After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

1. Define organizational behavior.
2. Identify four action steps for responding positively in times of change.
3. Identify the important system components of an organization.
4. Describe the formal and informal elements of an organization.
5. Understand the diversity of organizations in the economy.
6. Evaluate the opportunities that change creates for organizational behavior.
Human behavior in organizations is complex and often difficult to understand. Organizations have been described as clockworks in which human behavior is logical and rational, but they often seem like snake pits to those who work in them. The clockwork metaphor reflects an orderly, idealized view of organizational behavior devoid of conflict or dilemma because all the working parts (the people) mesh smoothly. The snake pit metaphor conveys the daily conflict, distress, and struggle in organizations. Each metaphor reflects reality from a different perspective—the organization’s versus the individual’s point of view. These metaphors reflect the complexity of human behavior, the dark side of which is seen in cases of air rage and workplace violence. On the positive side, the Gallup Organization’s Marcus Buckingham suggests that people’s psychological makeup is at the heart of the emotional economy.

This chapter introduces organizational behavior. The first section provides an overview of human behavior in organizations, its interdisciplinary origins, and behavior in times of change. The second section presents an organizational context within which behavior occurs and briefly introduces the six focus companies used selectively in the book. The third section highlights the opportunities that exist in times of change and challenge for people at work. The fourth section addresses the ways people learn about organizational behavior and explains how the text’s pedagogical features relate to the various learning styles. The final section presents the plan for the book.

Organizational behavior is individual behavior and group dynamics in organizations. The study of organizational behavior is primarily concerned with the psychological, interpersonal, and behavioral dynamics in organizations. However, organizational variables that affect human behavior at work are...
also relevant to the study of organizational behavior. These organizational variables include jobs, the design of work, communication, performance appraisal, organizational design, and organizational structure.

**Understanding Human Behavior**

The vast majority of theories and models of human behavior fall into two basic categories. One category has an internal perspective, and the other, an external perspective. The internal perspective looks at workers’ minds to understand their behavior. It is psychodynamically oriented and its proponents understand human behavior in terms of the thoughts, feelings, past experiences, and needs of the individual. The internal perspective explains people’s actions and behavior in terms of their history and personal value systems. The internal processes of thinking, feeling, perceiving, and judging lead people to act in specific ways. The internal perspective has given rise to a wide range of motivational and leadership theories. It implies that people are best understood from the inside and that people’s behavior is best interpreted alongside their thoughts and feelings.

The external perspective, on the other hand, focuses on factors outside the person to understand behavior. People who subscribe to this view understand human behavior in terms of the external events, consequences, and environmental forces to which a person is subject. From the external perspective, a person’s history, feelings, thoughts, and personal value systems cannot help interpret actions and behavior. This perspective has given rise to an alternative set of motivational and leadership theories, which are covered in Chapters 5 and 12. The external perspective implies that examining the surrounding external events and environmental forces is the best way to understand behavior.

The internal and external perspectives offer alternative explanations for human behavior. For example, the internal perspective might say Mary is an outstanding employee because she has a high need for achievement, whereas the external perspective might say it is because she is extremely well-paid for her work. Kurt Lewin combined both perspectives with his claim that behavior is a function the person and the environment.

**Interdisciplinary Influences**

Organizational behavior is a blended discipline that has grown out of contributions from numerous earlier fields of study. The sciences of psychology, sociology, engineering, anthropology, management, and medicine have each contributed to our understanding of human behavior in organizations. These interdisciplinary influences have evolved into the independent discipline of organizational behavior.

**Psychology**, the science of human behavior, developed during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Psychology traces its own origins to philosophy and the science of physiology. One of the most prominent early psychologists, William James, actually held a degree in medicine (M.D.). Since its origin, psychology has branched into a number of specialized fields, including clinical, experimental, military, organizational, and social psychology. Organizational psychology frequently overlaps with organizational behavior; for instance, both investigate work motivation. Johnson & Johnson, Valero Energy, and Chaparral Steel all used World War I era psychological research for the American military to develop their sophisticated personnel selection methods.

