



*World-class  
evaluation &  
organisational  
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# Evaluative thinking and learning-enabled organizational cultures

E. Jane Davidson, Ph.D.

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## Overview

- What is a 'learning-enabled' organization?
- Levels of learning-enabled culture
- Evaluation and creative tension
- The two components of evaluative thinking
  - The evaluative attitude
  - Evaluative know-how
- Reflections

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## What is a learning-enabled organization?

### Learning organizations ...

- Create useful knowledge
- Disseminate it effectively
- Use this knowledge to improve organizational effectiveness

### As a result, they ...

- Are better able to anticipate change
- Respond/adapt more quickly to change
- Perform better and survive longer than organizations that do not learn so well

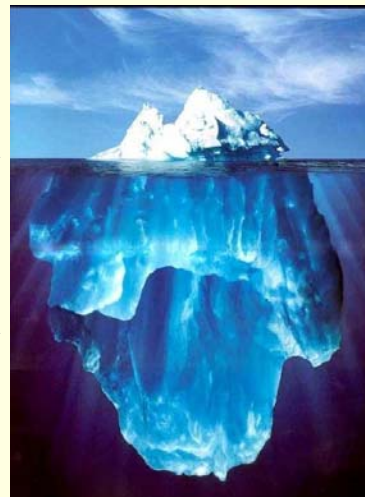
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## Levels of learning-enabled culture

Formal policies, systems,  
& practices

Informal practices &  
symbolic actions

Evaluative thinking, beliefs,  
values, & attitudes



## Evaluative beliefs, values, & attitudes

### Beliefs

- It is valuable to distinguish good from poor performance
- Without tough feedback & criticism, excellence is impossible – especially at the top!
- No 'sacred cows'

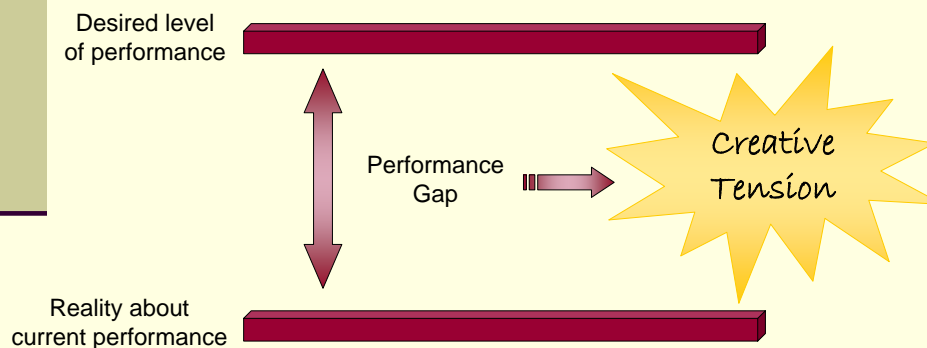
### Values & Attitudes

- The evaluative attitude: "the relentless pursuit of the truth about quality"
- Openness to change & continual improvement
- Diverse perspectives and 'outside-the-box' thinking are highly valued

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## Evaluative thinking & creative tension

- Evaluative thinking helps create and maintain "creative tension" – the affective reaction created by the gap between our desired level of performance and current reality



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## The two components of evaluative thinking

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- The evaluative attitude:
  - “The relentless pursuit of the truth about quality or performance”
  - A commitment to knowing the truth about where the lower line is in the diagram
  
- Evaluative know-how:
  - Cognitive ability, critical thinking, the ability to think evaluatively to understand issues
  - Enough knowledge of evaluation tools and strategies to be able to put them to effective use
  - The ability to use evaluation strategically to inform ‘big picture’ (not just operational) decisions

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## Reflections

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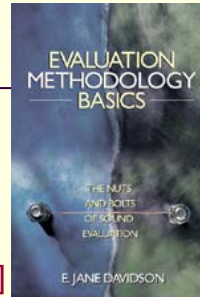
- Evaluation can help organizations become more ‘learning-enabled’ (able to create useful knowledge, disseminate it, and use it to improve effectiveness)
  
- Truly learning-enabled organizations don’t just “do” evaluation; they *think evaluatively*
  
- Organizational members pay an enormous amount of attention to the kind of thinking taking place at the top of organizations => there is huge payoff to be had in
  - Hiring evaluative minds
  - Training current leaders to think evaluatively

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## Some useful references

- Davidson, E. J. (2004). *Evaluation methodology basics: The nuts and bolts of sound evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[See the Sage exhibit at the conference]



- Davidson, Howe, & Scriven (2004). Evaluative thinking for grantees. In Braverman, Slater, & Constantine (Eds.), *Foundations and evaluation: Contexts and practices for effective philanthropy*. Jossey-Bass.

[See the Jossey-Bass exhibit at the conference]