

Challenges of Implementing a Just Learning Culture

Module 9
Keanu Foltz





What is a just learning culture?

- Organizational culture of fairness, accountability, and continuous learning
- Focus is on understanding what lead to the error rather than blame
- Team members feel safe to admit errors and report or own up to mistakes
- Incidents are carefully examined so they can be learned from



Image: Center for Patient Safety



Challenge: Fear

- Fear discourages accountability and reporting
- Punishment for mistakes promotes hiding errors and dishonesty
- Instead of focusing on blame and punishment, the focus should be on finding out why the mistake was made and how to learn from/prevent it





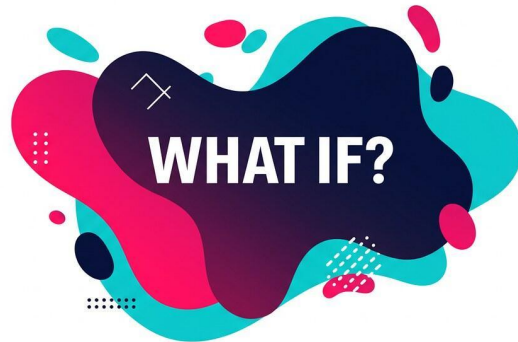
Challenge: Blame Culture

- Work cultures that are focused on blame, punishment, and compliance are the opposite of a just learning culture
- Systems need better design, human error is a symptom of poor design
- Focus should be on how to improve our systems so that people can't make the mistakes



Challenge: Focus on Hypotheticals

- Hypothetical actions should not be the sole focus of feedback and investigations
- Focus should instead be placed on the actual system behavior, rather than just what should have or could have happened
- Learning from mistakes and prioritizing specific countermeasures should be the focus of retrospectives





Challenge: Resistance to Change

- People are usually comfortable with familiar practices and are resistant to change
- Implementing just learning cultures require a mindset shift that some might not feel comfortable with at first
- The benefits of implementing such a culture need to be clearly conveyed and a safe, supportive environment must be encouraged among teams



Challenge: Lack of Support from Leadership

- A just learning culture will not take root in an organization where leadership does not practice or promote it
- Leaders need to encourage and prioritize a safe learning environment where input and feedback is valued





References

- <https://matoffo.com/devops-definitions-learning-culture/>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/9-challenges-developing-learning-culture-how-overcome-damian-hehir/>