**Sociology**, the science of society, has contributed greatly to our knowledge of group and intergroup dynamics. Because sociology takes society rather than the individual as its point of departure, the sociologists focus on the variety of roles within a society or culture, the norms and standards of behavior in groups, and the consequences of compliant and deviant behavior. For example, a team of Harvard educators used the concept of role set, a key contribution to Robert Merton’s 1957 role theory, to study the school superintendent role in Massachusetts. More recently, the role set concept has helped explain the effects of codes of ethics in organizations.

**Engineering** is the applied science of energy and matter. It enhances our understanding of the design of work. Frederick Taylor took basic engineering ideas and applied them to human behavior at work, influencing the early study of organizational behavior. With his engineering background, Taylor placed special emphasis on human productivity and efficiency in work behavior. His notions of performance standards and differential
piece-rate systems still shape organizational goal-setting programs, such as those at Black & Decker, IBM, and Weyerhaeuser.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Anthropology}, the science of human learned behavior, is especially important to our understanding of organizational culture. Cultural anthropology focuses on the origins of culture and the patterns of behavior that develop with symbolic communication. Anthropological research has examined the effects of efficient cultures on organizational performance\textsuperscript{11} and the ways pathological personalities may lead to dysfunctional organizational cultures.\textsuperscript{12} Schwartz used a psychodynamic, anthropological mode of inquiry to explore corporate decay at General Motors and NASA.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Management}, originally called administrative science, is the study of overseeing activities and supervising people in organizations. It emphasizes the design, implementation, and management of various administrative and organizational systems. March and Simon take the human organization as their point of departure and investigate administrative practices that enhance the effectiveness of the system.\textsuperscript{14} Management is the first discipline to take the modern corporation as the unit of analysis, a viewpoint that distinguishes its contribution to the study of organizational behavior.

\textbf{Medicine} is the applied science of healing or treating diseases to enhance an individual’s health and well-being. Medicine concerns itself with both physical and psychological health, as well as for industrial mental health.\textsuperscript{15} As modern care defeats acute diseases, medical attention has shifted to more chronic diseases, like hypertension, and to occupational health and well-being.\textsuperscript{16} These trends have contributed to the growth of corporate wellness programs, such as Johnson & Johnson’s “Live for Life Program.” Skyrocketing health care costs continue to contribute to increased organizational concern with medicine and health care in the workplace.\textsuperscript{17}

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\textbf{LEARNING OUTCOME 2}
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\textbf{Behavior in Times of Change}
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Early research with individuals and organizations in the midst of environmental change found that people often experience change as a threat and respond by relying on well-learned and dominant forms of behavior.\textsuperscript{18} That is, in the midst of change, people often become rigid and reactive, rather than open and responsive. This behavior works well in the face of gradual, incremental change. However, rigid and well-learned behavior may be counterproductive responses to significant change. Outsourcing is a significant change in American industry that has been forced by dramatic advances in the Internet and networking technology.\textsuperscript{19} Big changes disrupt people’s habitual behavior and force them to learn new skills. Eric Brown, Alberto Culver’s VP of Global Business Development, offers some sage words of advice to see the opportunity in change.\textsuperscript{20} He recommends adapting to change by seeing it as positive and challenge as good rather than bad. His action steps for doing this are to (1) have a positive attitude, (2) ask questions, (3) listen to the answers, and (4) be committed to success.

However, success is never guaranteed, and change sometimes results in failure. If this happens, do not despair. Some of the world’s greatest leaders, such as Winston Churchill, experienced dramatic failures before they achieved lasting success. Their capacity to learn from the failure and to respond positively to new opportunities helped them overcome early setbacks. One venture capitalist with whom the authors have worked likes to ask those seeking to build a business to tell him about their greatest failure. He wants to hear how the executive responded to the failure and what he or she learned from the experience. Change carries both the risk of failure and the

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\begin{flushright}
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\begin{flushright}
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opportunity for success; our behavior often determines the outcome. Success can come through the accumulation of small wins and through the use of microprocesses, as has been found with middle managers engaged in institutional change.  

