



Employer solutions & advice

Becoming a successful, learning organisation

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Learning organisation

“A term given to an organisation that facilitates the learning of its people and continuously transforms itself.”

or

“To accept a set of attitudes, values and practices that support the process of continuous learning throughout the whole organisation.”

Creating a learning culture

- It may take an organisation a step beyond just acquiring the skills to deliver its products and services
- It can enable and empower staff to be:
 - more easily anticipate and adapt to change;
 - more responsive to markets;
 - more passionate, committed and goal-oriented; and
 - to grow with the organisation and through innovation.
- It can introduce the correct balance between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills
- It could take the organisation to a truly market leading position

The learning organisation concept



1. Shared vision

- Customer-focused vision and business strategy effortlessly recited by staff at all levels
- Deeply held beliefs by all
- Strong culture where staff call each other to account
- Perfectly communicated business plans:
 - Daily/weekly deliverables
 - Next month/three months
 - Financial year
 - Three or five year plan
- Weekly meetings with all staff
- Monthly scoreboard presentations to all staff

2. Systems thinking

- All staff in the organisation:
 - are able to see and understand the big picture
 - understand how what they do, or what their team does, actually helps us to achieve our goals
 - understand our value proposition, points of difference and competitive advantage
 - understand what motivates customers to choose us
 - understanding how we need to evolve to attain/retain our desired leadership position

3. Personal mastery

- Commitment to learn:
 - by all (staff and management)
 - regularly
 - continuously
- Acquiring and maintaining the required personal competencies (all staff and management)
- Un-learning our unproductive habits

4. Mental model

- Mental models are our assumptions or our “maps of the world”
- Learning organisations cause our mental models to be challenged and changed through:
 - causing the seeing of new or different perspectives
 - healthy, vigorous adult-to-adult debate
 - effective consultation at all levels
 - an open culture
 - un-learning unwanted values

5. Team learning

- Staff grow more quickly through shared team learning
- The organisation's problem solving ability is enhanced by sharing and leveraging team experience
- Collective conversation and thinking skills are needed to develop team ability and intelligence that is greater than the sum of individual member's talents
- Openness, boundary crossing, dialogue and discussion need to be present
- Celebrating our achievements
- Actively understanding why we are succeeding, or what we still need to do to be successful

Top 10 essentials for a learning organisation

1. An inspiring, non-negotiable mission aligned to vision and values
2. A viable business strategy built on a strong value proposition, a clear competitive advantage and customer-focused points of difference
3. An effective and relentlessly communicated business plan
4. Weekly staff meetings and monthly presentations of a business dashboard to all staff
5. Continual reinforcement of an exceptionally strong organisational culture
6. Top quality Position Descriptions & KPIs and *at least* monthly feedback meetings with every member of staff
7. Individual and team performance metrics linked to the business plan and budget
8. Top quality inductions for the first: week, month, quarter and six months
9. A really good active personal development plan for each member of staff and member of management
10. Relentless pursuit of operational excellence supported by top quality team scorecards and “*All’s well*” team reporting

What we often see managers and executives not doing well...

1. Induction programmes
2. Well constructed position descriptions and key performance indicators
3. Receiving *All's well* reporting (e.g. scorecards)
4. Staff feedback skills (frequency and quality)
5. Employing useful metrics in feedback meetings
6. Recognising, appreciating and praising staff
7. Developing people
8. Communicating (frequency and quality)
9. Delegating (growing staff and creating organisational leverage)
10. Operating at the correct level for their role

What does it feel like in a learning organisation?

- Deeply purposeful
- Confident, easily accomplishing chosen results
- People doing what they care about
- Shared intent and aspiration
- Spirited and having fun
- Curious, eager to know and understand
- Learning together
- Deep and insightful conversations
- Widespread strategic thinking
- Alignment of processes and structures to the mission and purpose

Summary

- At the end of the day, a learning organisation is just a concept: it takes people, and leaders with vision, to introduce
- A learning organisation is not mandatory
- Learning organisation principles can be selectively adopted
- Learning organisations can evolve over time
- But the CEO must lead the (r)evolution
- Implementation of learning organisation principles is highly likely to correlate to superior business performance on many levels