

BENCHMARKING 2030

DESKTOP RESEARCH

INTERIM REPORT

Compiled by

Bruce Searles, Director, Business Development,

Global Benchmarking Network

bruce@benchmarkingpartnerships.com.au

JULY 2010

BENCHMARKING 2030 DESKTOP RESEARCH INTERIM REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Global Benchmarking Network (GBN) is an alliance of leading benchmarking organisations worldwide who share a common vision and mission. The GBN was founded in 1994 by representatives from benchmarking centres in Germany, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. The current membership comprises more than 20 benchmarking organisations from five continents.

The GBN Mission is - a global network of organisations and experts focussed on promoting and facilitating the use of benchmarking and sharing of best practices by helping each other, and working together.

The GBN vision is to be recognised as the Global hub for benchmarking with active representation in all countries. The idea is that all members of the GBN continuously supply the network with their knowledge and gain the valuable opportunity of learning from each other.

The GBN Values are:

- Helping each other - as evidenced by participation in team or group activities and projects as appropriate and attendance at the annual meeting
- Working Together – as evidenced by willingness to share and assist other members, participation in team or group activities and projects as appropriate and attendance at the annual meeting.
- Professionalism – as evidenced by handling all relations between GBN members in a professional manner
- Excellence – as evidenced by developing expertise in benchmarking, leading or managing benchmarking activities and promoting the role of benchmarking in performance improvement.
- Ethical Behaviour – as evidenced by following the Benchmarking Code of Conduct and respect for confidentiality.

A lot of changes and progress have happened during the last few years eg growth in Membership, GBN Roadshows, appointment of Directors with defined Roles, GBN projects like this one and no doubt more will change even more quickly in future, particularly as a recent global survey by the GBN shows that benchmarking will soon become the most used improvement tool. (<http://www.globalbenchmarking.org/gbn-survey-results-business-improvement-and-benchmarking>)

To align the future activities of the GBN with the needs and aims of all members the GBN has commenced a Benchmarking 2030 Project which will help to identify areas of further improvement well into the future.

CONTENTS

1. The Benchmarking 2030 Project – vital to our future	page 4
2. Benchmarking Definition – does GBN really have a relevant one	page 4
3. Global Megatrends – some challenging questions from the author	page 6
4. Trends in Benchmarking – is GBN & benchmarking too tactical?	page 8
5. Potential Technology Solutions – is current technology just a blip?	page 10
6. Maturity of Benchmarking – is it relevant for the future?	page 13
7. The Search for Information – not much out there on our future.	page 14
8. The GBN Itself – are we relevant for the future?	page 14
9. Next Steps – towards the Roundtable	page 16
10. Key Questions for the Roundtable – what should we ask?	Page 16

1. THE BENCHMARKING 2030 PROJECT

Background

The GBN is embarking on a project to look at the future for Benchmarking. We are seeking inputs from existing, past and potential GBN Members. This project will take into account new technologies, social networking opportunities as well as issues such as global financial crises, and Megatrends like governance, political, social and environmental trends and changing natural characteristics.

This project will answer the following questions - What will Benchmarking look like in 2030 – and in between? What are the tools, methodologies and technologies that Benchmarkers can use now to help organisations and economies to improve their outcomes? The main outcome will be to report on results of a **Roundtable** as part of the next GBN AGM and Annual Conference.

The project will investigate the use of benchmarking and the future use of benchmarking techniques: It will connect Benchmarking experts with people from politics, science and companies to discuss the use and future use of benchmarking (e.g. survey, roundtable discussion, delphi study). Key parties to the project are Bruce Searles, Benchmarking Partnerships (project leader), Dr Robin Mann, bpir.com and Dr Holger Kohl, Fraunhofer. These three people will be doing considerable desktop research and preparing for their presentations and facilitated discussions as part of Roundtables at the next GBN AGM and Annual Conference.

The initial stage of this project is to undertake desktop research to look for current and future global trends and changes that may threaten or create opportunities for benchmarking in future. This research will help form the project platform and help to frame an initial questionnaire of past, present and potential future GBN Members and their associates.