LEARNING OUTCOME 3

The Organizational Context

A complete understanding of organizational behavior requires both an understanding of human behavior and an understanding of the organizational context—that is, the specific setting—within which human behavior is acted out.

Organizations as Open Systems

Just as two different perspectives offer complementary explanations for human behavior, two views shape complementary explanations of organizations. Organizations are open systems of interacting components, which are people, tasks, technology, and structure. These internal components also interact with components in the organization’s task environment. Open system organizations consist of people, technology, structure, and purpose, all interacting with elements in the organization’s environment.

What, exactly, is an organization? Today, the corporation is the dominant organizational form for much of the Western world, but other organizational forms have dominated other societies. Religious organizations, such as the temple corporations of ancient Mesopotamia and the churches in colonial America, can often dominate society. So can military organizations, like the clans of the Scottish Highlands and the regional armies of the People’s Republic of China. All of these societies are woven together by family organizations, which themselves may vary from nuclear and extended families to small, collective communities. The purpose and structure of the religious, military, and family organizational forms varies, but people within different organizations often behave alike. In fact, early discoveries about power and leadership in work organizations were remarkably similar to findings about power and leadership within families.

Organizations may manufacture products, such as aircraft components or steel, or deliver services, for instance, managing money or providing insurance protection. We must first understand the open system components of an organization and the components of its task environment in order to see how the organization functions.

Katz and Kahn and Leavitt established open system frameworks for understanding organizations. The four major internal components are task, people, technology, and structure. These four components, along with the organization’s inputs, outputs, and key elements in the task environment, are depicted in Figure 1.1. The task of the organization is its mission, purpose, or goal for existing. The people are the human resources of the organization. The technology is the wide range of tools, knowledge, and/or techniques used to transform the inputs into outputs. The structure is the systems of communication, systems of authority, and the systems of workflow.

In addition to these major internal components, the organization as a system also has an external task environment. The task environment is composed of different constituents, such as suppliers, customers, and federal regulators. Thompson describes the task environment as that element of the environment related to the organization’s degree of goal attainment; that is, the task environment is composed of those elements of the environment related to the organization’s basic task. For example, Starbucks is the chief competitor for Caribou Coffee and therefore a key element in Caribou’s task environment. Therefore, Caribou must develop a business strategy and approach that considers the actions and activities of Starbucks.

The organization system works by taking inputs, converting them into throughputs, and delivering outputs to its task environment. Inputs are the human, informational, material, and financial resources used by the or-
The open systems view of organization suggests that they are designed like clockwork with a neat, precise, interrelated functioning. The informal organization, which is unofficial and less visible. The Hawthorne studies, conducted during the 1920s and 1930s, first suggested the importance of the informal elements. During the interview study, the third of the four Hawthorne studies, the researchers began to fully appreciate the informal elements of the Hawthorne Works as an organization. The formal and informal elements of the organization are depicted in Figure 1.2.

Since the formal and informal elements of an organization can sometimes conflict, we must understand the informal organization, which is unofficial and less visible. The Hawthorne studies, conducted during the 1920s and 1930s, first suggested the importance of the informal elements. During the interview study, the third of the four Hawthorne studies, the researchers began to fully appreciate the informal elements of the Hawthorne Works as an organization.

The actions of suppliers, customers, regulators, and other elements of the task environment affect the organization and the behavior of people at work. For example, Onsite Engineering and Management’s survival was threatened by its total dependence on one large utility for its outputs during the mid-1980s. By broadening its client base and improving the quality of its services (that is, its outputs) over the next several years, Onsite grew healthier and more successful. Transforming inputs into high-quality outputs is critical to every organization’s success.

**Learning Outcome 4**

**The Formal and Informal Organization**

The open systems view of organization suggests that they are designed like clockwork with a neat, precise, interrelated functioning. The formal organization is the official, legitimate, and most visible part that enables people to think of organizations in logical and rational ways. The snake pit metaphor mentioned earlier originates from the study of the informal organization, which is unofficial and less visible. The Hawthorne studies, conducted during the 1920s and 1930s, first suggested the importance of the informal elements. During the interview study, the third of the four Hawthorne studies, the researchers began to fully appreciate the informal elements of the Hawthorne Works as an organization. The formal and informal elements of the organization are depicted in Figure 1.2.

