

IS YOURS A TEACHING ORGANIZATION?

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We've heard about Learning Organization and the fact that Organizations that fail to learn are the ones that will eventually disappear. However, creating a Learning Organization is only part of the greater equation of organizational survivability quotient. The question that you need to ask is whether you have a teachable organization.

In order for people to learn they need to be self-directed to the learning process. However they still need someone to guide and coach them to become effective in what they are doing. Consider this example. Peter was appointed as a supervisor in a manufacturing company. He was well qualified and had all the know-how's of his work. Peter's immediate superior was John who has been with the company for more than 10 years. John has got an effective practical work experience in his line of work.

On the first day of work John tells Peter of all the procedural rules that has to be adhered to. He also tells Peter on his responsibilities and that's that. John then left Peter to his job and did no further coaching. A workman, approached Peter on a certain issue and Peter using his initiative told the workman what to do. However it turned out that the instruction that Peter gave the workman was not the supposed way of doing things and this led to a minor disaster. When an inquiry was made on this matter, John reports to his boss stating that Peter is incompetent.

This situation also reflects the incompetence of John for failing to teach Peter effectively on what to do. Too often new recruits in organizations are thrown at the deep end of the pool and expected to learn on their own. This is one of the reasons why some organization faces a severe attrition rate of new staff as some feel that although they have the motivation and drive to learn they have no one to teach them properly.

One of the true qualities of a leader is to create a teaching culture within his/her organization. This means that everyone in the organization should be empowered to help others to do their job better. If one staff goes for training, when he/she returns there must be some form of avenue for that staff to teach others of the training that he/she has received. Only when there is such a transfer of knowledge through teaching can learning occurs.

To create a teachable organization there are a few pointers you need to remember:

1. When you teach you learn

Compared to teaching learning is the easy part. However, learning in an unstructured and haphazard manner does not quite make the cut. Whatever your position is in your organization you have to take the initiative to teach others in your organization. It is only through the process of teaching that you can internalize for yourself what you've learnt.

2. Knowledge is for sharing

Nothing is gained by keeping knowledge to yourself. Too often people fail to realize that it takes two hands to clap. This is parable to the fact that if you know something that your team mate does not, then the whole team fails. Only when you share the knowledge that you have can you begin to synergize with other people in your organization and through this synergy it would be possible to synthesis with other people's knowledge and come up with new ideas, innovation and solutions to problems.

3. Teaching starts from the top

Unlike learning, teaching starts from the top of the organizational hierarchy. If you are a leader you have to initiate the process of teaching your staff of your expectations and what you want from them. Remember that the people who work for you are looking up to you for guidance and directions. It is easy to tell them to use their initiative or that you've empowered them to learn. Providing a learning environment is only part of the process of creating a perpetual learning culture. There must be avenues and ways where by all people in your organization have access to someone who could teach them and they must be empowered to teach others as well.

4. Develop good communication skills to teach effectively

People in the organization who have the ability to help others learn should be trained in their communication skills so that they could teach others effectively. Sometime people are fearful of their inability to articulate what they want to say. Good communication skills allow a person to share his/her knowledge in a manner that could be understood.

When you create a teaching culture, you will notice a positive environment whereby everyone feels alive and energized. There will be a constant sharing of information across all domains which will boost the productivity of the organization. Teaching then becomes an integral process which will in turn motivate people to learn other new things so that they can then impart this knowledge to others. Thus a cycle of teaching and learning is created.

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