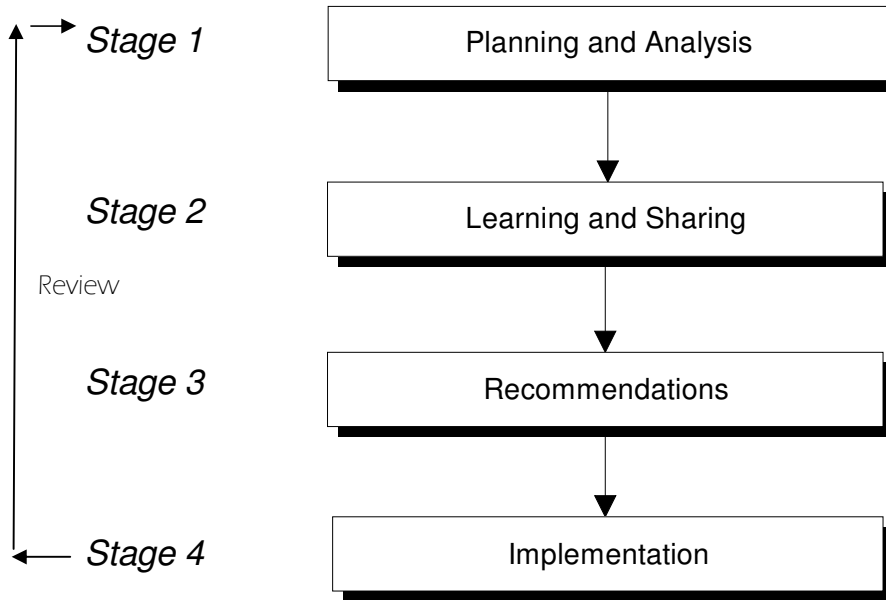
2. Benchmarking Definition

Benchmarking is a relentless strategic discovery process; a search for, identification, understanding, adaptation and then implementation of solutions leading an enterprise to far superior performance, which is based on the best practices.

In a nutshell the main value add from benchmarking over other improvement tools is **learning innovations of HOW to improve from others**. You need to decide the WHAT, other partners will teach you about the HOW, and you need to make the appropriate changes for your enterprise.

What are the trends and opportunities and treats over the next 30 years regarding this key differentiator?

The basic methodology for Benchmarking for improvement is shown below (Source: www.benchmarkingpartnerships.com.au)



The main categories of benchmarking are also defined below – the most ideal for making vast, sustainable improvements is Best Practice Benchmarking.

Informal Benchmarking - Actively encouraging employees to learn from the experience and expertise of other colleagues and organisations through comparing practices and processes e.g. through best practice tours, conferences, workshops etc

Performance Benchmarking (Benchmarks) - Comparing performance levels of a process/activity with other organisations

Best Practice Benchmarking - Follows a structured process for identifying your organisational strategic priorities, comparing relevant performance levels and practices across a variety of industries and experiences; then learning and thoroughly understanding **how** better performers have achieved their excellent results , adapting these best practices learned to your own culture and systems and then implementing improvements.

Camp and Anderson noted in a 2004 study that the trend at that time was towards use of Best Practice Benchmarking for improvement (Current Position and Future Development of Benchmarking; Robert C Camp and Bjorn Anderson; Feb 11 2004).

3. Current Global Trends in Society - Megatrends

The OECD has published a report by Cornelia Daheim . Z_punkt GmbH . The Foresight Company - 6 Key Trends Shaping Future Society – presented in December 2009 in Paris.

20 Megatrends are categorised in 6 key trend areas – *my questions for consideration are noted in italics*

<p>SOCIETY</p> <p><i>How are countries & organisations responding?</i></p> <p><i>Is the GBN sufficiently diverse?</i></p> <p><i>Is triple bottom line enough?</i></p> <p><i>Would not-for-profits / charities benefit from Benchmarking?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Urbanisation and demographic change <input type="checkbox"/> Women on the rise <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural diversity <input type="checkbox"/> New patterns of mobility <input type="checkbox"/> Welfare and disaster recovery 	<p>TECHNOLOGY</p> <p><i>Is social networking merely a blip on the changes?</i></p> <p><i>What benchmarking can we do with nature?</i></p> <p><i>How do we make sure technology is not the driver of change?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Digital lifestyle <input type="checkbox"/> Convergence of technologies <input type="checkbox"/> Learning from nature <input type="checkbox"/> Ubiquitous intelligence
<p>CONSUMERS</p> <p><i>Should GBN have a health project – is western health in disarray?</i></p> <p><i>Who will be the benchmarking consumers?</i></p> <p><i>What's around the corner from business excellence?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Next level of individualism <input type="checkbox"/> New consumption patterns <input type="checkbox"/> Thriving health sector 	<p>GLOBALISED WORLD</p> <p><i>Should GBN set the example? eg What about developing countries / poverty</i></p> <p><i>How can benchmarking make the world more secure?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Globalization 2.0 <input type="checkbox"/> Urbanisation <input type="checkbox"/> New political world order <input type="checkbox"/> Increasing security threats
<p>BUSINESS</p> <p><i>What about governance?</i></p> <p><i>What about business greed & moving from one financial crisis to another</i></p> <p><i>How can the GBN ensure responsible business?</i></p> <p><i>How does GBN help the growing NGO sector and SMEs?</i></p> <p><i>Are clusters a benchmarking opportunity?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge-based economy <input type="checkbox"/> Change of the world of work <input type="checkbox"/> Business ecosystems <input type="checkbox"/> Management systems trended to public sector – not-for-profits & NGOs? <input type="checkbox"/> Business Clusters 	<p>ENVIRONMENT</p> <p><i>What about the risks eg BP & the Gulf oil spill</i></p> <p><i>Is GBN sufficiently focused on a future for our children?</i></p> <p><i>Are charitable donations achieving the best for those in need after disasters?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Energy and resource reversal <input type="checkbox"/> Climate change and other environmental impacts <input type="checkbox"/> Natural disasters increasing and more help needed to communities