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both. Conflicts erupted in many organizations during the early years of the twentieth century and were embodied in the union–management strife of that era. Sometimes formal–informal conflicts escalated into violence. For example, during the 1920s supervisors at the Homestead Works of U.S. Steel were issued pistols “just in case” they felt it necessary to shoot unruly, dangerous steelworkers. Not all organizations are characterized by such potential formal–informal, management–labor conflict. During the same era, the progressive Eastman Kodak company helped with financial backing for employees’ neighborhood communities, such as Meadowbrook in Rochester, New York. Kodak’s concern for employees and attention to informal issues made unions unnecessary within the company.

The informal elements of the organization are often points of diagnostic and intervention activities in organization development, though the formal elements must always be considered since they provide the context for the informal. Informal elements are important because people’s feelings, thoughts, and attitudes about their work affect their behavior and performance. Individual behavior plays out in the context of the formal and informal elements of the system, becoming organizational behavior. Employees’ moods, emotions, and dispositional affects all influence critical organizational outcomes, such as job performance, decision making, creativity, turnover, teamwork, negotiation, and leadership.

**Learning Outcome 5**

**Diversity of Organizations**

Organizational behavior always occurs in the context of a specific organizational setting. Most attempts at explaining or predicting organizational behavior rely heavily on factors within the organization and give less weight to external environmental considerations. Students can benefit from being sensitive to the industrial context of organizations and from developing an appreciation for each organization as a whole. In this vein, we will focus on six organizations throughout the text.

Large and small organizations operate in each sector of the economy. The private sectors play an important role in the economy. The manufacturing sector includes the production of basic materials, such as steel, and the production of finished products, such as automobiles and electronic equipment. The service sector includes transportation, financial services, insurance, and retail sales. Government sectors, which provide essential infrastructure, and nonprofit organizations are also important to our collective well-being because they meet needs that aren’t addressed by other sectors.

Hundreds of small, medium, and large organizations contribute to the economic health and human welfare of the United States. Throughout this book, we provide ex-
amples from a variety of organizations to help you develop a greater appreciation for your own organization and for others in the diverse world of private business enterprises and nonprofit organizations.

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**Learning Outcome 6**

**Change Creates Opportunities**

Change creates opportunities and risks. Global competition is a leading force driving change at work. Competition in the United States and world economies has increased significantly during the past few decades, especially in industries such as banking, finance, and air transportation. Corporate competition creates performance and cost pressures, which have a ripple effect on people and their behavior at work. While one risk for employees is the marginalization of part-time professionals, good management practice can ensure their integration. Competition may lead to downsizing and restructuring, but it provides the opportunity for revitalization. Further, small companies don’t necessarily lose in this competitive environment. Scientech, a small power and energy company, needed to enhance its managerial talent and service quality to meet the challenges of growth and big-company competitors. Product and service quality helps companies win in a competitive environment. IBM, Control Data Services, Inc., Northwest Airlines, and Southwest Airlines all use problem-solving skills to achieve high-quality products and services.

Too much change leads to chaos; too little change leads to stagnation. Change in the coffee industry is a key stimulus for both Caribou Coffee and Starbucks as they innovate and improve. Winning in a competitive industry can be a transient victory however; staying ahead of the competition requires constant change.

**Four Challenges for Managers Related to Change**

Chapter 2 develops four challenges for managers related to change in contemporary organizations: globalization, workforce diversity, ethics and character, and technological innovation. These four driving forces create and shape changes at work. Further, success in global competition requires organizations to respond to ethnic, religious, and gender diversity and to personal integrity in the workforce, in addition to responding positively to the competition in the international marketplace. Workforce demographic change and diversity are critical challenges in themselves for the study and management of organizational behavior. The theories of motivation, leadership, and group behavior based on research in a workforce of one composition may not be applicable in a workforce of a very different composition. This may be especially problematic if ethnic, gender, and/or religious differences lead to conflict between leaders and followers in organizations. For example, the Russian military establishment has found ethnic and religious conflicts between the officers and enlisted corps a real impediment to unit cohesion and performance.

