

Assessing a Learning Culture

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Abstract

The organization of the future recognizes the need to continuously learn to build a sustainable competitive advantage. It must create an environment in which people are open to new ideas, responsive to change and eager to develop new skills and capabilities. A path to building a learning organization begins with an assessment of the current culture of the organization (Senge, 1990). This paper assesses the culture of an administrative division of a criminal justice agency and establishes a blueprint for transforming it to continue its journey to becoming a learning organization.

Introduction

Managers are interested in “developing and sustaining an environment that is favorable to learning at every level, to reawaken and sustain the power and joy of learning in all members of the organization, regardless of their position and background, and to harness the new learning that was generated in order to produce maximum benefit for the organization” (Kline and Sanders, 1993). Peter Senge in his widely acclaimed book, The Fifth Discipline, provides mechanisms for an organization to transform itself into a learning organization. Senge (1990) defined the learning organization as “an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future.” Kline and Sanders developed a ten step process to assist organizations in building a learning organization. Their first step is an assessment of the current conditions within the organization. A review of current literature regarding learning organizations and broad areas of leadership was undertaken to better understand the elements necessary for leaders to undertake great change efforts that may be required to transform the organization to a learning organization.

Literature Review

Senge et al. (1994) believe that without learning about the business, as well as their own tasks, employees cannot make the contributions of which they are capable. This requires dramatic learning efforts, both for the employees who must learn to act in the interest of the whole enterprise, and for the senior managers who must learn how to extend mastery and self-determination through the organization. They reported that:

The core of learning organization work is based upon five learning disciplines – lifelong programs of study and practice:

- personal mastery—learning to expand our personal capacity to create the results we most desire, and creating an organizational environment which encourages all its members to develop themselves toward the goals and purposes they choose.

- mental models – reflecting upon, continually clarifying, and improving our internal pictures of the world, and seeing how they shape our actions and decisions.
- shared vision – building a sense of commitment in a group, by developing shared images of the future we seek to create, and the principles and guiding practices by which we hope to get there.
- team learning – transforming conversational and collective thinking skills, so that groups of people can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of individual members’ talents.
- systems thinking – a way of thinking about, and a language for describing and understanding, the forces and interrelationships that shape the behavior of systems. This discipline helps us see how to change systems more effectively, and to act more in tune with the large processes of the natural and economic world” (Senge, et. al., 1994).
- “An organization can’t transform itself until it transforms its thinking. Thinking within an organization is defined as the mental activity of every member of the organization...all the idea generation, learning and skill development, exchange of information, development of strategic directions, project planning, communication, market research, problem-solving, process improvement and quantum leaps that make up the total intellectual activity of the organization (Wycoff, 1995).

“The most significant contributions leaders make is not to today’s bottom-line but to the long-term development of people...who prosper and grow” (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). In their book, The Leadership Challenge, Kouzes and Posner articulated five practices and ten commitments of leadership:

PRACTICES

Challenging the Process

Inspiring a Shared Vision

Enabling Others to Act

COMMITMENTS

1. Search out challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate, and improve.
2. Experiment, take risks, and learn from the accompanying mistakes.
3. Envision an uplifting and ennobling future.
4. Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes and dreams.
5. Foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust.
6. Strengthen people by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support.

Modeling the Way

7. Set the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values.

8. Achieve small wins that promote consistent progress and build commitment.

Encouraging the Heart

9. Recognize individual contributions to the success of every project.

10. Celebrate team accomplishments regularly.

In Teaching the Elephant to Dance, Belasco (1991) captured the thoughts of several experts on how to create change in an organization.

Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric says, 'We have found what we believe to be the distilled essence of competitiveness. It is the reservoir of talent and creativity and energy that can be found in each of our 302,000 people. That essence is liberated when we make people believe that what they think and do is important--and then get out of their way while they do it.' Welch restates the words of Mr. Matsushita, founder of the successful Matsushita Electric company: 'For us, the core of management is the art of mobilizing the intellectual resources of all employees in the service of the firm.' Peter Drucker, the greatest management mind in this century, wrote similar words in 1946. He said, 'Any institution has to be organized so as to bring out the talent and capabilities within the organization; to encourage men to take initiative, give them a chance to show what they can do, and a scope within which to grow.' In the late 1700s, Adam Smith similarly felt that the empowered actions of millions of people were much more likely to create economic progress than the intelligent decisions of a few royal appointees. Empowerment creates change.

