

ADULT LEARNING

March/April 1997

Volume 8, Number 4

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Adult Learning (ISSN: 0-5-1595) is published six times annually by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, 1200 19th St., N.W., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20036. Subscriptions are \$29 per year (U.S. and Canada), \$35.00 (other foreign), and \$100 (AAACE members receive *Adult Learning* at the annual subscription rate of \$29 as part of their membership dues.

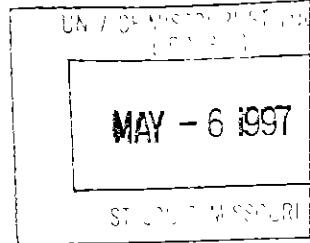
Periodicals postage rate is paid at Washington, D.C. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adult Learning*, 1200 19th St., N.W., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Back volumes are available from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

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Important Challenges In AAACE As A Learning Organization

Speed seems to be a "by-word" in today's world. We think about being in the fast lane. We want our computers to access information quicker this year than last year. We focus on cutting the time for accomplishing a particular task we need to repeat. We desire to move from one location to another in the shortest route and time possible. We become anxious and impatient while waiting for an appointment, or are unable to talk with a colleague the moment we dial the phone. And we "stress out" when planning an adult education event takes more time than anticipated or the results are not as spectacular as we had hoped.

My first President's Podium in the most recent issue of *Adult Learning*, focused on several reasons I think the Learning Organization concept holds some promise and value for AAACE and for each of us as professional adult and continuing educators. This concept also offers us some important challenges. Even in challenging ourselves to improve AAACE as a Learning Organization, time to accomplish this is a consideration. I suggest that this is an important, ongoing, continuous, never-ending, delightfully important, challenging process. However, if we would counter with the challenge of a quick test for AAACE becoming a Faster Learning Organization, we would need to:

- assess our strategic situation realistically,
- possess a clear and motivating vision of ourselves as such,
- respond quickly and effectively to competitive conditions,
- rapidly convert information into valued knowledge,
- have up-to-date technology,
- continuously reduce cycle time,
- confidently and capably handle change,
- be more innovative than our competition,
- enhance our performance through both incremental changes and breakthroughs,
- operate our commissions and units as micro-businesses, and
- outperform our competition.

All of this may seem to be a huge challenge or a "tall order," but faster does not mean to hurry, because hurrying most leads to our being "frazzled." On the other hand, faster learning means reflective thinking on what is important, simpler ways to learn, fewer steps in the process, and more efficient ways for learning. This challenge may take the form of starting to implement various ones of these elements, working on tactics and skills already begun, and refining and fine-tuning what is working well.

A second challenge for AAACE as an organization focused on learning is to help continue the legislative success of 1996. AAACE

through the efforts of our Executive Director and the 501b lobbyist retained with the financial assistance of some publishers, was able to not only maintain the \$252 million in basic funds for Adult Education, but is credited with garnering another \$100 million. In 1997, our important challenge is assuring that the legislature will appropriate the funds at that level or higher, and for them to reauthorize the Adult Education Act which will carry the field forward in serving some of our constituencies until the year 2002.

There is a third important challenge for AAACE functioning as a Learning Organization. In December 1996, I had the privilege to travel to Fayetteville, Arkansas and take to Malcolm S. Knowles, a medallion and book for his being inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame. During my visit with Malcolm and Hulda, his wife, I asked Malcolm what he thought would be the most beneficial thing we could do in AAACE to fulfill our responsibility to the field of Adult Education. He gave a one word answer: "Recruitment," and then he explained (and I paraphrase the essence of what I heard Malcolm say) "I think we should recruit as many people as we are able to recruit, to become members of AAACE. There are a large number of people in corporations, social

service agencies, health care systems, religious institutions, educational organizations, governmental bodies, etc., who are doing the same thing we are doing (Adult Education) but they really don't understand what Adult Education is and don't call it by that name. If we recruit them into AAACE we would help them learn better what they are doing. We could also learn from them, and it would help us serve the field better."

This wisdom — the importance of "recruiting" — if implemented, from a person who has the "long range view" of Adult Education, could help AAACE fulfill its vision and mission, and help it be the dynamic Learning Organization of which it is capable. If each member accepts the important challenge of recruiting at least one new member for AAACE during 1997, our constituencies and our society will be the winners, and we will continue to reap the benefits from our being a Learning Organization. ▲

— **John A. Henschke**
President, AAACE