**Global Competition in Business**

Managers and executives in the United States face radical change in response to increased global competition. According to noted economist Lester Thurow, this competition is characterized by intense rivalry between the United States, Japan, and Europe in core industries. Economic competition places pressure on all categories in the 1980s, Nintendo ushered in the modern age of video games and dominated the market. By 2000, however, the company saw its market share of U.S. hardware sales decline by 50 percent as competitors like Sony and Microsoft introduced incredibly powerful systems and games saturated with increasingly lifelike graphics. Spending billions of dollars on game development became a standard in the industry, and Nintendo needed to rethink how it was competing. Top managers decided to build something simple, economically priced, and enjoyable for the whole family. The result was Wii, a game console controlled by a motion-sensitive wireless handheld. Although the decision was risky when it was made, thinking in a new way about the controller and the console has paid off handsomely for Nintendo, and demand for Wii has well outstripped supply during 2006. Wii is reversing 20 years of declining Nintendo console sales.

Quality improvement enhances the probability of organizational success in increasingly competitive industries. One study of 193 general medical hospitals examined seven TQM practices and found them positively related to the financial performance of the hospital. Quality improvement is an enduring feature of an organization’s culture and of the economic competition we face today. It leads to competitive advantage through customer responsiveness, results acceleration, and resource effectiveness.

The three key questions in evaluating quality-improvement ideas for people at work are: (1) Does the idea improve customer response? (2) Does the idea accelerate results? (3) Does the idea increase the effectiveness of resources? A “yes” answer means the idea should be implemented to improve quality.

Six Sigma is a philosophy for company-wide quality improvement developed by Motorola and popularized by General Electric. The Six Sigma program is characterized by its customer-driven approach, its emphasis on using quantitative data to make decisions, and its priority on saving money. It has evolved into a high-performance system to execute business strategy. Part of its quality program is a 12-step problem-solving method specifically for employees to be productive and to add value to the firm.

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Economic competition places pressure on all categories of employees to be productive and to add value to the firm.

Ford’s “Quality is job 1” slogan helped reenergize the company’s quality program.
designed to lead a Six Sigma “Black Belt” to significant improvement within a defined process. It tackles problems in four phases: (1) measure, (2) analyze, (3) improve, and (4) control. In addition, it forces executives to align the right objective and targets and quality improvement teams to mobilize for action in order to accelerate and monitor sustained improvement. Six Sigma is set up so that it can be applied to a range of situations, from manufacturing settings to service work environments. Table 1.1 contrasts Six Sigma and TQM. One study compared Six Sigma to two other methods for quality improvement (specifically, Taguchi’s methods and the Shainin system) and found it to be the most complete strategy of the three, with a strong emphasis on exploiting statistical modeling techniques.  

**Behavior and Quality at Work**

Whereas total quality may draw on reliability engineering or just-in-time management, total quality improvement can succeed only when employees have the skills and authority to respond to customer needs. Total quality has important direct effects on the behavior of employees at all levels in the organization, not just on employees working directly with customers. Chief executives can advance total quality by engaging in participative management, being willing to change everything, focusing quality efforts on customer service (not cost cutting), including quality as a criterion in reward systems, improving the flow of information regarding quality-improvement successes or failures, and being actively and personally involved in quality efforts. While serving as chairman of Motorola, George Fisher emphasized the behavioral attributes of leadership, cooperation, communication, and participation as important elements in the company’s Six Sigma program. 

**Total quality isn’t a panacea for all organizations and it doesn’t guarantee unqualified success.**

Quality improvement is crucial to competitive success. The U.S. Department of Commerce’s sponsorship of an annual award in the name of Malcolm Baldrige, former secretary of commerce in the Reagan administration, recognizes companies excelling in quality improvement and management. The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award examination evaluates an organization in seven categories: leadership, information and analysis, strategic quality planning, human resource utilization, quality assurance of products and services, quality results, and customer satisfaction.

