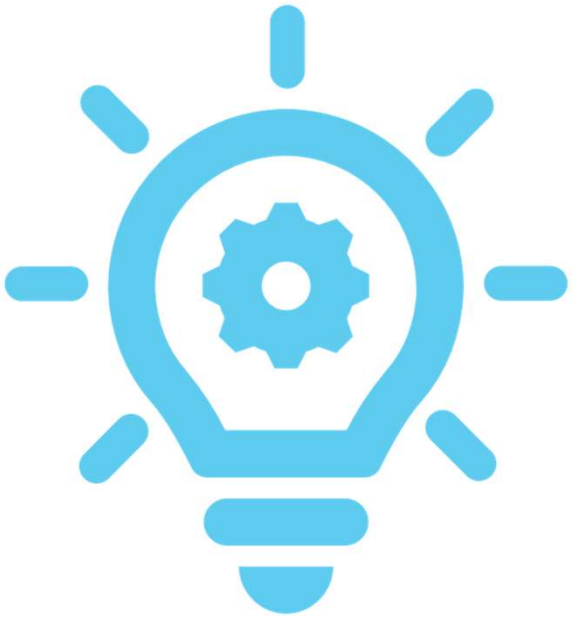


Creating a Culture of Organizational Learning: Evidence to Innovation

Superintendent Mark Langhorn

Victoria Police

The Problem

- Analysis of Operational Safety and Critical Incident Reviews (OSCIRs) conducted by Victoria Police between 2013 and 2023.
- 123 OSCIRs, which include incidents resulting in death, serious injury, and non-injury involving police activities.
- The findings reveal significant insights into the **recurring** themes and recommendations.

Organizational Learning in an Operational Context (Case Study)

5 Feb 2021

Death of 30 year old male in custody at Melbourne West Police Station due to suicide – police cells

27 Aug 2021

Death of 50 year old woman in custody at Ballarat Police Station due to medical condition – police cells

2 Nov 2021

Serious injury to 27 year old male from attempted suicide at Frankston Police Station – police cells

10 Nov 2021

Death of 43 year old male from drug withdrawal at Sunshine Police Station – police cells

