

Surviving MI

AN ACC QUALITY INITIATIVE

Organizational Culture Supporting Creative Problem Solving and Learning

Creative problem solving is an integral component of an organizational culture that can improve patient outcomes. Top performing hospitals view adverse events as opportunities to conduct root cause analysis and learn from experiences. They also focus on problem-focused experimentation and innovation.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

In a learning organization, employees are always creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, in turn helping their organization adapt to unpredictable factors.

Building Blocks for creating learning organizations¹:

Supportive Environment	Employees: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feel safe disagreeing with others, asking naive questions, owning up to mistakes, and presenting minority view points• Recognize the value of opposing ideas• Take risks and explore the unknown• Take time to review organizational processes
Concrete Learning Processes and Practices	A team or company has formal processes for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generating, collecting, interpreting, and disseminating information• Experimenting with new offerings• Gathering intelligence on competitors, customers, and technological trends• Identifying and solving problems• Developing employees' skills
Leadership that Reinforces Learning	The organization's leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate willingness to entertain alternative viewpoints• Signal the importance of spending time on problem identification, knowledge transfer, and reflection• Engage in active questioning and listening

HOW TO ASSESS THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOUR HOSPITAL IS A "LEARNING ORGANIZATION"

Take the Harvard [Learning Organization Survey](#) to assess how well your team, department or entire hospital is performing with each building block. The survey should take less than 45 minutes to complete and consists of 73 items organized in 3 sections. Use the survey and its results as part of your first AMI Quality Improvement Team meeting.

The survey will help your hospital answer the following questions:

- To what extent is your hospital/unit/department a learning organization?
- What are the relationships among the factors that affect learning in your hospital/unit/department?

Ways to take the survey:

- Each individual within a team can take the survey and compare scores within the team.
- Several members of a unit can take the survey and average their scores.

After taking the survey:

- Within your team, compare and discuss results about perceptions of your organizational culture.
- Within your organization, use the scores to benchmark against other teams. Identify areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement between teams to improve your organizational culture overall.
- Repeat the survey periodically (every 6-9 months) to assess changes in perceptions over time.

References

1. Garvin DA, Edmondson AC, Gino F. [Is yours a learning organization?](#) *Harv Bus Rev.* 2008;86(3):109-16, 134.