Covey (1990) states,

An empowerment style of management creates more innovation, initiative, and commitment, but also more unpredictable behavior. Managers must weigh the benefits of an empowerment style against the predictability of high control. To talk empowerment but practice control only creates cynicism. Few managers are willing to really pay the price of empowerment through the win/win agreement process—where desired results and guidelines are clearly established, available resources are identified, and specifics of accountability and consequences are agreed upon. Those managers who do pay the price unleash the potential of people, foster innovation and initiative through self-supervision that respects the individual, and produce desired results in a way that is both tougher and kinder than a high-control style. Skills such as team building, delegation, communication, negotiation, and self-management are fundamental to high performance. Fortunately these can be learned and enhanced through continuing education and training.

Leaders transfer ownership for work to those who execute the work. Leaders create the environment for ownership where each person wants to be responsible. Leaders coach the development of personal capabilities. Leaders learn fast themselves and encourage others also to learn quickly (Belasco and Taylor, 1993). Belasco offered the following insights from his evolving leadership journey:

1. In most instances 'I am the problem.' My desire to be the lead buffalo, my wanting to rescue people, my previous success, all got in the way of successfully handling the current situation. Nothing constructive happened until I recognized me as the obstacle and changed my behavior.
2. Practice the intellectual capitalism leadership style. Create the conditions where the intellectual capital holders assume responsibility for delighting their customers. Everyone must be a leader before there's effective leadership in the new organization.
3. Leading is learning. I languished until I realized that learning faster was the key to my survival. Maximizing everyone's learning is the key to my organization's success. My organization didn't soar until everyone became an avid learner.

George R. Weber in his essay on growing tomorrow's leaders states, "growing people is the creation and cultivation of a climate throughout the organization in which people are actively given the opportunity to try out their talents and skills, are deliberately exposed to progressive challenges, are given training and study opportunities that broaden their perspectives and abilities, and, perhaps most important of all, are given management and leadership tasks that permit them and the organization to learn who and what they are in relation to the organization's mission" (Hesselbein, Goldsmith and Beckhard, 1996).

Robert H. Rosen (1997) identified eight principles of leading people. One of those principles was "learning". He felt that leaders must promote constant innovation, and must encourage their people to refresh their skills and renew their spirits.

Kline and Saunders (1993) offer sixteen principles that "constitute a kind of preview and guide to the changes in attitude and behavior that characterize an emergent learning organization:"

1. Prime the mind of individuals at every level to be self-directed. As people learn to help themselves and others in their own learning, continuous improvement for the organization is guaranteed.
2. View mistakes as stepping stones to continuous learning, and essential to further business growth.
3. There must be willingness to rework organizational systems and structures of all types. Growth is impossible without continuous redesign, as old habits are discarded and new possibilities investigated. All systems and structures were evolved to meet practical needs. As the needs change, so must the structures.