According to George H. W. Bush, “Quality management is not just a strategy. It must be a new style of working, even a new style of thinking. A dedication to quality and excellence is more than good business. It is a way of life, giving something back to society, offering your best to others.”

Quality is one watchword for competitive success. Organizations that do not respond to customer needs find their customers choosing alternative product and service suppliers who are willing to exceed customer expectations. Keep in mind, however, that total quality isn’t a panacea for all organizations and it doesn’t guarantee unqualified success.

### TABLE 1.1 Contrasting Six Sigma and Total Quality Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIX SIGMA</th>
<th>TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive ownership</td>
<td>Self-directed work teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business strategy</td>
<td>Quality initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>execution system</td>
<td>Largely within a single function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truly cross-functional</td>
<td>No mass training in statistics and quality Return on investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focused training with</td>
<td>Quality oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>verifiable return on</td>
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<td>investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business results</td>
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<td>oriented</td>
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Managing Organizational Behavior in Changing Times

Over and above the challenge of quality improvement to meet international competition, managing organizational behavior during changing times is challenging for at least four reasons: (1) the increasing globalization of organizations’ operating territory, (2) the increasing diversity of organizational workforces, (3) the continuing demand for higher levels of moral and ethical behavior at work, and (4) continuing technological innovation with its companion need for skill enhancement.

Each of these four issues is explored in detail in Chapter 2 and highlighted throughout the text as they appear intertwined with contemporary organizational practices. For example, the issue of women in the workplace concerns workforce diversity and at the same time overlaps with the globalization issue. Gender roles are often defined differently in various cultures, and sexual harassment often plagues organizations in the United States, Europe, Israel, and South Africa.

Learning about Organizational Behavior

Organizational behavior is based on scientific knowledge and applied practice. It involves the study of abstract ideas, such as valence and expectancy in motivation, as well as the study of concrete matters, like observable behaviors and medical symptoms of distress at work. Therefore, learning about organizational behavior includes at least three activities, as shown in Figure 1.3. First, the science of organizational behavior requires the mastery of a certain body of objective knowledge. Objective knowledge results from research and scientific activities, as reflected in the Science feature in each chapter. Second, the practice of organizational behavior requires skill development based on knowledge and an understanding of yourself in order to master the abilities essential to success. Third, both objective knowledge and skill development must be applied in real-world settings.

Learning is challenging and fun because we are all different. Within learning environments, student diversity is best addressed in the learning process when students have more options and can take greater responsibility as coproducers in the effort and fun of learning. For those who are blind or have vision impairments, learning can be a special challenge. Teaching and learning styles should be aligned carefully and educators should be aware that teaching is no longer merely verbal and visual, it has now become virtual. If you are a visual learner, use charts, maps, PowerPoint slides, videos, the Internet, notes, or flash cards, and write things out for visual review. If you are an auditory learner, listen, take notes during lectures, and consider taping them so you can fill in gaps later; review your notes frequently; and recite key concepts out loud. If you are a tactile learner, trace words as you are saying them, write down facts several times, and make study sheets.

Objective Knowledge

Objective knowledge, in any field of study, is developed through basic and applied research. Research in organizational behavior has continued since early research on scientific management. Acquiring objective knowledge requires the cognitive mastery of theories, conceptual models, and research findings. In this book, the objective knowledge in each chapter is reflected in the supporting notes. Mastering the concepts and ideas that come from these notes

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**LEARNING OUTCOME 7**

Learning about Organizational Behavior

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enables you to intelligently discuss topics such as motivation, performance, leadership, and executive stress.

We encourage instructors and students of organizational behavior to think critically about the objective knowledge in organizational behavior. Only by engaging in critical thinking can one question or challenge the results of specific research and responsibly consider how to apply research results in a particular work setting. Rote memorization does not prepare students to appreciate the complexity of specific theories or the intricacies of interrelated concepts, ideas, and topics. Good critical thinking, however, enables the student to identify inconsistencies and limitations in the current body of objective knowledge.