The report describes the trends in more detail. (see attached) What do these trends mean for benchmarking and the GBN? This is the focus for the Roundtable led by discussions from Robin Mann, Holger Kohl and Bruce Searles.

Megatrends in the Public Sector

(EU eGovernment Benchmarking 2010+; Alexander Schellong; 13 Dec. 2009). Although the following issues are addressed from a technology perspective the issues themselves are certainly relevant to Benchmarking 2030. My questions are shown in italics.

Rising public sector spending – ageing populations will lead to an increase in healthcare and pension budgets, apart from current government economic stimulus spending. A shortfall in tax revenue and additional budget constraints through debt payments, both resulting from the economic crisis will further put government budgets under stress. ICT will be considered as a facilitating element to further reduce costs. *How can benchmarking help here? What about the lessons from the past and the oscillating financial global fortunes and their impact on ability to fund ageing populations?*

Trade off between free market and regulation – the economic crisis and concerns about social welfare and equity will lead to further calls for greater government intervention. At the same time other non-government actors will be seen as having more appropriate solutions. ICT will be used for oversight, analysis or reporting. *Should the GBN facilitate benchmarking between the non-government and government sectors? Does regulation really work in the long run?*

New consumer groups – increasing numbers of singles and women in the workforce and a generation of “digital natives” expect society to take advantage of ICT for a flexible lifestyle. Immigration, religious diversity and ageing society will require new ways of public service delivery and identity management. *What is the role of Benchmarking / GBN?*

Information economy – the information economy is powered by digital infrastructure. ICT is flattening communication, markets and hierarchies and is contributing to disruption of business and organisational models. ICT facilitate the speed of communications and more selectively control access to, and participation in, information exchange. Technologies once used only by experts are now available to everyone. Successful organizations are those that harness the data available to them both internally and externally. Decisions are driven by digital data that can be combined (mash up) or reconfigured so as to provide new information. Networks and resources of knowledge workers can be adapted more flexible. *How can Benchmarking / GBN help people to access the right data and knowledge at the right time?*

Networked Government / Open Government / Government 2.0 – top-down democracy is fading and government by network has emerged. Issues like immigration, trade, financial markets and global warming transcend national boundaries. Government will not be able to solve many issues itself – even collectively. Broader networks of government, private sector, the public and NGO's / Not for profits is needed. Web 2.0 provides the opportunity for open government as espoused by the Obama administration. Information and services are provided to citizens seamlessly when and where they need it. Government will collaborate with intermediaries who have solutions in place. Governments are more open because the democratization of data drives accountability, engagement and performance. Balancing privacy and citizen participation will have to be carefully managed. *Technology is not the only answer here – Benchmarking as a tool and proven methodology is well placed to facilitate networking solutions – how can the GBN help?*

Cyber security – this refers to the protection of all things internet – from networks to data on computers. The protection requires identity management (eg validating individual's access to networks) , risk management (identifying vulnerabilities and threats and determining appropriate countermeasures) and incident management (responses when security threats occur). This will impact on the level of trust in public services and information. *How can the GBN help to make life safer and more secure to allow people to do what they want without unnecessary intrusion?*

*In general – human-kind keeps making mistakes and ignoring the lessons of history and the experience of others. Take the global financial crises, lack of financial governance by banks, and the regular environmental disasters, cyberstalkers etc. **How can GBN help society to avoid repeating the same mistakes and becoming complacent again in future?***

Is there a public sector / private sector / NGO angle? Certainly moving some of the management techniques to the public sector has engaged a relatively new audience and depending on the region the public sector now is performing better than the private sector in terms of customer service for instance. Not-for-profits need to be considered – so much funding is going into social welfare and disaster recovery that efficiencies and effectiveness may be improved significantly in the way support is provided to those in need by charitable and volunteer type organisations. The charities are in intensive competition with one another for funds – does this impact on social support? Benchmarking would certainly help with innovations and improvement and business focus.