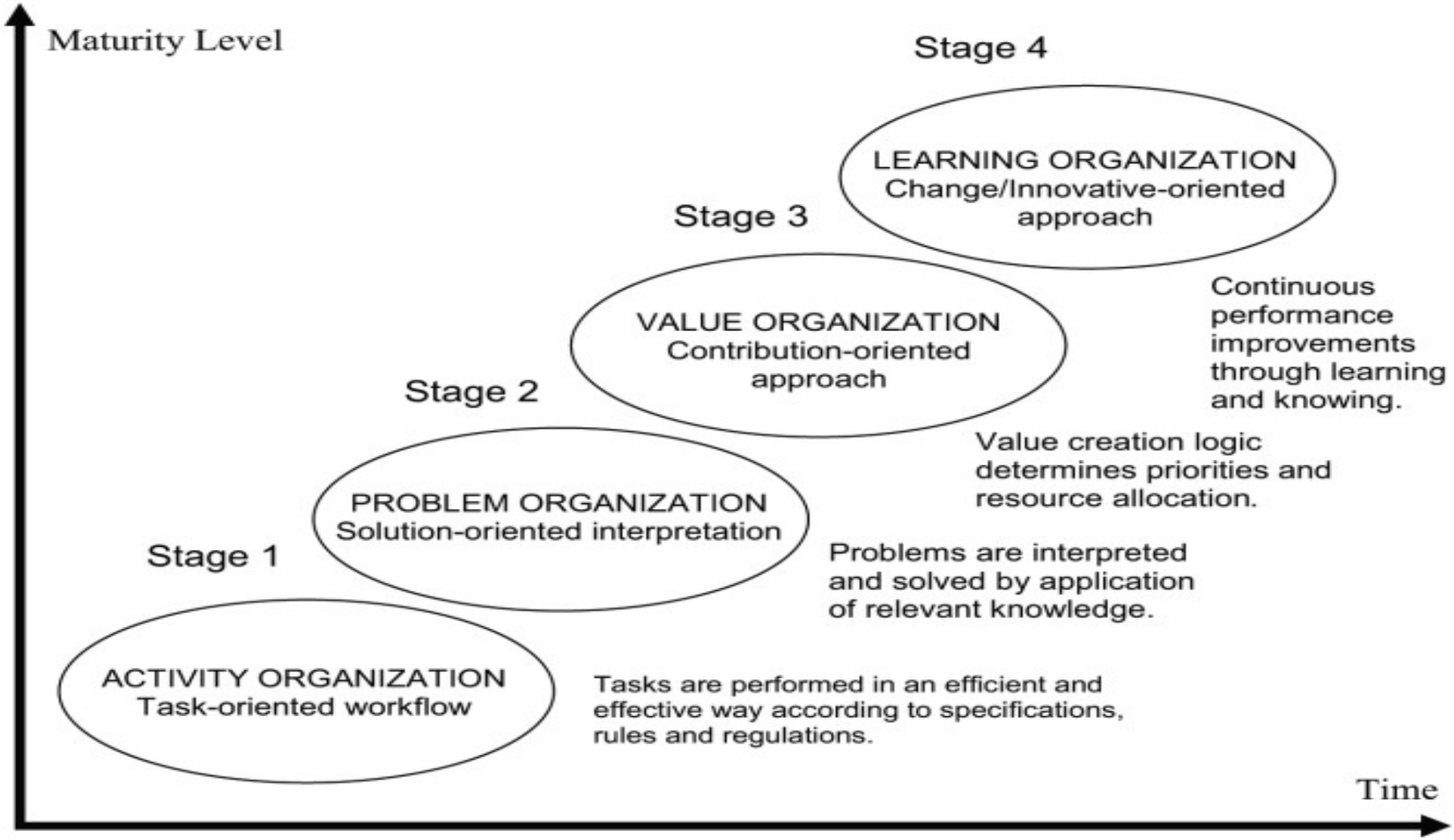
3 Dec 2021

Death of 40 year old woman at Knox Police Station due to suicide – police cells

The Aspiration

To develop an evidence base to support the adoption of Organizational Learning.

Organizational Learning is about identifying misalignment between an organization's objective and acting to realign activities to achieve outcomes.


Maturity Level
Stage 4
LEARNING ORGANIZATION
Change/Innovative-oriented approach
Stage 3
VALUE ORGANIZATION
Contribution-oriented approach
Continuous performance improvements through learning and knowing.
Stage 2
PROBLEM ORGANIZATION
Solution-oriented interpretation
Value creation logic determines priorities and resource allocation.
Stage 1
Problems are interpreted and solved by application of relevant knowledge.
ACTIVITY ORGANIZATION
Task-oriented workflow
Tasks are performed in an efficient and effective way according to specifications, rules and regulations.
Time

The Research Frame: Developmental Evaluation

- Aim: To design a framework that supports genuine organisational learning in policing agencies.
- Focus: Not just the framework itself, but the **evidence** and **insights** that underpin it.
- Traditional review methods often fail to embed learning.
- Barriers include risk aversion, fear of blame, and disciplinary consequences.
- **Core Idea:** Innovation and co-design, grounded in evidence and research.

Research approach – alternative methods of building an evidence base

- Strategic Policy Analysis
- Case Study Analysis
- Interviews with Senior Leaders
- Delphi Process – gaining consensus from experts around the globe
- Focus Groups

The evidence - Core characteristics required of a Learning Organization

- Governance & Accountability
- Culture & Engagement
- Commitment to Learning
- Processes & Resources
- Review & Feedback
- Communication & Collaboration
- Leadership Participation

The evidence - Principles that support a learning culture

- **Having tolerance for mistakes**
- **Leadership uplift**
- **Establishing learning and development pathways**
- **Having guiding principles**
- **Strong governance**

The evidence - Requirements of an effective review process

- Ensuring a Safe Environment
- Establishing a Learning Culture
- Having Clear Criteria and Objectives
- Building in Reflective Practice
- Establishing Feedback Loops
- Promoting Active Participation
- Leadership

Barriers and challenges to becoming a Learning Organization

Silos - information often gets trapped.

Cultural barriers - inhibit learning; including **fear of mistakes** and of repercussions.

Governance and Accountability - the absence of clear governance structures and accountability mechanisms.

Processes - failure to access previous learnings and lessons.

Learn Innovate Foster Transform (LIFT)

Leveraging insight for service excellence

LIFT is an integrated framework designed to build a culture of organisational learning through continuous improvement, innovation, and evidence-informed practice.

By incorporating learning, reflective practices, problem solving, critical thinking and lessons management, LIFT enables the transformation of insight into meaningful action to achieve service excellence.

LEARN

- Be curious and look for learning opportunities
- Embrace reflective practice and build a growth mindset
- Capture and share best practices

INNOVATE

- Use diverse perspectives in problem-solving
- Nurture critical thinking and trial new ideas
- Leverage technologies

Enhance service delivery and community safety through a culture of learning

FOSTER

- Partner with knowledgeable colleagues and stakeholders
- Encourage open dialogue and constructive feedback
- Empower leadership at every level

TRANSFORM

- Lead a culture of continuous learning and improvement
- Adopt a *no-fault approach* while capturing lessons
- Deliver sustainable transformation using data, intelligence, and evidence

Organizational Learning in Action

LEARN	INNOVATE
• Reviewed custody related policies from other policing jurisdictions • Debriefs of each incident – promoting reflective practice • Undertake themed review to identify common issues	• Develop custodial newsletter for Police Custody Staff • Integrated learnings into online learning material • Developed IT systems updates to Custody Module • Introduce suicide resistant blankets as mandatory • Develop summaries for the Learning Locker to share the lessons across all Police Cell locations
FOSTER	**TRANSFORM**
• Engaged subject matter experts – Custodial Health and Police Medical Officers. • Dialogue with Properties Branch – design of cells • Dialogue with custodial training centre • Engage Station Officer in Charge, Senior Custody Officers, and central Custody policy managers to create shared ownership and empower leadership	• Analysed data of custody related incidents • Policy updates to reinforce requirements around physical checks opposed to CCTV checks • Custody Hub updates with accessible warnings, guidance to support continual improvement • Focus remained on strategic level issues – policy, training, culture and practice – avoiding blame

Reflection

- Developmental Evaluation is a valuable approach to introducing innovation.
- Evidence can be broad – take what you can get!
- Evidence is sometimes not enough!
- Organisational change cannot be done alone – build a team!
- Making change is hard. EBP is hard. You are challenging the status quo!

Contact

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