



A FIO PARTNERS PERSPECTIVE:

Organizations That Learn Will Survive

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There has probably been no previous time in history that nonprofit organizations are so in need of organizational climates that promote both critical and creative thinking. As the sector retrenches, and CEO's make tough decisions about who stays and who goes, it is easy to shift a culture, inadvertently, from one of accomplishment to a kind of paralyzed bunker mentality. At the very moment when every CEO needs each remaining employee to use every ounce of brains, intuition and creativity they possess, fear and insecurity about what the future holds can drive employees into a "head down, keep quiet, and keep out of sight" model of behavior.

So, what can a CEO do to maintain a powerful culture of inquiry despite the contraction of resources? One of the approaches I like best comes from Tony DiBella's *How Organizations Learn*. Written for for profit businesses, I have taken his list of what he calls "facilitating factors," and done some translation for nonprofits and this particular time in the sector's history.

This is a time of exponential change so the importance of scanning the environment for changes in fields of services remains. There are several areas of nonprofit practice that are undergoing re-engineering, particularly those that are funded by state government or federal Medicaid dollars. As well, change is coming

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