4. Because learning is an emotional process, the corporate culture is a supportive place to be. As each employee is able to experience continuous growth in self-esteem, morale rises and commitment to the organization deepens.
5. Celebrate the learning process for its own sake, not just its end product. As employees rediscover the gifted learners within themselves, the thrill, surprise, recognition and celebration of continuous discovery and learning are reborn. Learning itself, not just its product, is important because we can never predict what new practical benefits may result from the frequent exercise of the learning process.
6. Celebrate all learners equally.
7. Accomplish as much transfer of knowledge and power from person to person as possible. Whenever two people get together they can share information, and thus teach each other. In a fully developed learning culture, this will happen almost constantly.
8. Encourage and teach learners to structure their own learning, rather than structuring it for them.
9. Teach the process of self-evaluation. As we perceive ourselves more realistically, we become better able to guide our own learning and thus continuously improve our work.
10. Recognize and accept as a goal the complete liberation of human intelligence everywhere.
11. Recognize that different learning preferences are alternate tools for approaching and accomplishing learning. The advantage of learning along with someone who learns differently from you is that you'll see new ways to activate your learning process as a result of understanding theirs better.
12. Encourage people to discover their own learning and thinking styles and make them accessible to others. The more we share our own styles and learn each others', the more we build a common basis of communication with all people.
13. Cultivate each employee's abilities in all fields of knowledge, and spread the idea that nothing is forever inaccessible to people. There's no predicting how information or skill in one field may become relevant to or useful in another.
14. Recognize that in order to learn something so it is easy for you to use it, it must be logical, moral and fun.
15. Ideas can be developed best through dialogue and discussion. Learning occurs in an atmosphere in which people are constantly exploring together in informal ways and regard developing their ideas with each other as a normal part of the culture.
16. Everything is subject to re-examination and investigation. There are no sacred cows, and the assumptions on which we operate should always be subjected to further reconsideration in the light of new data.

Kline and Saunders in their book, Ten Steps to a Learning Organization (1993), list ten steps that an organization can take to transform itself into a learning organization. The ten steps are:

1. Assess your learning culture.
2. Promote the positive.
3. Make the workplace safe for thinking.
4. Reward risk-taking.
5. Help people become resources for each other.
6. Put learning power to work.
7. Map out the vision.
8. Bring the vision to life.
9. Connect the systems.
10. Get the show on the road.

These steps will be valuable tools to the Office of Management and Budget within Florida's Department of Juvenile Justice, and will provide the framework for our journey to become a learning organization.

Research Questions

In order to assess the culture of the Office of Management and Budget and develop a blueprint for further development, several research questions had to be answered:

1. What do the employees in the Office of Management and Budget think about the current conditions of the office?
2. If the current conditions are not conducive to an environment that would foster a learning organization, what steps should be taken to rectify the situation?

A "Learning Organization Assessment Tool" was used to survey employee opinions about current conditions within an administrative division of the Department of Juvenile Justice in order to effectively apply the information discovered in the literature review.

Method

The Learning Organization Assessment Tool was copy righted in 1995 by Great Ocean Publishers, Inc. on behalf of Peter Kline and Bernard Saunders. Kline and Saunders (1993) had earlier published an assessment within the Ten Steps to a Learning Organization. Through further research and use of the assessment tool in the book, the authors refined the current assessment tool. The assessment consists of 68 questions dealing with various topics associated with an employee's perception about the current conditions within their organization. The questionnaire was designed to easily assess the organization in ten different steps considered to be processes toward becoming a

learning organization. A copy of the questionnaire is available from Great Ocean Publishers, 1823 North Lincoln Street, Arlington, Virginia 22207-3746.

The statements were designed to provide anonymity to those being surveyed. As a result opinions could be given without fear of being identified (Boles, 1996). The questionnaire was distributed to 138 employees of the Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Management and Budget during a six-week period in July-August, 1997, during bureau meetings or through a specially called meeting for this purpose. The 138 employees represent those employees who were in the office, at the time the questionnaire was being administered. The 138 employees represent 81% of the total workforce (170) within the Office of Management and Budget, Department of Juvenile Justice. Table 1 reflects the number of employees responding from each organizational unit within the Office of Management and Budget.

Table 1
Number of employees responding from each unit in
the Office of Management and Budget

Office of Assistant Secretary	4
Office of the Comptroller	2
Bureau of Finance & Accounting	48
Bureau of Budget	10
Bureau of General Services	19
Bureau of Management Information Systems	23
Bureau of Personnel	32

The employees were advised that when the word organization or agency was used in a statement, the employees were to respond to the statement in the context of the Office of Management and Budget. When the word organization or agency was missing in a statement, the employees were to respond to the statement in the context of conditions in their bureau. The rating scale used was a Likert Scale with response options: 1=Not at all; 2=To a slight extent; 3=To a moderate extent; 4=To a great extent; and, 5=To a very great extent.

