

How Organizations Learn

Session Focus

The pursuit of balance between organization learning theorists and application in a work setting. The discussion will focus specifically on the use of organization learning theorists and the metaphor of improvisation in jazz that provided a structure for the design and launch of a global performance management process in an apparel company.

What is an organization?

"A collection of individuals organizes when its members develop rules for collective decision delegation and membership. In their rule-governed behavior, they act for the collectivity in ways that reflect a task system. Just as individual behavior, so organizational theories of action may be inferred from patterns of organizational action. As individuals have espoused theories which may be incongruent with their (often tacit) theories-in-use, so with organizations." (Argyris and Schon's 1978, p. 28).

Organization Learning Theorists

- Kurt Lewin's model: Unfreeze, Change, Freeze
- Chris Argyris & David Schon: Single Loop Learning & Double Loop Learning
- Peter Senge: Self awareness
- George P. Huber: Constructs and processes for learning
- Barbara Levitt & James G. March: Learning challenges/obstacles

Applying Organization Learning Theorists and Jazz Improvisation to Launch of Global Performance Management Process

1. Provocative Competence: Deliberate Effort To Interrupt Habit Patterns
2. Embracing Errors As A Source Of Learning
3. Shared Orientation Toward Minimal Structures That Allow Maximum Flexibility
4. Distributed Task: Continual Negotiation And Dialogue Toward Dynamic Synchronization
5. Reliance On Retrospective Sense-Making
6. Hanging Out: Membership In A Community Of Practice
7. Taking Turns Soloing And Supporting

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