4. Current Trends in Benchmarking

The key trend noticed amongst people in organisations is their **lack of time** to undertake benchmarking well and hence they are not able to reap the benefits from proper and rigorous benchmarking. Sometimes they undertake quick benchmarking without properly following the methodology and this gives “benchmarking” a bad name.

This response is reflected in the GBN Survey of Improvement Tools in 2008. The majority of the 450 organisations responding to the survey were not deriving substantial improvements from benchmarking. The survey indicated that this is because they were not undertaking benchmarking properly. Those organisation that were undertaking benchmarking properly were reaping substantial improvements in business outcomes as a result. At the same time, the survey also revealed that benchmarking is a tool for the future, and will be one of the most commonly used improvement tools.

Future Use of Improvement Techniques - Worldwide



The above GBN survey examined the use of business improvement tools and benchmarking worldwide. Some of these (frequently used) techniques (e.g. quality management, different excellence approaches/models like EFQM) suggest or even dictate the use of benchmarking (or similar concepts). Therefore it is valuable to examine within this Benchmarking 2030 project how the integration or connectivity of benchmarking and other improvement tools should or could look. This is important because established tools may serve as door opener for the future use of benchmarking in private and public companies.

The GBN has embarked on a series of Benchmarking Roadshows to teach people how to do benchmarking properly - <http://www.globalbenchmarking.org/new-gbn-roadshow>

Organisations are tending to de-layer and reduce functional boundaries so that co-ordination and work of importance is increasingly occurring through networks of informal relationships (like in society generally) rather than channels tightly prescribed by formal reporting structures and detailed work processes. Will this be a trend for benchmarking too? In this case, a problem may arise because executives generally pay little attention to assessing and supporting informal networks within their organisations.

Some organisations are coming together in clusters for commercial or other reasons and there is an ideal opportunity here for them to be benchmarking and sharing of best practices to improve together. Care has to be taken to avoid apparent collusion by competitors though. Business clusters are like-minded groups of co-operative businesses and supporting organisations with common business objectives that work collaboratively for economic growth. Clusters can include businesses with complementary capability or businesses involved in the same supply/value chain with common suppliers and distributors, and can include related organisations that support these businesses such as industry associations and knowledge providers (universities and research institutions). Clusters are emerging for small to medium enterprises and this may give them an opportunity to carry out benchmarking by sharing financial and other resources. Clusters are often seen as catalysts for knowledge sharing and innovation, both of which benchmarking enables.

Some benchmarking providers have offered services to help resolve this dilemma eg web services, services to do the benchmarking on behalf of the client.

Another key gap area is the failure of organisational leaders to effectively implement the changes arising from the recommendations phase of benchmarking. **Leadership**, or lack of it, is a key hurdle to the initiation and closure of effective benchmarking.

The trend towards quick “benchmarking” is also leading to a lack of understanding of the details of best practices and hence not being able to adapt and effectively implement the best practices learned from the benchmarking partners.

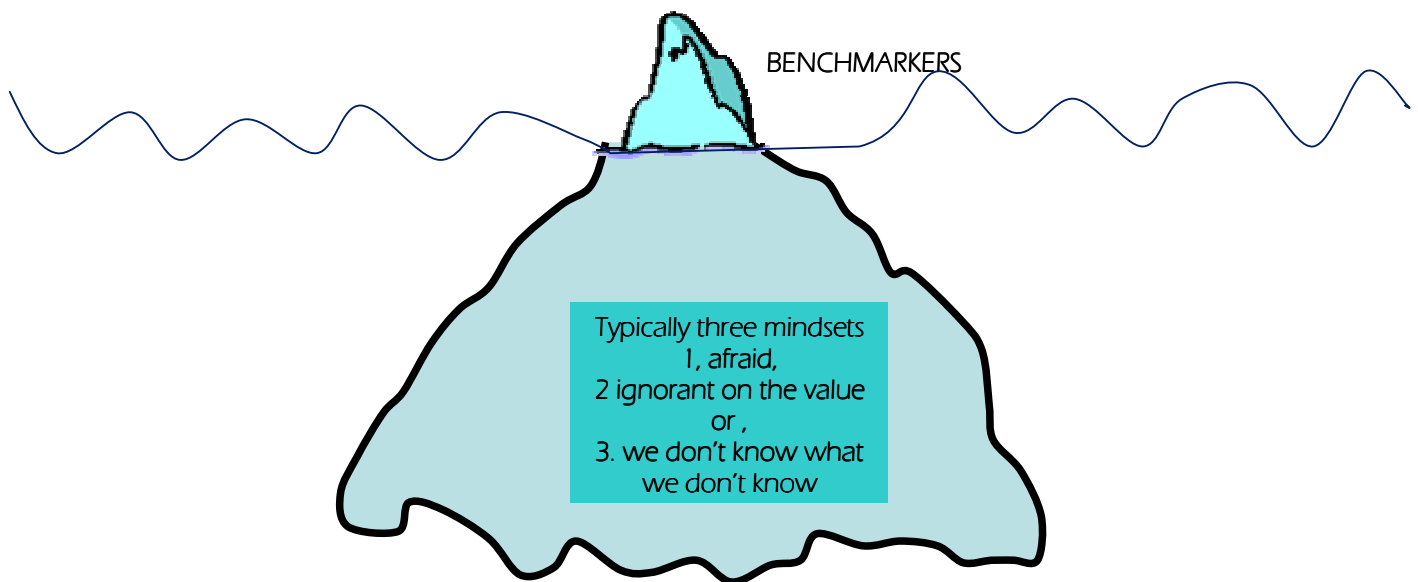
Another difficulty faced in benchmarking is to identify, access and create trusting relationships with benchmarking partners.

