

Organizational Learning Disability

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Just like individuals, if they are to learn, organizations must have memory. Some modern philosophers believe that all memories are formed and organized within a collective context [1]. Organizational memory refers to stored information from an organization's history that can be brought to bear on present decisions. Corporate knowledge, like individual knowledge exists in two basic forms: explicit knowledge, which is easily codified and shared asynchronously, and tacit knowledge, which is experiential, intuitive and communicated most

effectively in face-to-face encounters. Explicit knowledge can be articulated with formal language. It is that which can be recorded and stored in the more concrete organizational "storage bins": records, policies and procedure manuals, training curricula, orientation programs, organizational structure and lines of authority, and other educational and written materials [2].

Tacit knowledge is that knowledge which is used to interpret the information – in clinical circles more commonly referred to as "clinical wisdom". It is knowledge that is more difficult to articulate with language and lies in the values, beliefs and perspectives of the system [3, 4]. Tacit knowledge resides within the individual memories of every person who is or has ever been a part of the organization, is cumulative, slow to diffuse, is rooted in the human beings who comprise the organization, and creates organizational culture. Every person that leaves an organization takes a part of the organizational memory out the door with them. As a result, over time and with sufficient loss, the organization may develop organizational amnesia that affects learning and adaptation[5]. Corporate amnesia becomes a tangible problem to be reckoned with when there is a loss of collective experience and accumulated skills through the trauma of excessive downsizing and layoffs [6].

The result of organizational amnesia may be a deafening silence about vital but troubling information, not dissimilar to the deafening silence that surrounds family secrets like incest or domestic violence. There is reason to believe that maintaining silence about disturbing collective events may have the counter-effect of making the memory even more potent in its continuing influence on the individuals within the organization as well as the organization as a

whole, much as silent traumatic memories continue to haunt traumatized individuals and families [7].

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For more see: Bloom and Farragher, *Destroying Sanctuary: The Crisis in Human Service Delivery Systems*

- [Link to Commitment to Social Learning](#)
- [Link to Dissociation and Organizational Amnesia](#)
- [Link to Impaired Decisions and Conflict Management](#)

References

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