When an employee failed to rate a statement, that statement was not considered as part of the average. The average of the responses to each statement were charted for each bureau or office within the Office of Management and Budget, for an at-a-glance picture of the employees' perceptions regarding its office. Additionally, the statements relate to the ten steps of a learning organization.

Results

The responses to the statements were based on opinions and relatively little factual information. The intent was to allow the employees to express their opinions on

various conditions within the Office of Management and Budget and their bureau. A chart detailing the average score for each statement in the questionnaire for each bureau and the leadership team is included in the Appendices. Appendix A is the chart for the leadership team. The leadership team is composed of the Assistant Secretary, Office of Management and Budget, Comptroller, Chief of Budget, Chief of General Services, Chief of Management Information Systems, Chief of Personnel, and Chief of Finance and Accounting. The leadership member is not included in the charts detailing the results of each bureau. The Appendices also include charts reflecting average responses for each statement for employees in the Bureau of Budget (B), Bureau of General Services (C), Bureau of Management Information Systems (D), Bureau of Personnel (E), Bureau of Finance and Accounting (F), and the Office of the Assistant Secretary (G).

Statements that had a rating of less than 2.5 were considered to be areas needing attention and change within the Office of Management and Budget. Each statement was a performance indicator of at least one step within the learning organization journey. Table 2 reflects those statements that had an average rating of less than 2.5, within at least three bureaus of the Office of Management and Budget and the steps associated with the statement. For instance, in statement #14, the learning organization steps affected were Steps 2, 3, 4, and 9.

Table 2

Statement Numbers and the Step Affected from the Learning Organization Assessment that have an Average Rating of Less than 2.5, within at least Three Bureaus of the Office of Management and Budget.

Statement	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10
14		x	x	x					x	
15	x								x	
17					x	x				
18					x	x				
19					x	x	x	x	x	x
24	x		x	x	x	x				
26						x				
28			x		x	x				
31	x		x							x
32						x			x	
56		x			x	x				

The statements that the Office of Management and Budget need to address for the entire organization include:

Statement #14: Lessons learned sessions are conducted so as to produce clear, specific and permanent structural and organization changes. Steps 2 through 4 and 9.

Statement #15: Management practices that hinder the growth of people and the organization are removed and replaced with workable systems and structures. Steps 1 and 9.

Statement #17: There are clear and specific expectations of each employee to receive a specified number of hours of training and education annually. Steps 5 and 6.

Statement #18: Workers at all levels are specifically directed towards relevant and valuable training and learning opportunities—inside and outside the organization. Steps 5 and 6.

Statement #19: Cross-functional learning opportunities occur on a regular basis, so that people understand the work of others whose jobs are different. Steps 5 through 10.

Statement #24: The level of stress in the organization is kept at a healthy, manageable level. Steps 1 and 3 through 6.

Statement #26: The difference between training/education and learning is clearly understood. (Training and education can be so conducted that no learning takes place.) Step 6.

Statement #28: There is a formal, on-going education program to prepare middle managers in their new roles as teachers, coaches and leaders. Steps 3, 5 and 6.

Statement #31: There is sufficient time scheduled into people's professional calendars to step back and reflect on what is happening in the organization. Steps 1, 3 and 10.

Statement #32: There is direction and resource allocation planned to bring about meaningful and lasting learning. Steps 6 and 9.

Statement #56: There is little turnover of employees. Steps 2, 5 and 6.

The overall assessment of all surveyed employees resulted in an assessment for the Office of Management and Budget of being a learning organization "to a moderate extent."

This research painted a vivid picture of the perceptions of the employees within the Office of Management and Budget regarding its organization culture. Based on the survey results, managers within the Office of Management and Budget have a better view of the perceptions of the employees concerning the organization and the offices in which they work.