One respondent to the Benchmarking 2030 blog emphasised the need for evaluation of innovations. “I have developed a framework to integrate benchmarking with innovation and evaluation. You need to **monitor and evaluate** to measure the benefits of any innovation. This process involves the development of a plan to establish measures and a regular reporting system to set a baseline and record change at regular intervals. How are you going to know if you have had a win if you cannot measure the impact of your change program and its outcomes? There will be an increasing government imperative to report on outcomes to demonstrate accountability. Evaluation is the tool

for this. Global trends are towards more and more innovation BUT we need to demonstrate that our new idea adds value and provide a solution for the initial issue or problem. How better to do that than to evaluate the outcomes and impact of that idea.

Evaluation is the systematic process of collecting information (qualitative and quantitative data) that focuses on the impact of a change process at any stage. The findings of an evaluation will give you information about your performance so you can identify opportunities for improvement and focus **benchmarking** efforts.”

Also another key difficulty faced in benchmarking is to encourage organisations to start to undertake benchmarking. Most are afraid of the potential consequences (in their eyes) of losing competitive advantage or intellectual property, ignoring the benefits that can far exceed any risk of potential losses. In some cases organizations really ‘don’t know what they don’t know’ – haven’t put their toes in the water to experience the wonderful potential of benchmarking. The organisations that undertake benchmarking are those at the tip of the iceberg, whereas the large majority of organisations are below the deep, murky waters. **How do we open the eyes of those below the surface and get them to do benchmarking, and do it well?**



5. Towards Solutions – Potential Use of Technology

Social networking, dating services and other quick networking services along the lines of ‘speed dating’ offer opportunities to enhance benchmarking productivity. Benchmarkers would need to take some of the social networking concepts and tools and apply them in a benchmarking context. Examples include:

- **Dating services** – the core of benchmarking is a trusting “relationship” between two or more parties wanting to learn and share best practices in a well defined scope – the internet dating services tend, in a similar fashion, to match people with similar or desirable characteristics. I’m not sure whether some of these services go the extra step to facilitate the successful relationship

- **Intranet benchmarking/knowledge management facilities exist within some organisations** – benchmarkers may consider extending these concepts to Internet to facilitate exchange between different organizations
- **New methods of face to face networking such as Round Tables (www.bestpraxclub.com.in) and World Café – <http://www.theworldcafe.com>**

Benchmarking essentially differentiates from other improvement tools in learning the HOW to improve from other organisations and industries. Often this is done through structured networking amongst benchmarking partners who are sharing and learning best practices. Hence, it is inherently logical that relatively new social networking may offer some opportunities for benchmarking.

Below are some key opportunities from the social networking environment. A full report on these tools is at Appendix 1.

Social Networking

virident.com/bhive/t/4/benchmark.jsp defines social networking websites as *allowing people to connect with others who share common interests and provide a forum for interaction between them*. (This could be a basic definition for a benchmarking service!). The social networking sites also allow people in these groups to keep track of what is happening in each others' groups.

Below I have identified some social networking sites whose concepts may be useful in a benchmarking context.

Linked-In – this concept may help to overcome one of the key dilemmas of benchmarking – initiating a trusted relationship with companies you wish to do benchmarking – **through linked-in you may be able to identify someone you know who has a relationship with someone in the benchmarking partner company you are seeking**. Also of potential interest, in October, 2008, LinkedIn revealed plans to opening its social network of 30 million professionals globally as a potential sample for business-to-business research.

