

Creating a Learning Culture

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Why is learning now more than ever
critical in developing an effective
government organization?

A Disruptive World

- Local govts are overwhelmed with accelerating and discontinuous change
- Problems are complex, difficult-to-solve, emotion-laden, and divisive
- No one institution, including govt, can solve any major problem
- Local govts face era of “permanent fiscal crisis,” depleting capacity to respond



A Disruptive World (cont)

- Power is diffuse (“veto” power)
- Citizens have lost confidence in all institutions, including govt
- To confront any major challenge, leaders must cross boundaries and collaborate
- Learning is the new social glue
- Learning is key ingredient to adapting



“Are we learning as fast as the world is changing?”

Gary Hamel

Overview

1. Technical vs. Adaptive Challenges
2. Indispensable Competencies
3. Exercise: “My most powerful learning experience”
4. New Ways of Interacting with Our World
5. Growth vs. Fixed Mindsets
6. Cost-Effective Approaches
7. Leadership Strategies
8. Resources, Key Learnings, Questions

The Nature of the Challenges

- Technical challenges

Solutions are known and can be addressed through management

- Adaptive challenges

Solutions are unknown and require leadership at all levels

The Essence of Leadership

“Leaders do not force people to follow—
they invite them on a journey.”

Charles Lauer

Indispensable Competencies

- Active futures orientation
- Boundary-crossing and partnering skills
- Ability to start conversations
- Learning agility



Promoting Learning in Organizational Setting

Historic View

Learning = classroom training

Contemporary View

Learning = series of “stretching” job experiences coupled with helpful and candid coaching

“My Most Powerful Learning Experience”

1. What has been your most powerful learning experience (personally or professionally)?
2. What were the key ingredients that made the experience so powerful?

Continuum of Different Ways to Interact with World

Informing

*One-way

*Telling/selling

*Educating

*Presenting technical information

*Discerning “public opinion”

*No responsibility for problem

Engaging

*Two-way

*Listening/responding/listening

*Learning

*Eliciting values, hopes, aspirations, concerns

*Promoting “public judgment”

*People struggle to find solutions

Mind-Sets

Fixed Mindset

- Talents are seen as fixed; capacity to grow and change is viewed as limited quantity; failures are avoided

Growth Mindset

- Talent grows with effort; challenges or even failures are treated as opportunities for improving and acquiring skills

Cost-Effective Approaches



- Schedule “learning reports” at beginning of each staff meeting
- De-brief everything
- Pilot-test new ideas
- Hold simple “case study forums”
- Encourage every employee to submit “annual learning plan”
- Encourage teaching
- Train managers simple coaching skills

Seven Leadership Strategies To Promote a Learning Culture

1. Promote learning as core value
2. Model attitudes and behaviors
3. Allocate resources, especially time
4. Challenge people to stretch

Seven Leadership Strategies To Promote a Learning Culture

5. Allow mistakes and provide “professional safety net”
6. Reconceptualize the role of managers
7. Reward and celebrate learning

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.”

John Quincy Adams

“What will I do differently on
Monday?”

Key Learnings

“As a result of this session, what did I learn, re-learn, or discover about my self?”

“In times of change, learners inherit the earth while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to work in a world that no longer exists.” Eric Hoffer

Resources



- Jim Collins, *From Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, 2005
- Frank Benest, *Creating a Multidimensional Talent Strategy to Avert Brain Drain and Other Future Disasters*, ICMA, 2009
- Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, Marty Linsky, “Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis,” *HBR*, July-August 2009



Thank You!

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