The average rating for all employees of the Office of Management and Budget to statement #14 (Lesson learned sessions are conducted so as to produce clear, specific and permanent structural and organization changes.) is 2.4. The Bureaus of Management Information Systems (2.1), General Services (1.9), and Budget (1.7) have average ratings for this statement below the 2.5 threshold. Lesson learned sessions

foster an atmosphere for promoting the positive (step 2), making the workplace safe for thinking (step 3), rewarding risk-taking (step 4), and connecting the systems (step 9). Lesson learned sessions are considered important to the growth of individuals within the organization. These sessions provide feedback to employees in discussing how well a process or service met the customers' needs, in recognizing achievements of employees, in determining whether a process, service or behaviors need to be changed and in providing information to other employees, who may face the same or a similar situation in the future.

Statement #15 is, "management practices that hinder growth of people and the organization are removed and replaced with workable systems and structures." The Bureaus of Management Information Systems (2.4), General Services (1.4), and Budget (1.8) have average ratings for this statement below the 2.5 threshold. Recognizing (step 1), removing and replacing management practices that hinder growth of people and the organization is an essential element of the assessment of the organization, and connects all the systems (step 9) to working toward becoming a learning organization.

Within the Bureaus of General Services (2.2), Budget (1.3), Finance and Accounting (2.0), Personnel (1.9) and the Office of the Secretary (2.0) the average rating for statement #17 was below the 2.5 threshold. Overall within the Office of Management and Budget the average rating for this statement was 2.2. It was clear that in most of the bureaus, there are no clear and specific expectations of each employee to receive a specified number of hours of training and education annually (statement #17). When there are clear and specific expectations of employees to receive annual training and education, the employees can become resources for one another (step 5) and the organization can put learning power to work (step 6). As the organization moves toward becoming a learning organization, it must make clear its expectations of the employees to receive training and education, annually.

In a learning organization, workers at all levels are specifically directed towards relevant and valuable training and learning opportunities—inside and outside the organization (statement #18). The Bureaus of General Services (2.1), Budget (1.6) and Finance and Accounting (2.2) have average ratings for this statement below the 2.5 threshold. The management of these bureaus, in particular, should provide more direction to each specific employee in prescribing relevant learning opportunities that would provide the employee with professional and career development and enhancement opportunities. This would further the organization in developing its employees to become resources for one another (step 5) and putting its learning power to work (step 6).

In a learning organization, cross-functional learning opportunities occur on a regular basis, so that people understand the work of others whose jobs are different (statement #19). In all bureaus, except the Office of the Assistant Secretary and the Office of the Comptroller, the average rating of this statement was below the threshold of 2.5. The facilitation of cross-functional learning opportunities within an organization

helps people become resources for one another (step 5), puts learning power to work for the organization (step 6), allows management to map out the vision and employees to see the big picture (step 7), brings the vision to life for employees (step 8), allows employees to connect the various systems of the organization toward its common mission (step 9), and provides the avenue for the organization to develop as a learning organization (step 10).

The level of stress in the Office of Management and Budget is perceived to be neither healthy nor manageable (statement 24). The average response to this statement reflected unhealthy and unmanageable stress levels felt among employees in the Office of the Assistant Secretary, Bureaus of Personnel, Finance and Accounting, General Services, and Budget. A first step in becoming a learning organization is to assess the stress level of employees (step 1). Organizations with healthy and manageable stress levels are organizations where the workplace is safe for thinking (step 3), risk taking is rewarded (step 4), people become resources for one another (step 5), and the learning power of the organization is put to work (step 6).

Within the Bureaus of General Services(2.2), and Budget (1.9), and the Office of the Assistant Secretary (2.3) the employees thought that the difference between training/education and learning is not clearly understood. Training and education can be so conducted that no learning takes places (statement #26). This statement gets at the heart of making sure the learning power of the organization is put to work (step 6). If employees are not required to demonstrate that “learning” took place during or after a training/education session, then the difference between training/education and learning would not be clearly understood. Too often, employees are provided with training that is in the form of lecture with question/answer periods. Very few training opportunities for employees include participative, interactive and hands-on demonstration learning exercises that would foster mastery of the educational/training information presented.

