

HPO SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

Building High-Performance Organizations

This seminar is concerned with the **theory and practice of organizational change management and performance improvement**. It assumes that: (1) after years of observation, seminar participants are ‘experts’ on their own organizations, but (2) they may not have been exposed to an organizational theory background and so need a framework (a diagnostic change model and analytical approach) to structure and amplify their knowledge and suggest how to use it to effect desired change, and (3) they want to be part of a positive change process, continually driving their organizations toward becoming ‘high-performing organizations’ (defined as *simultaneously* delivering appropriate product and service quality with excellent execution quality, outstanding customer value, and sound financial performance—‘Pick 3’).

The organizational change approach that forms the basis of this seminar seeks to “cast a net” over what has been learned from the past 100 years of academic theory and practical organizational applications and to synthesize that knowledge base into a diagnostic change model explaining why some organizations are high performers while many are not. The seminar *does not* attempt to “tell an organization what’s wrong with it” or to deliver a ‘cookbook’ of what to do to improve it. Rather, the seminar introduces a series of ‘lenses’ through which participants can view their organizations and decide for themselves what changes may be necessary to improve its performance.

We start by asking the question “how did we get like this as an organization?” This question begins the HPO diagnostic process; we believe that it is critical to understand how organizations got to be as they are, so we can decide what we want to keep from our inherited past and what needs to be changed. Depending on when the organization was formed, we may find that the support systems and work processes of the organization date from an earlier era; and while they may have been sufficient in that earlier period, they will not be capable of taking us successfully into the future. We conclude by examining the evolving ‘nature of work:’ the mindsets, competency-based skills and abilities, and expectations of individuals if they are to function successfully in the future – most critically, we will redefine ‘leadership’ and find that we need everyone at every level of the organization to help get the ‘work of leadership’ done.

We then turn our focus to asking such ‘outcome-oriented’ questions as: “What is high performance for us,” “How would we know if we were high performance,” “According to whom are we high performance,” and “Why do we want to be high performing in the first place?” But we will also look inside the organization to ask: “What are the key *change levers* available to help us move the organization toward higher performance?” Finally, we ask: “Are we doing the right ‘what,’” “How good are we at it,” and “How should we treat each other, our business partners, and our stakeholders?”

Because this seminar is based on a change approach and materials designed for use by ‘intact’ work teams over a relatively long period of time, the seminar will not try to cover all parts of the change model in detail. Rather, we will begin with a thorough *overview* of the model's six interdependent change levers and seven key diagnostic questions and then focus our time primarily on the first lever: the *critical nature of organizational*

leadership. Experience has shown that unless an organization gets leadership “right,” nothing else “downstream” in the model matters.

Organizational leadership in the HPO model will not be defined the same as ‘individual leadership’ or as just ‘top management,’ as in most management books and courses. Rather, for us, leadership will be defined as consisting of three parts: (1) a belief set -- **a leadership philosophy** -- about the nature of people and their attitudes toward work, about how people are motivated, about the distribution of knowledge and creativity and how we make decisions, and about how we see the nature of work; (2) a set of functions -- **the ‘work of leadership’** -- that must be performed at all levels of an organization if the organization is to become high-performance, including Strategic Stakeholder Value Analysis; Vision/Values implemented through our Strategy/Business Model, Organizational Structure, and support/work Systems; Suprasystems Integration/Stewardship; Learning/ Thinking/ Changing/ Renewing; and Enabling/ Empowering/ Enabling/ Energizing, and (3) a new set of ‘leadership forms’ -- **formal and informal ways to share power** -- required to get the work of leadership done. In the process of exploring organizational leadership, we’ll discover the need for a fundamental ‘*mental model*’ or ‘*paradigm*’ shift by everyone in the organization -- moving our ‘mental view of organizations’ from the older, steeply hierarchical, autocratic, control-oriented, traditional industrial model to a more inclusive, less-hierarchical, team-based ‘networked talent model’. Those who help get the work of leadership done at their level of the organization are ‘leaders’, those who don’t are just top managers, or middle managers, or first-level contributors. Leadership must be getting done at all levels of the organization, regardless of formal positional authority.

The other five change levers -- vision, values, strategy, structure, and systems -- will be discussed as outgrowths of this first (leadership) lever. Participants in the seminar will be asked to help direct the flow of the material presented to best meet their needs. We will use applied examples of *how* the model is being used by teams in actual client organizations to help guide their change efforts. Clients include **federal government organizations** (e.g., the Navy's Space and Naval Warfare System Command (SPAWAR), its Naval Aviation Command (NAVAIR), and its Fleet Readiness Center-Southwest (FRCSW); the Marine Corp System Command (MCSC); the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); the FDA’s Center for Veterinary Medicine; and NASA’s Dryden Flight Research Center), **municipal governments** (e.g., the Cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth and the Counties of Arlington and Fairfax in Virginia; Pinellas Sarasota Counties in Florida; the City of Bellevue in Washington; the Cities of Dublin and Montgomery in Ohio, and Guelph, Ontario, Canada), and **private sector organizations** (e.g., Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory and American Airlines).

A key assumption of the HPO model and change process is that participants must gain the theory/practice-based ‘profound knowledge’ and skills to diagnose their own organizations in order to begin identifying opportunities for introducing positive change. Although some discussion of implementation techniques (e.g., high-involvement work teams, re-engineering, ABC/BPR, Lean/6 Sigma, etc.) will be included in the seminar, the majority of class discussion will center on the theoretical principles, which must be mastered in order to make any of these techniques work.