ca/interesting

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Agenda

- Context
- Rationale
- Methods
- Initial Findings
- Implications
- Q&A

Context: Defining a World Evaluation Agenda

Rationale:
Why do we do evaluation?

Q: Why do we do evaluation?
A: To improve our health care

Q: Why do we do evaluation?
A: To better protect our environment

Q: Why do we do evaluation?
A: So children can have a better start in life

Q: Why do we do evaluation?
A: To make our world a better place

How Influential is Evaluation?

- There is anecdotal evidence to support the assumption that evaluation is beneficial

- There is relatively little empirical evidence.

- We want to develop tools that we can use to:
  - measure evaluation influence, and
  - test the assumption that evaluation is beneficial

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Theoretical Model for Evaluation

Hierarchy of Evaluation Accountability: Evaluating Evaluation

Evaluation Action Hierarchy		Hierarchy Utilization Questions
7. Program and decision impacts	7. To what extent and in what ways was the program improved? To what extent were informed, high quality decisions made?	
6. Practice and program change	6. To what extent did intended use occur? Were recommendations implemented?	
5. Stakeholders' knowledge and attitude changes	5. What did intended users learn? How were users' attitudes and ideas affected?	
4. Reactions of primary intended users	4. What do intended users think about evaluation? What's the evaluation's credibility? believability? relevance? accuracy? potential utility?	
3. Stakeholder participation	3. Who was involved? To what extent were key stakeholders and primary decision makers involved throughout?	
2. Evaluation activities	2. What data were gathered? What was the focus, the design, the analysis? What happened in the evaluation?	
1. Inputs	1. To what extent were resources for the evaluation sufficient and well managed? Was time sufficient?	

Source: Patton, M.Q. (1997). Utilization-focused evaluation (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Page 236

Methods:
Our Tools and Processes

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Toolkit Development

- Considerations:
  - Want to minimize demand on the "client", but still engage them
  - Clients more willing to talk on the phone than to fill out a form
  - Each evaluation is unique
  - Each evaluation has different goals
  - Want tools that will improve the evaluation
  - Want to measure more tangible results than client perceptions
  - Need to be able to analyse the data in the end
- Draft tools – currently being pilot tested

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Toolkit

- Five components:
  - Client goal-setting worksheet
  - Interim client interview
  - Final client interview
  - Follow-up client interview
  - Tools to help the evaluators reflect on and document the benefits

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Goal-Setting Activity

- Evaluator and client will discuss **why** the client is doing the evaluation

- Identify key goals for the evaluation (drill down to determine the **real** goals)

- Categorize for easier reference later

- Think about how they might measure the achievement of the "essential" goals (optional)

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Interim Client Interview

- Informal chat between evaluation project manager and client every 3 months or so

  - What's working well, what's not working well

  - What influence the evaluation has had so far

  - Review & revise client's goals for the evaluation

  - Make sure the evaluation is on track to achieve the goals, and if not, then correct

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Final Client Interview

- Conducted by someone other than the evaluation project manager about a month after the evaluation finishes:
  - Typical satisfaction questions
  - Use/intended use of the evaluation findings
  - Achievement of goals
  - Unanticipated outcomes of the evaluation
  - Perceptions of interview (pilot only)

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Follow-up Client Interview

- Similar to the final client interview, but no satisfaction items

- One year after the evaluation is finished, or a suitable time frame depending on when goals are expected to be achieved

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Evaluator Tools

- Reflection guides to use during the evaluation

- Agenda for evaluation team reflection meeting at the end of the project

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Initial Findings:
What We Have Learned

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Initial Findings from Piloting

- **What worked?/Benefits**
  - Response Rates
    - Previous self-administered satisfaction survey: 30% (3 out of 9)
    - Current tool: 76% (13 out of 17)
  - Feedback opportunity appreciated by clients (particularly satisfaction questions)
  - Helped in evaluation planning and strengthens the focus on utilization
  - Gained knowledge of evaluation utilization and influences

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Initial Findings from Piloting

- **Utilization and Influence (N=7)**
  - 1 evaluation – not utilized
  - 5 evaluations – utilized
  - 1 evaluation – evidence of influence
  - Too early for detecting influences?

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Initial Findings from Piloting

- **Unanticipated influences (N=7)**
  - Positive
    - Made us interested in doing evaluations of other programs
    - Got staff excited about the program
    - The information the evaluation generated made the organization be perceived as expert leaders in the field
  - Negative
    - Goal displacement
    - Timing of the evaluation was inappropriate and caused political tension

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Initial Findings from Piloting

- **Satisfaction (N=13)**
  (Scale: 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=excellent)
  - Understanding of the project and its context (3.5)
  - Attentiveness to your needs (3.6)
  - Quality of deliverables (3.2)
  - Appropriateness of deliverables, for your needs (3.3)
  - Timeliness (3.7)
  - Accessibility of the Project Manager(s) (3.9)
  - Quality of communication (3.5)

Initial Findings from Piloting

- **Positives**
  - Flexibility, flexibility, flexibility
  - Being true to the facts
  - Politically sensitive, persistent, patient, respectful
  - Participatory and collaborative approach
  - Familiarity with the organization/project
- **Negatives**
  - Information needs were not originally met
  - Scoping issues

Initial Findings from Piloting

- **Work in progress**
  - Gathering information on use and influence
    - Inclusion of all relevant evaluation users in the feedback process
    - Identifying credible evidence requires client interest and time
  - Documentation (use of project logs)
  - Feedback to clients must not be forgotten

Evaluation Influence: Examples

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Next Steps

- More pilot testing until the tools work smoothly
- Accumulate evidence of the influence of Cathexis evaluations over time
- Develop better documentation mechanisms
- See if we can analyse the data more thoroughly
- Encourage others to try the tools out, to see if they work in different contexts
- Encourage others to try different approaches

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Implications:
So What? Now What?

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Discussion Questions

- How do you/might you track evaluation utilization and influence in your organization?

- What are the barriers to track utilization and influence and how can we overcome them?

- Why is it worth doing?

- What are the benefits to evaluators, evaluation users and the society at large?

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