Livemocha is a [social network service](#) where users can learn languages through audio-visual lessons, [peer tutoring](#) tools and support systems. Users can aid others in learning the languages that they are proficient in while learning other languages themselves. This is achieved through peer reviewing of submissions, live text and audio conversations, and other learning systems. **Maybe this could have some interest for benchmarking training?**

MEETin.org , or the MEETin group, is a web-based social community dedicated to providing a casual social environment for people without charging membership fees, or otherwise profiting from events. The MEETin "Vibe" represents the general culture and attitude of the MEETin group. Each chapter is run by local volunteers with the main purpose of bringing people together to find new friends in their city. The MEETin group also help connect cities around the globe, and allows members to quickly re-establish their social network across various MEETin cities. As an integral part of the MEETin Vibe, members are encouraged to organize and participate in social events in any given MEETin city, without the pressures of business networking or "pick-up" scenes. Events are created by any member by posting it on the local group's web site, and events have no fees or dues This may also be interesting in a benchmarking context.

MyLife (formerly **Reunion.com**) is a [social network service](#) founded in [2002](#) by [Jeffrey Tinsley](#) after meeting his wife at their high school reunion. The company began with the acquisition of [highschoolalumni.com](#) and [PlanetAlumni.com](#).-The website claims to help members find and keep in touch with friends, relatives and lost loves. **Something like this may be useful to help**

benchmarkers keep track of each other when they move from one organisation to another.

Netlog (formerly known as **Facebox** and **Bingbox**) is a [Belgian social networking website](#) specifically targeted at the European youth demographic. Netlog has a localization technology ensuring that all content is geotargeted and personalized to each member's profile – this concept would be a boon for benchmarking. A similar feature may be useful to target benchmarking partners to each other's specific needs.

Ravelry is a free [social networking website](#), beta-launched in May 2007. It functions as an organizational tool for a variety of fiber arts including [knitting](#), [crocheting](#), [spinning](#), and [weaving](#). Members share projects, ideas, and their collection of [yarn](#), [fiber](#), and tools via various components. As of January 2010, Ravelry had over 600,000 members worldwide. – Benchmarking of knitting!

ResearchGATE is a free [social networking](#) site and collaboration tool aimed at scientific researchers from all disciplines of science. It provides web applications including [semantic searching](#) (whole abstract searching)¹, [file-sharing](#), publication database sharing (e.g. [endnote libraries](#)), forums, methodology discussions, groups etc. Members can create their personal blog within the network. Since May 2008, ResearchGATE has gathered a user base of more than 250,000 researchers from 196 countries.^[3]

Among other tools, ResearchGATE has developed a semantic search engine that browses internal resources and major external research databases, including [PubMed](#), [CiteSeer](#), [arXiv](#), NASA Library and others to find research papers. The search engine was developed to analyze a larger string of terms than is used in standard keyword searches – it will analyze entire abstracts – with the idea that more terms will allow more precise results.

The same kind of semantic matching is also used by the platform to support member networking. Through analysing the information provided by the user on his or her profile page, the platform will suggest groups, other members and literature with similar research interests that the user might be interested in. In total, more than 1,100 groups have been created within ResearchGATE. These can be open to all users or are set up as private groups, and any member can create a new group at anytime. Every group also has collaborative software; for example, a file-sharing tool allows users to collaborate with colleagues on writing and editing documents. Other tools include an appointment scheduler and a polling/survey option. Several scientific organizations and conferences use ResearchGATE as a meeting place to list details, collaborate and communicate. The platform has also developed private Subcommunities for larger organizations, open only to members of the respective institution.

The platform has set up a job board for scientists that lists international research jobs. The jobs can be filtered by keyword, position, field and country. In 2009, ResearchGATE also entered the open access scene when it developed a tool to help researchers upload previously published papers while respecting copyright agreements. The uploaded papers are among the internal resources that are searched by the semantic search engine. Users can read and download these publications for free – these could be benchmarking projects!

Ning has the facility to create unique social networks on its site that are completely separate from each other. This may be useful for different processes, issues groups in benchmarking.

Google groups has been set up to discuss special interests. Groups can start discussion, post topics and replies and create web pages and discuss them and upload files.

