
Walking the Talk: Incorporating Organizational Competencies in the Fabric of Institutional Culture



Overview

Now that you have been provided with a turnkey set of competencies and subcompetencies, how do you use this information to leverage performance? In this part we will get down to the nitty-gritty and answer this question.

The benefits are substantial, but so is the investment in time and money. You are embarking on an enterprise that will involve all of your staff, in all units, across the organization. Consider for a moment the case of a program your organization initiated or implemented that was less successful than might have been expected. The cause was most probably a significant failure in organizational competency. It is far more likely that the cause was a deficiency in leadership, communication ability, information management capability, or another of these competencies, expressed in a particular setting and exercised by one or more levels of the organization, than lack of a technical knowledge or skill.

We really are talking about leveraging performance. It can be done. It will require an organization-wide commitment. We are going to show you how to walk the talk.

Organizational learning reflects individual learning. The responsibility, however, for an organization's learning lies primarily with senior management who need to support and embody learning and make learning a priority. Supervisory staff, however, may be the critical factor in translating information into behavioral change which



Background Readings:

Senge, PM. The leader's new work: Building learning organizations. *Sloan Management Review* (1990): 7-23.

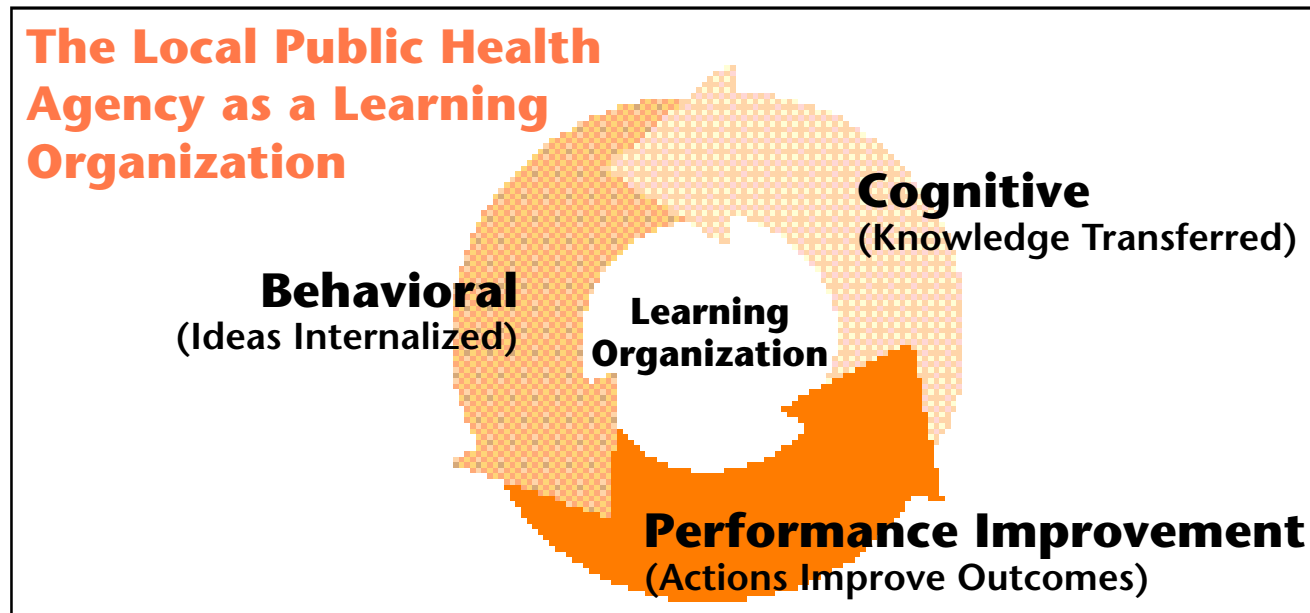
Senge, PM. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Garvin, D. Building a learning organization. *Harvard Business Review* (1993: July-Aug): 78-91.

results in improved performance. Keeping the learning process alive and productive requires the commitment of all employees and institutional systems that support quality improvement.

This is not about the “quick fix.” This is about creating an organizational culture that values learning and translates it into improved performance. If we consider the local public health agency as a learning organization, we can identify phases of organizational competency development:

- Cognitive, when knowledge is transferred as in classroom training;
- Behavioral, when ideas are internalized by learners as new ways to behave/act as in an assignment that follows classroom training;
- Performance, when application of new knowledge is applied and reinforced on the job.



Workforce Resources To Get You Started:

GENERAL:

The Key Ingredient of the National Prevention Agenda: Workforce Development
(A companion document to *Healthy People 2010*)
www.bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce

CDC-ATSDR Office of Workforce Policy and Planning
www.phppo.cdc.gov/owpp/

LEADERSHIP:

National Public Health Leadership Development Network
www.slu.edu/organizations/nln/

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