Statement #28 states, “There is a formal, on-going education program to prepare middle managers in their new roles as teachers, coaches and leaders. Within the Bureaus of General Services (2.1), Budget (1.8), and Finance & Accounting (2.4) and the Office of the Comptroller (1.0) the average rating of this statement was less than the 2.5 threshold. Educational programs that provide training for middle managers to become teachers, coaches and leaders would encourage a workplace environment that is safe for thinking (step 3), would help people become resources for one another (step 5) and would put learning power to work (step 6) for the organization.

Within the Bureaus of Management Information Systems (2.2), General Services (1.7) and Budget (1.7), employees think there is insufficient time built into the daily schedule to step back and reflect on what is happening in the organization (statement 31). Allowing employees time to reflect on the day’s events within the organization provides for the assessment necessary to have everyone one involved in the journey to become a learning organization (step 1). Additionally, it makes the workplace safe for thinking (step 3), especially if groups of employees meet daily to discuss major events

that occurred during the day that could be learning opportunities for all employees. Seeing this statement put into practice would signify that the organization is well on its way to becoming a learning organization (step 10). Time for reflection, assessment, feedback and discovery would further promote learning within the organization for future success.

On average, employees within the Bureaus of General Services (2.1), Budget (1.4) and Finance and Accounting (2.3) thought there was not enough direction and resource allocation planned to bring about meaningful and lasting learning. Adequate direction and resource allocation to make learning a priority within the organization would put learning power to work within the organization (step 6) and would assist employees in connecting the systems within the organization (step 9).

In all offices of the Office of Management and Budget, except Budget and Finance and Accounting, employees, on average, thought there was more than “little turnover” within the organization (statement 56). High turnover thwarts efforts to promote the positive (step 2), hinders people from becoming resources for one another (step 5), and slows down putting learning power to work (step 6).

Now that we have an assessment of what employees think about the current conditions within the Office of Management and Budget, the challenge will be establishing strategies to learn from the employees’ perceptions of reality and develop strategies to rectify the situation. As a result of the research, the following recommendations are offered that could be adopted by the Office of Management and Budget to promote its journey to transforming itself to a learning organization.

Discussion

Each agency needs to tap into the intellectual power of its employees, by making learning a regular, normal function of the office. The following recommendations are based upon the assumption that to prepare for the future, leaders must inspire the employees to achieve extraordinary results. Leaders must believe that the heart and soul of the work accomplished is the delivery of results through people. The following recommendations are based on those assumptions.

Step 1 - Assess your learning culture.

Statement #15: Management practices that hinder the growth of people

and the organization are removed and replaced with workable systems and structures.

Statement #24: The level of stress in the organization is kept at a healthy and manageable level.

Statement #31: There is sufficient time scheduled into people’s professional calendars to step back and reflect on what is happening in the organization.

Recommendation #1: Make sure your employees are aware of your interest in hearing their thoughts and creating change within the organization. Develop a graffiti board on a common wall within your bureau. At the top of the board, pose the question and allow employees to complete the sentence or add comments. The employees may use different colored sticky notes to record their comments or allow the employees to write their comments directly on the board. In the alternative, at a staff meeting, you could have the question posed on a flip chart and have two other flip charts that allow employees to record a positive and negative comment regarding the question. Each employee would be asked to consider the question and develop two polar comments regarding the question (Wycoff, 1995).

Example: What management practices inhibit or accelerate your growth within the workplace?

Inhibitors

Accelerators

Step 2. Promote the Positive.

Statement #14: *Lessons learned sessions are conducted so as to produce clear, specific and permanent structural and organization changes.*

Statement #56: *There is little turnover of employees.*

Recommendation #2: At the beginning of each staff meeting, the employees are encouraged to share lessons learned since the last meeting. The manager should begin the exchange. This sharing of lessons learned is an excellent way to promote mistakes as learning opportunities and model the way for employees to always continue to learn and develop from everyday actions.

