



**IMPLEMENTING HEALTH LITERACY  
IN HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS:  
THE KEY INGREDIENTS**

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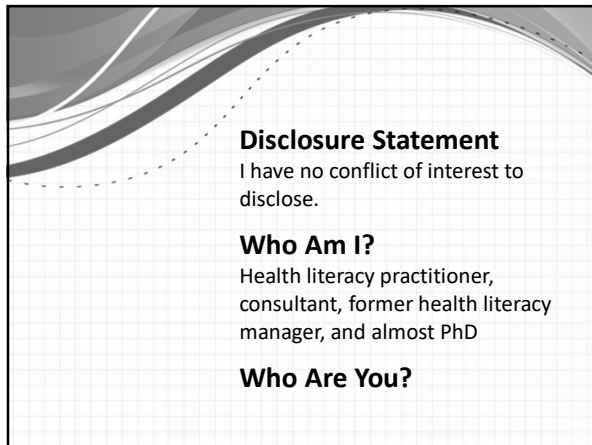
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**Disclosure Statement**  
I have no conflict of interest to disclose.

**Who Am I?**  
Health literacy practitioner,  
consultant, former health literacy  
manager, and almost PhD

**Who Are You?**

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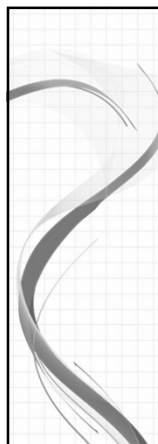
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**Learning Objectives**

- Name **3 facilitators** and **3 barriers** to advancing health literacy initiatives.
- State 2 pieces of **advice** for building support and implementing change.
- Identify 3 **actions** you can take next week to facilitate HL in your organization.




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**The Study Description**

- Goal
- Qualitative research
- Method--interviews
- Participants from healthcare organizations across the U.S.
- The questions
  - ✓ Facilitators and barriers
  - ✓ Building support
  - ✓ Organizational change models and processes

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**Case Studies**  
Which one sounds like your organization?

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**Case Study # 1**

- Senior leaders made HL a priority
- Named executive sponsor, champions, & coalition w/power
- Created organization-wide office
- Allocated resources
  - Created full-time position(s)
  - Budget
- Established policies, mandates



“Carol”

“I have loved it... It is *significantly* easier if leadership is on board....without that, change is not likely...”

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**Case Study #2**

- Little to no leader support— not a priority, no policies, no mandates, and no resources
- Part time, no office, no budget
- Little access to senior leaders, presented only twice in 4 yrs.
- Found others who believe in HL, created team, doing small projects under the radar



“Jamie”

“...we feel like our hands are tied...we don't have a voice, ...or the attention of leadership...I feel like I'm digging a tunnel with a tablespoon...”

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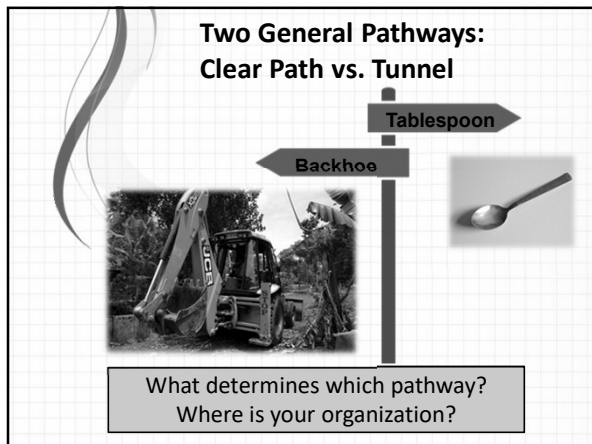
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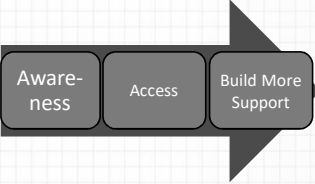
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**New Aspects Found in this Study**

- 1) Awareness
  - Who, where
- 2) Access
  - Senior leaders
  - Managers
  - Staff
- 3) Initiative location
  - Organization-wide vs. one area or service line (silo), e.g., nursing




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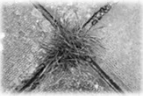
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**New Aspects Found in this Study**

- 4) Experience of Health Literacy Leaders
  - ✓ Passion and commitment



“There have been challenges...Not everybody is receptive. I’ve had a couple of smack downs...”  
 “The answer is you put on your big girl panties...”

- ✓ Background and training vs. job demands
  - Needed knowledge and skills
  - What are some areas?

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**Top Strategies Used to Build Support**  
(by Frequency of Use)

- 1) Linking health literacy to other initiatives, e.g., reducing readmissions
- 2) Cost savings and ROI
- 3) Health literacy statistics
- 4) Stories of patient experiences (in your own organization)— engage **“Heart-Head-Heart”**  
Only one mention, but critical...
- 5) Legal, regulatory, and compliance reasons

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**Organizational Change Processes**

- Most HL leaders not aware of specific process for change
- Formal models used *successfully* in health literacy
  - Model for Improvement with Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycles
  - Kotter’s 8-Step Model
- Informal models
  - Chain of command
  - Approval committees, panels

**Model for Improvement**

What are we trying to accomplish?  
 How will we know that a change is an improvement?  
 What change can we make that will result in improvement?

Act Plan  
 Study Do

Developed by Associates in Process Improvement

Retrieved from:  
[www.hi.org/resources/Pages/Howtoimprove/default.aspx](http://www.hi.org/resources/Pages/Howtoimprove/default.aspx)

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**Recommendations  
for your Work**

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**Consider These Strategies**

- 1) Build alliances and recruit champions at all levels and across disciplines
- 2) Ask for *specific* actions from others
- 3) To sell health literacy, also:
  - Use attributes from Diffusion of Innovations theory to sell HL: **relative advantage, compatibility**, complexity, trialability, and observability
  - Use legal, regulatory, and compliance explanations

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**Consider These Strategies**

- 6) Build skills for leading change
  - Learn your organization's change model and processes
  - Learn how to do a PDSA
  - Recruit a mentor on change processes, strategies (in QI?)
  - Explore Kotter's Model
- 7) Get technical assistance and coaching from a health literacy subject matter expert
- 8) Build a support network of other HL people or change leaders

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**Resources**

- 1) *The improvement guide: a practical approach to enhancing organizational performance.* Langley, G. J., Moen, R. D., Nolan, K. M., Nolan, T. W., Norman, C. L., & Provost, L. P. (2009). John Wiley & Sons. The first edition, 1996, is also terrific.
- 2) Kotter, J. P. (1995). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review*, 28(3), 121. [http://doi.org/10.1016/0024-6301\(95\)91633-4](http://doi.org/10.1016/0024-6301(95)91633-4)
- 3) *Building Health Literate Organizations: A Guidebook to Achieving Organizational Change.* Abrams MA, Kurtz-Rossi S, Riffenburgh A, Savage BA. 2014. Available at: <http://www.HealthLiterateOrganization.org>.

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**Questions?**  
**Need Technical Assistance?**  
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