Critical thinking, based on knowledge and understanding of basic ideas, leads to inquisitive exploration and is a key to accepting the responsibility of coproducer in the learning process. A questioning, probing attitude is at the core of critical thinking. The student of organizational behavior should evolve into a critical consumer of knowledge related to organizational behavior—one who is able to intelligently question the latest research results and distinguish plausible, sound new approaches from fads that lack substance or adequate foundation. Ideally, the student of organizational behavior develops into a scientific professional manager who is knowledgeable in the art and science of organizational behavior.

**Skill Development**

Learning about organizational behavior requires doing as well as knowing. The development of skills and abilities requires that students be challenged by the instructor and by themselves. The What about You? features on the Chapter Review Cards give you a chance to learn about yourself, challenge yourself, and developmentally apply what you are learning.

The U.S. Department of Labor tries to ensure that people achieve the necessary skills to be successful in the workplace. The essential skills identified by the Department of Labor are (1) resource management skills, such as time management; (2) information management skills, such as data interpretation; (3) personal interaction skills, such as teamwork; (4) systems behavior and performance skills, such as cause–effect relationships; and (5) technology utilization skills, such as troubleshooting. Many of these skills, such as decision making and information management, are directly related to the study of organizational behavior.

Developing skills is different from acquiring objective knowledge because it requires structured practice and feedback. A key function of experiential learning is engaging the student in individual or group activities that are systematically reviewed, leading to new skills and understandings. Objective knowledge acquisition and skill development are interrelated. The process for learning from structured or experiential activities is depicted in Figure 1.4. The student engages in an individual or group-structured activity and systematically reviews that activity, gaining new or modified knowledge and skills.

If skill development and structured learning occur in this way, there should be an inherently self-correcting element to learning because of the modification of the student’s knowledge and skills over time. To ensure that skill development does occur and that the learning is self-correcting as it occurs, three basic assumptions must be followed. First, each student must accept responsibility for his or her own behavior, actions, and learning. This is a key

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**A group cannot learn for its members.**
to the coproducer role in the learning process. A group cannot learn for its members. Each member must accept responsibility for what he or she does and learns. Denial of responsibility helps no one, least of all the learner.

Second, each student must actively participate in the individual or group-structured learning activity. Structured learning is not passive; it is active. In group activities, everyone suffers if just one person adopts a passive attitude. Hence, all must actively participate.

Third, each student must be open to new information, new skills, new ideas, and experimentation. This does not mean that students should be indiscriminately open. It does mean that students should have a nondefensive, open attitude so that they can learn and adjust to new ideas.

**Application of Knowledge and Skills**

Understanding organizational behavior includes an appreciation and understanding of working realities, as well as of science and of yourself. One of the advantages of structured, experiential learning is that a person can explore new behaviors and skills in a comparatively safe environment. Losing your temper in a classroom activity and learning about the potentially adverse impact on other people will probably have dramatically different consequences from losing your temper with an important customer in a tense work situation. Learning spaces that offer the interface of student learning styles with institutional learning environments give learners safe spaces to engage their brains to form abstract hypotheses, to actively test these hypotheses through concrete experience, and to reflectively observe the outcomes in behavior and experience. The ultimate objective of skill application and experiential learning is that one transfers the process employed in learning from structured activities in the classroom and learning spaces to learning from unstructured opportunities in the workplace.

Although organizational behavior is an applied discipline, a student is not “trained” in organizational behavior. Rather, one is “educated” in organizational behavior and is a coproducer in learning. The distinction between these two modes of learning is found in the degree of direct and immediate applicability of either knowledge or skills. As an activity, training more nearly ties direct objective knowledge or skill development to specific applications. By contrast, education enhances a person’s residual pool of objective knowledge and skills that may then be selectively applied later—sometimes significantly later—when the opportunity presents itself. Hence, education is highly consistent with the concept of lifelong learning. Especially in a growing area of knowledge such as organizational behavior, the student can think of the first course as the outset of lifelong learning about the topics and subject.
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