Recommendation #3: At a staff meeting, break into groups of 3-5 employees. Pose the following question on an index card and ask the participants to come up with at least 10 ways to end the sentence. "I enjoy working here because....." After approximately 10 minutes, allow the groups to present the ending of their statement and write down on a flip chart the various endings. Post the results on your "brag board" at the office. A brag board is a board for posting positive events in the lives of the employees. The employees post notes and comments regarding significant events in their lives. Currently our brag board has a thank you note on it, a picture of the last bring your daughter to work participants, photos of our last bureau meeting and a couple of notes regarding weight loss of a couple of our employees (Kline and Saunders, 1993).

Step 3: Make the workplace safe for thinking.

Statement #14: Lessons learned sessions are conducted so as to produce clear, specific and permanent structural and organization changes.

Statement #24: The level of stress in the organization is kept at a healthy and manageable level.

Statement #28: There is a formal, on-going education program to prepare middle managers in their new roles as teachers, coaches, and leaders.

Statement #31: There is sufficient time scheduled into people's professional calendars to step back and reflect on what is happening in the organization.

Recommendation #4: At the beginning of a staff meeting, you may want to begin it with a Go-Around, that invites all participants to say whatever they want for a couple of minutes without interruption (Kline and Saunders, 1993).

Recommendation #5: Introduce the Think and Listen activity, as a workshop in communication. Here are the rules:

- Find a partner.
- Agree in advance on the amount of time to be used by each person, and keep track of it.
- Decide which of you will talk first, and which will listen first.
- Establish confidentiality of whatever is said, and agree that it will never be discussed later unless the person who said it suggests doing so.
- Trade roles when your talking time is up.
- The listener may not interrupt to make comments or ask questions of the talker at any time.
- Allow for feedback after each has had equal time to talk, if both desire this.
- If you are the talker, use the exact agreed upon time, and don't trade away what is rightfully yours, even if you believe you have said everything you wanted to.
- Never make "you" statements. That is, never talk about your listener. An example of a "you" statement would be, "I think this about you." The Think and Listen must, in most cases avoid any kind of discussion of the person listening. This is because once there is such discussion, the listener can no longer be an impartial supporter of the thinking process itself.

Once the rules are fully understood, have each member of the group pair off with one other person, and agree to an amount of time each will have to explore any subject whatsoever. Five minutes is a good length of time to start with. One partner then begins talking while the other listens without interruption or feedback for the amount of time agreed on. The listener simply listens, though positive nonverbal feedback is encouraged. The topic can be freely chosen, or agreed to in advance.

When the talker's time is up, he or she becomes the listener, while the listener becomes the talker. The rules are the same as before, and it remains important to keep track of time. Don't be alarmed by gaps or silences, or if the talker's eyes wander while speaking, since that is a normal activity when one is exploring new ideas.

After each has had a turn to talk, the pair may want to offer feedback to one another about what has been said, if both have mutually agreed to do so, and if feedback can be given respectfully and constructively. (Kline and Saunders, 1993)

Recommendation #6: Conduct a workshop using the progressive think and listen. In this activity, a group of people, say 4-6, begin by doing Think and Listens on a particular topic. After each round they share with the facilitator of the whole group what they have learned from each other about that topic. The facilitator keeps track of these new learnings on a flip chart. For the next round they take on new partners and repeat the process. The process is repeated until no new learning is taking place (Kline and Saunders, 1993).

Recommendation #7: Conduct a voluntary workshop for all levels within the organization based on Covey's book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.

Recommendation #8: Conduct a voluntary workshop for all levels within the organization based on Covey's book, First Things First.

Recommendation #9: Conduct a voluntary workshop for all levels within the organization on stress management.

Recommendation #10: Initiate a mentor program for middle managers within the Office of Management and Budget. The mentor program should include workshops in coaching, conflict resolution, on-the-job training methods, instructor techniques, appropriate delegation, how to facilitate meetings, how to conduct meaningful meetings, job shadowing days, process review techniques, assignment of a leadership guide (mentor) and management/leadership readings, etc. This curriculum should be available to all employees, who have an interest in learning these valuable tools.

Step 4: Reward risk-taking.

