



Becoming a Learning Organization: Assessing Your Teams Competencies Through the Performance Evaluation Process and Professional Development Plans



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It has been said that knowledge is power. The ability of companies to learn faster than the competition and adapt that knowledge is now a core competency for success. Healthcare organizations, business, government, communities are engaged in an environment of increasing complexity and speed.

A "Learning Organization" is one in which individuals at all levels of the company, individually and collectively; continually increase their capacity to produce results that meet corporate and personal goals. Using data to drive decisions, utilizing business best practices and continually re-engineering to meet the needs of our customers are all part of creating that learning environment.

Why should healthcare organizations care?

Because, the level of performance and improvement needed today requires learning, lots of learning. In my work with organizations as a consultant for MTM Services and The National Council, I have found that most organizations struggle with this concept of incorporating learning and professional education into their strategic planning.

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Does your organization align staff training with your strategic plan? How will the training that members of your staff went to last week align with your growth? How will it help you meet a target population need? Many organizations have difficulty in this area.

I encourage organizations to work with their team members align their learning objectives with their strategic initiatives. If your goal is to expand service delivery to better serve those individuals with eating disorders, and you do not have that level of competency, then what is your plan to obtain that competency? The Professional Development plan sets team members learning in a planful strategic manner. I have provided a sample of a Professional Development Plan below. Each year, the manager

In Healthcare, we have been operating in the old learning model for too long. Our businesses cannot sustain themselves as learning organizations unless they become capable of embracing a culture of accountability, learning, and change.

As leaders, it is important to understand that our business environment is a changing system, and the organization will fade if knowledge and support to adapt is not encouraged and supported financially. I have found that even the simplest form of informal learning as part of staff meetings is extremely valuable to keep everyone in the loop as well as dispels myths and misperceptions.

The first developmental stage in sustaining a core competence in learning organizations is to change the assumptions of the current training and education programs. Developing core competence in organizational learning calls for businesses to model learning and incorporate these into daily action. I have found that most learning programs are a loosely held grab bag of multiple training courses and CEU programs with little to no alignment to organizational growth or performance improvement and development. Staff training and development must be aligned with core values of the company and future goals.

When budgets are tight, usually one of the first items eliminated from the budget is staff training and education. Yet, re-investing in your workforce may allow expansion of markets, reduce redundancies and create operational efficiencies that were not possible before. The end result is a more fulfilled working environment where everyone shares the same learning vision and meets the community's as well as the organization's goals.

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Whether we are learning of new ways to meet consumer needs, changes in funding or incorporating collaborative documentation we must incorporate these learning models and assess their return on organizational goals.

An organization or team within an organization holding onto old models and values will parish conserving these values rather than risking the learning required for change. I have witnessed this with organizations, the stronger the culture to preserve outdated models the less likely it is that they will be successful in the future in meeting their goals. Expanding the core competence in organizational learning calls for leaders to first assess the current level of learning and develop a plan to meet the community and workforce challenges, to enhance core competencies and organizational learning.



I have worked with organizations in transition, whereby they have strategic goals and plans, they have marketing plans, they have credentialing committees, they have standards committees, and they have staff development and training budgets. However, guess what is missing: a coordination of efforts and an alignment of these goals, plans and objectives.

Few organizations can do this quickly, or through just one effort. The change is more likely to occur over time; therefore, the organization's task is to engage in a process of discipline and mastery to facilitate this change and systems learning over time. Create a system whereby learning objectives are embedded into the culture and are measured as part of performance evaluations, executive goals and strategic plans.

Leadership must support the model and hold managers and team members accountable for learning. In healthcare, a model of learning accountability becomes more apparent, if it becomes part of the culture. We can avoid a premature organizational demise brought about by holding onto expiring models just because "that's the way we have always done it" if we align our staff learning and performance with our strategic goals.

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