

The characteristics of a learning organization



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Learning organization is the ability to acquire knowledge, skills, innovation that has the potential to influence behavior which takes place in all levels of the organization. A learning organization is one that facilitates learning, encourages team building, staying up to date with research thus acquiring new knowledge and at time to time changing to maintain the best practices. It is an organization where a group of people work together applying best practices, creativity and being innovative in achieving targets successfully. The employees in a learning organization strive to give their fullest in strategic ideas and decision making, as there is no blame culture.

According to Peter Senge (1990: 3) learning organizations are:

...organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.

Learning organizations are not simply the most fashionable or current management trend, they can provide work environments that are open to creative thought, and embrace the concept that solutions to ongoing work-related problems are available inside each and every one of us. All we must do is tap into the knowledge base, which gives us the “ ability to think critically and creatively, the ability to communicate ideas and concepts, and the ability to cooperate with other human beings in the process of inquiry and action

Characteristics of a Learning organization

Organizational Culture

Learning organization adopt a strong culture that emphasizes on creativity, risk taking and experimentation. Employees are encouraged to acquire new knowledge, process and as well as share, they have the freedom of experimenting new innovative things as risk taking is tolerated.

Information Systems

Learning organization are open to a wide areas of knowledge, they require information system that significantly enhance themselves rather than remaining as a traditional organization. Through effective information system, rapid acquisition of information is gained, processed and applied to practices making it a more flexible organization.

Human Resource Practices

As for the human resources, people are solely identifies for innovativeness and creativity, as a result the management focuses on individual training to enhance the knowledge of employees. Appraisals and reward systems are used in order to measure the effectiveness of the employee and also motivate them for long term sustainability.

Leadership

A more democratic leadership style is focused in a learning organization; the leaders are more facilitators and guide the employees to organizational success. Leaders are more open. Risk taking and reflecting on necessary areas of performance adhering to the companies objectives. They ensure

that teams and the organization itself have the capability to learn, change and develop.

Self-Organization

Learning organization itself encourages self-organization where teams come together in order to explore new ideas; use the knowledge they have and carry on things, rather than taking orders from managers. Many learning organizations encourage self organization, as they see it as a method of improving effectiveness rather than believing it as a waste of time.

Why Learning Organizations Work

The People Develop

Learning organizations aims at encouraging employees to risk taking, and improves on their personal skills and qualities, thus learning from it. They benefited from their own experience and also from others where the watch and learn, whether it's positive or negative doesn't matter since the main objective is learning

Greater motivation

In a learning organization people are appreciated for their own skills, employees opinions are treated equally and with respect thus, this actually motivates them to give their fullest to the organization. This sends a message to all the employees, making them also contribute to the organization.

The workforce is more flexible

People learn skills and acquire knowledge beyond their specific job requirements. This enables them to appreciate or perform other roles and tasks. Flexibility allows workers to move freely within the organization, whilst at the same time it removes the barriers associated with a rigidly structured company. It also ensures that any individual will be able to cope rapidly with a changing environment, such as those that exist in modern times.

4 People are more creative

There are more opportunities to be creative in a learning organization. There is also room for trying out new ideas without having to worry about mistakes. Employees' creative contribution is recognized and new ideas are free to flourish.

5 Improved social interaction

Learning requires social interaction and interpersonal communication skills. An organization based on learning will ensure members become better at these activities. Teams will work better as a result.

6 Teams and Groups Work Better

Learning Organizations provide the perfect environment for high performing teams to learn, grow and develop. On the other hand these teams will perform efficiently for the organization to produce positive results.

7 Knowledge sharing

” Openness Creates Trust “

A team is composed of highly specialized members who cannot and are not expected to know everything about a job. In this case the sharing of common knowledge is quite important for the completion of a job. Within learning organizations in general, and teams in particular, information and knowledge flows around more freely. This makes for higher productivity within teams and between teams as they build on each other's strengths. Trust between team members increases and hence they value each other's opinions more.

8 Interdependency

In any organization people depend on each other for the completion of their jobs. Learning Organizations will increase this awareness, and improve relations between people at a personal level. By knowing more about other people's roles, needs and tasks, members can manage their time better and plan their work more efficiently. This dependency is decreased as learning is enhanced, letting people get on with their own job better as they rely less on others.

9 The Company Benefits

An active learning organization will have at its heart the concept of continuous learning. Therefore it will always be improving in its techniques, methods and technology.

10 Breakdown of traditional communication barriers

The old hierarchical communication barrier between manager-workers has devolved into more of a coach-team member scenario. Leaders support the

team, not dictate to it. The team appreciates this, which in turn helps them to be highly motivated.

All workers have an increased awareness of the company's status, and all that goes on in other departments. Communication between and across all layers of the company gives an other departments. Communication between and across all layers of the company gives a sense of coherence, making each individual a vital part of the whole system. Workers perform better as they feel more a part of the company; they are not just pawns in a game.

11 Customer relations

A learning organization will be able to satisfy the needs of the customer sooner, as the unnecessary procedures is cut down compared to a traditional organizational structure, thus been able to serve the customer more effectively.

12 Information resources

By being a learning organization, the company builds a pool of knowledge and learning, either in the form of primary information sources or the human workforce. These them the added advantage to change according to the changes in the environment.

13 Innovation and creativity

As more employees are open to vital information, and continual learning there is effective contribution to the organization. Being innovative by then

entire workforce will actually help the organization achieve sustainable advantage, being more flexible to changes in the environment.