

### Building a Vocabulary of Change

#### Learning

the process by which individuals receive data from the external environment, analyze that data, and adjust their thinking and behaviors based on that analysis.

#### Theory into Practice

The most effective change implementation starts with a diagnosis that is shared by many employees at multiple organizational levels.

Altered and renewed strategies, new business models, and shifting external realities typically call for new skills, competencies, and patterns of behavior. The sequential implementation model depicted in [Exhibit 2-6](#) starts with diagnosis in order to identify both the current state of skills, competencies, and behaviors and the requirements for future outstanding performance. Mutual engagement by employees generates awareness of the gap between the status quo and the desired future state. That awareness, in turn, provides the source of dissatisfaction and the drive for change.

Recall from [Chapter 2](#) Lewin's warning that "lectures" about the status quo—speeches on the need for change or Power Point presentations on the new strategy, for instance—will not be sufficient to create the disequilibrium necessary to motivate change. Instead, effective change starts with a diagnostic process that engages employees in a learning process. Executives learn why the status quo is unsatisfactory; so, too, do employees at all levels and in all units.

In addition to generating learning, mutual engagement in shared diagnosis can create a consensus among employees not just about *what* needs to be changed but also *how* to bring about that change. Engaging employees in the process of collecting and learning from data and then using that learning to shape an intervention can help build real commitment to implementing change.

As an alternative to initiating change by announcing a solution, leaders can instead begin with diagnosis. **Diagnosis** is the process of learning about the dynamics of an organization's functioning. It is meant to engage employees in the process of identifying both the current state and the desired future state of the organization.<sup>3</sup> Employees collect data and engage in a dialogue concerning the meaning of the data. The diagnostic process provides a roadmap for change; mutual engagement in diagnosis helps build motivation on the part of employees to alter their behaviors.

