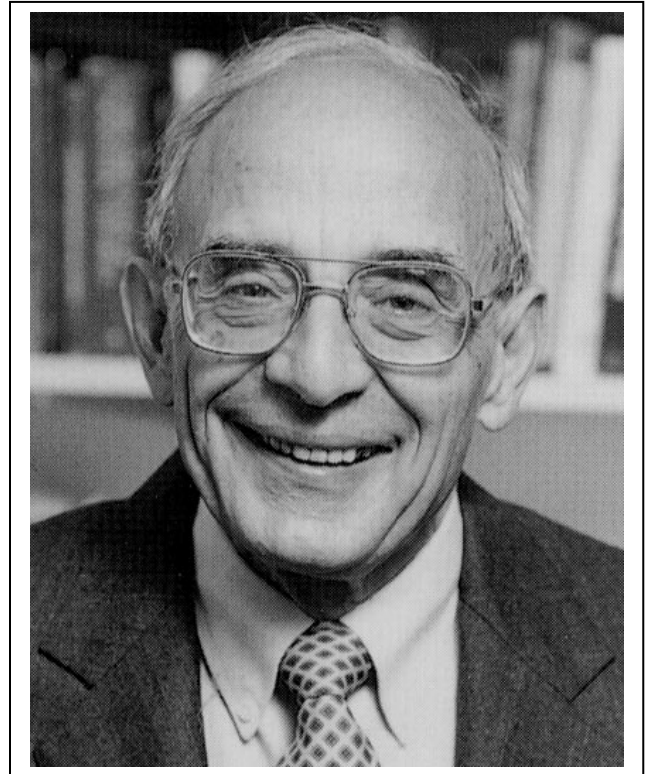


Chris Argyris, Ph.D

Chris Argyris, a director of the Monitor Company, is the James Bryant Conant Professor of Education and Organizational Behavior at the Graduate School of Business, Harvard University. He was awarded the A.B. degree in Psychology from Clark University (1947); the M.A. degree in Economics and Psychology from Kansas University (1949); and the Ph.D. degree in Organizational Behavior from Cornell University (1951). From 1951 to 1971, he was a faculty member at Yale University, serving as Beach Professor of Administrative Sciences and as chairperson of the Administrative Sciences Department during the latter part of this period.

Argyris' early research focused on the unintended consequences for individuals of formal organizational structures, executive leadership, control systems, and management information systems—and on how individuals adapted to change those consequences. (Personality and Organization, 1957; Integrating the Individual and the Organization, 1964) He then turned his attention to ways of changing organizations, especially the behavior of executives at the upper levels of organization (Interpersonal Competence and Organizational Effectiveness, 1962; Organization and Innovation, 1965).

As early as the 1950s, Argyris championed the belief that people can be self-directed and creative at work if properly motivated. He examined the effect of management practices on individual behavior and personal growth. Applying his Immaturity-Maturity Theory, he showed that formalized structures, rigid channels of communication, and prescriptive job design often cause



alienation, apathy, and antagonism in workers.

Argyris examined the role of the social scientist as a researcher and interventionist. He defined valid interventions as those that generate valid information; provide free, informed choice for the client; and create an internal commitment on the part of the client to the choices made. He developed a unique format and method of case analysis that is useful in consultant-client interaction as well as other situations involving human interaction.

During the past decades he has also been developing, with Donald Schon, a theory of individual and organizational learning in which human reasoning—not just behavior—becomes the basis for diagnosis and action. (Theory in Practice, 1974; Increasing Leadership Effectiveness, 1976;

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Organizational Learning, 1978) Argyris continues this line of inquiry by focusing on *Overcoming Organizational Defenses*, (1990), beginning at the highest levels of organization (*Knowledge for Action*, 1993) and *Organizational Learning II*, 1996.

For 50 years, Chris Argyris has been among the first generation of contributors to the field of organization development, Argyris has defined and vigorously advanced theories and strategies for individual and organizational development including action research as a powerful approach to organizational change. This iterative process of data gathering and diagnosis, involvement of employees, and action planning and evaluation is a principal method in change efforts today. His work in action research and organizational learning has provided the underpinnings for theorists and practitioners to foster long-term effectiveness in organizations. So powerfully has Argyris's work penetrated the field that his innovative ideas have become universal.

Today Argyris continues to challenge management to provide a climate in which everyone can grow and mature, satisfying their own needs while working for the success of the organization. He believes the most productive business is one in which the needs and goals of employees are aligned with those of the organization.

Chris Argyris's more recent works focus on understanding how individuals reason, make decisions, and change behaviors in organizations. He examines the link between interpersonal competence and organizational learning. He distinguishes between two kinds of organizational learning.

- Single-loop, the most basic, asks questions about objective facts and is

one-dimensional. It focuses on changing tasks and organizational routines.

- Double-loop learning is longer lasting. It asks questions about the reasons and motives behind the fact. It changes the underlying values and leads to a new framework for learning and to new routines.

He contends that the only way to have effective, lasting change is at this deeper, personal level. Individuals need to be skilled in productive reasoning and be willing to reset their assumptions and the way they frame reality. Productive reasoning means that people make their premises known and their inferences clear and explicit. Their conclusions are testable by logic other than their own. He has written 31 books and written and co-authored over 300 articles.

Argyris has received numerous awards, including honorary doctorates from Warwick University (1996), DePaul University (1987), IMCB, Buckingham, England (1987), the Stockholm School of Economics (1979), the University of Leuven, Belgium (1978), McGill University (1977). He has received the Irwin Award by the Academy of Management for lifetime contributions to the discipline of management. He is a fellow of the National Academy of Human resources and is recognized as a distinguished lifetime contributor to theory and practice of management from *Revue Française de Gestion* and *Financial Times Handbook of Management*. His article, "Good Communication that Blocks Learning," received the McKinsey Prize for best article in the *Harvard Business Review*, 1994.