Statement #14: *Lessons learned sessions are conducted so as to produce clear, specific and permanent structural and organization changes.*

Statement #24: *The level of stress in the organization is kept at a healthy and manageable level.*

Recommendation #11: Have a special award or certificate that recognizes the risk-taking of those who tried something different, whether it worked or not. Create an "Outside the Box" award for attempting to improve something in a new and different way.

Step 5: Help people become resources for each other.

Statement #17: There are clear and specific expectations of each employee to receive a specified number of hours of training and education annually.

Statement #18: Workers at all levels are specifically directed towards relevant and valuable training and learning opportunities—inside and outside the organization.

Statement #19: Cross-functional learning opportunities occur on a regular basis, so that people understand the work of others whose jobs are different.

Statement #24: The level of stress in the organization is kept at a healthy and manageable level.

Statement #28: There is a formal, on-going education program to prepare middle managers in their new roles as teachers, coaches, and leaders.

Recommendation #12: Hold managers accountable for encouraging and facilitating employees to receive at least 12 hours of training and education annually.

Recommendation #13: Conduct a needs assessment of the employees at all levels to determine their training and education needs.

Recommendation #14: Encourage managers to establish routine cross-training opportunities for all employees. A 1/2 day spent shadowing another employee provides powerful insight into the organization as a whole. Every day an employee, somewhere within the organization should be shadowing another employee. Debriefing should occur as a follow-up to the shadowing exercise to determine lessons learned.

Step 6: Put learning power to work.

Statement #17: There are clear and specific expectations of each employee to receive a specified number of hours of training and education annually.

Statement #18: Workers at all levels are specifically directed towards relevant and valuable training and learning opportunities—inside and outside the organization.

Statement #19: Cross-functional learning opportunities occur on a regular basis, so that people understand the work of others whose jobs are different.

Statement #24: The level of stress in the organization is kept at a healthy and manageable level.

Statement #26: The difference between training/education and learning is clearly understood. (Training and education can be so conducted that no learning takes place.)

Statement #28: There is a formal, on-going education program to prepare middle managers in their new roles as teachers, coaches, and leaders.

Statement #32: There is direction and resource allocation planned to bring about meaningful and lasting learning.

Statement #56: There is little turnover of employees.

Recommendation #15: Develop learning leaders within the organization who can effectively conduct integrative learning, which emphasizes discovery and direct experience within their workshops (Kline and Saunders, 1993).

Step 7: Map out the vision.

Statement #19: Cross-functional learning opportunities occur on a regular basis, so that people understand the work of others whose jobs are different.

Recommendation #16: At a staff meeting, conduct a process review of a particular product or process within the bureau and demonstrate how employees of the bureau assist in the success of the process.

Step 8: Bring the vision to life.

Statement #19: Cross-functional learning opportunities occur on a regular basis, so that people understand the work of others whose jobs are different.

Recommendation #17: At a staff meeting, invite employees to discuss their jobs, demonstrate their daily activities and how they interact with others within the bureau or the organization.

Step #9: Connect the systems.

Statement #14: Lessons learned sessions are conducted so as to produce clear, specific and permanent structural and organization changes.

Statement #15: Management practices that hinder the growth of people and the organization are removed and replaced with workable systems and structures.

Statement #19: Cross-functional learning opportunities occur on a regular basis, so that people understand the work of others whose jobs are different.

Statement #32: There is direction and resource allocation planned to bring about meaningful and lasting learning.

Recommendation #18: At a staff meeting, train employees on how to conduct a workflow diagram. As an interactive exercise, have the employees who work together within the units to form process teams to diagram a workflow in which they participate.

Step 10: Get the show on the road.

Statement #19: Cross-functional learning opportunities occur on a regular basis, so that people understand the work of others whose jobs are different.

Statement #31: *There is sufficient time scheduled into people's professional calendars to step back and reflect on what is happening in the organization.*

Recommendation #19: Supervisors, on a weekly basis, should meet to discuss issues that arose during the week. This is a time for discussing lessons learned, brainstorming solutions to concerns that may have arose, and sharing management, leadership or coaching tips.

Learning should be a continuous process in the organization. Encouraging and facilitating learning opportunities for all employees will prepare us for the future and enrich our organization today.

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