The BPIR.com is an internet-based benchmarking and best practice information and networking service for improvement-focused individuals and organisations. Members can

- Network with over 8,000 organisations from around the world, share [best practices](#), collaborate on [benchmarking](#) projects, and discuss business opportunities.
 - Create a personal or organizational profile
 - Search for and make valuable contacts with other organisations that have best practices or use improvement tools of interest.
 - Submit "Requests for Assistance" when looking for consultancy help, general advice, benchmarking partners, request for tenders, or working on joint projects.
- Access eight (8) integrated databases sharing best practices and benchmarks. The databases consist of:
 - [Best practice case studies](#) and [research studies](#)
 - [Performance measures](#) and linked [case studies](#) and [research studies](#)
 - Benchmarks and linked case studies and research studies
 - Self-assessment tools for personal or organisational performance/skill assessment
 - [Business improvement tools](#) and linked case studies and research studies
 - [Competitor analysis information](#) and linked case studies
 - Award winners (potential benchmarking partners)
 - Reviews of business related websites
- Information within these databases is categorised via [business excellence models](#) to help you to find information quickly.

In addition, Members have:

- Full access to a [library suite of business/management publications](#) , more than 1,000,000 articles
- Regular email newsletter keeping you informed of events and best practices
- Regular best practice Management Brief Report on a topical business process or area (minimum of eight per year)
- Research request service - if you cannot find the information that you are looking for then submit a research request to our team
- Discounted entry into selected partner events - e.g., conferences, workshops, seminars

Some of the above sites have a search facility to find a group / topic of interest but others do not. Linked In for instance has a facility to search by keyword, narrow down by category etc and groups are also suggested to you.. Google groups seems to have a very powerful mechanism to search and join a group and it is also fairly obvious what is new since you visited the group.

Sakai has set up a benchmarking study comparing how different social networking sites deal with groups – go to www.confluence.sahaiproject.org/display/GROUPS/Benchmarking

Although these social networking concepts could resolve some of the difficulties benchmarkers face, I don't believe they take away the need to include face to face discussions at some stage of the benchmarking process. Once the partners have been narrowed down to those with known value-add, each partner then needs to understand details such as cultural context and process steps in order to be able to successfully adapt what they learn to their own context and systems. I believe that this can only be done through actual experience and being able to see and ask relevant questions about intricate details of relevance to each inquiring partner. So face to face meetings, workshops and site visits will still be an important part of the benchmarking methodology.

6. Maturity of Benchmarking

In spite of all of the above, and in view of the Megatrends explained earlier we need to ask the question – is the GBN and Benchmarking relevant for the future. Are we too tactical? Do we need to be more of a global influence? Is Benchmarking easily understood and applied – and practical? Do we need a GBN methodology for the future rather than the methodology by each GBN Member? Should GBN Members work as one, rather than separately?

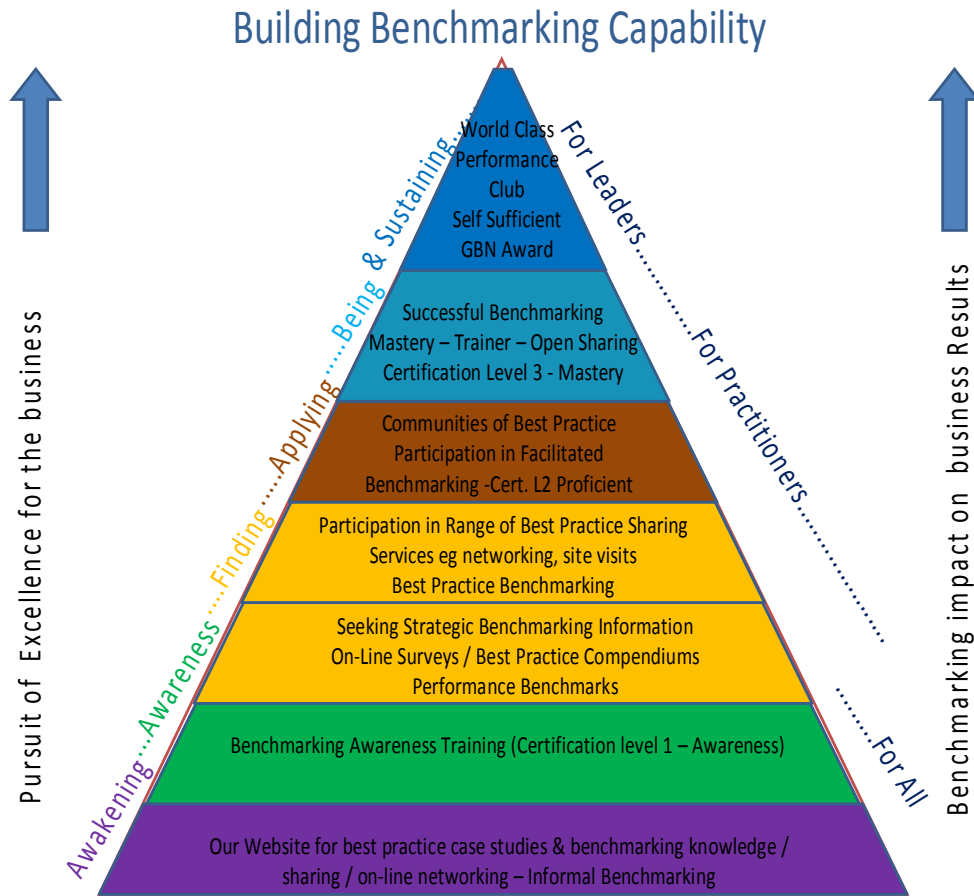
The following chart describes the current benchmarking maturity model, positioning social networking and other elements in the maturity scale.

So the future for benchmarking up to 2030 needs to be looked at in the context of the various elements of maturity, in order to lead people and their organisations up the maturity scale. Or do we need to invent a more relevant maturity scale?

7. The Search for Information

I have conducted extensive searched of the Internet, periodicals and journals and apart from the above, have not been able to find any recent commentary on the future for benchmarking. This emphasises the importance of the current GBN study.

I have set up a blog through bpir.com and content for feedback on the GBN website, and advertised a request for feedback through Benchmarking Partnerships customers. Feedback is starting to come in.



8. The GBN – some more Questions

The GBN has further extended our influence from the solid platform created e.g. running conferences to generate income, the GBN Roadshow, the capability for members to bid for projects, the formation of a board, the ability for member's to have their membership fee cancelled if they attract a new member etc..

Has the GBN become much more commercial and successful - how far do we want to go in this direction?

How can GBN address the challenges of the future, and leverage off future opportunities for the global benefit of benchmarking?

Below are some questions raised to me by a GBN Member –

1. In our minds, is GBN more important than our individual practices?
2. How can we collaborate?
3. Are we members using GBN as a vehicle to promote our individual practices?
4. Are we duplicating our skills?
5. How can GBN promote and deliver benchmarking more?
6. How can GBN take advantage of a presence in 20 odd countries?
7. Why are there so many different benchmarking approaches amongst members?

9. Next Steps

The next stage is developing and undertaking a qualitative survey through GBN Members in the lead up to the Roundtable at the next GBN AGM and Annual Conference.

10. Key Questions for the Roundtable?

Maybe we have 6 steps of arguing for Benchmarking 2030.

- 1.) What are the Global Challenges / Global Megatrends?
- 2.) How can benchmarking support / respond to such Global Challenges / Global Megatrends?
- 3.) What kind of benchmarking-methods do we need to answer such questions and how can we use new communication technologies to bring the best practices to public, not-for-profit and private sectors? Are we aiming for Best Practices or Best Known Practices?
- 4.) How should integration or connectivity of benchmarking and other improvement tools (eg Business Excellence) look
- 5.) How do we proceed further on getting all countries to think and do benchmarking? (Noting that Benchmarking is the tool emphasised in various business excellence frameworks and award processes in over 80 different countries)
- 6.) What is the role of the GBN? What should the GBN do? In 20 years and in 3 years?

There are possible options of using new resources like the internet (twitter, net-meetings, social networks, TV, video, iphone-apps, and further communication platforms for “connecting people” and “sharing best practice”. This could become an important issue for supporting the development of the “knowledge economy”.

But technology is not the only consideration. Technology should not drive benchmarking but enable benchmarking.

We should define some “headlines” for the discussion. Maybe up two five questions for the whole Roundtable discussion are enough.

Are the questions above appropriate?

Is the GBN relevant for the future? Does benchmarking have a future? How will we look? How will we know?

Maybe the way forward lies in the words from our Russian GBN colleague Ury Samoylov–

June 10 we will participate in IFC meeting in Moscow together with leading marketing companies from Russia and abroad. The main reason of this meeting is IFC (International Finance Corporation) has to understand the future of benchmarking in Russia. During this discussion I will present GBN and our attempts to make researches about benchmarking development worldwide.

2005 I presented GBN in European Economic Commission of United Nations Organization on Geneva where I tried to get special international status for GBN. I think that we have to force this activities and try to state GBN as a unique international organization which can be

considered as new way of humankind development. ONLY COOPERATION BUT NOT FIGHTING!!! Last 2009 in Tokyo in Waseda University I made a speech "QUALITY IS VITAL AND MORAL CATEGORY!". So I think benchmarking can be named as a "BENCHMARKING IS A TOOL FOR HUMANKIND SURVIVAL!". Only that approach can push active benchmarking development in future!