

# Some learning strategies in high performance organizations

Manuel de Jesús Moguel Liévano  
Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas

## Abstract

Learning in organizations is currently the most important and competitive strategic advantage, it is one of the key factors that determine the success or failure of organizations. Organizational knowledge is considered as a production factor as important or more than land, labor and capital and as an energy source postmodern, off electricity and oil at the time.

During the last three decades, the advancement of scientific knowledge - in many cases using various strategies within organizations - has impacted the business scenario up to become the main factor leading to the development of organizations to be given to promoting the current era as "the knowledge society and information."

The production and knowledge management, organizational learning activities under, are now vital aspects in world class organizations which increasingly rely on their ability to create knowledge that their assets and capital as traditionally had.

Keywords: Organizational Learning, Organizational Knowledge, Learning Strategies, Competitive Advantage.

## Introduction

In the context of fierce competition for world markets, rampant technology and the speed with which changes occur, during the last three decades it has received special attention a proposal to bring an explanation of organizational performance, considered by experts as a factor leading to the disappearance of continuity or organizations.

This perspective, which evidence may be in the early Industrial Age companies and organizations strengthening in the late twentieth century, has to do with their ability to expand their borders through activities to learn and acquire new knowledge. We refer to organizational learning, which according to many theorists, turns out to be the turning point for the success of today's organizations, through innovation, creativity and continuous improvement.

Although learning in the organization was given continuously through the areas of Research and Development (R & D), in formal

and systematic managers suffered myopia to ignore personnel from operating there was a potential of knowledge as important as that generated the scientific R & D.

It was with the arrival of the school of human relations and people-centered management, during the fifties, which began to take into account this knowledge that people were willing to contribute to the continuous technological enrichment of the organization.

Then recognized from research achievements in world-class organizations, mainly Japanese and American, that success and survival lies in their capacity for learning and knowledge creation, through continuous improvement, creativity and innovation, to bring to market high quality, economical, high performance and other features that consumers demanded, making maximum customer care center.

Learning in organizations, while recognizing their genesis in the study of technical learning, Taylorism, is located in postmodernism with a more humanistic approach, which allows the survival of the organization and the people who work there. The new mandate is to learn and generate knowledge within the organization, through a transit positivist outlook, rationalist and empiricist initial reflective approach, continuous improvement of learning by doing, ie. metalearning.

## **Principales authors on organizational learning**

Many authors who have studied the phenomenon of learning and knowledge in the context of organizations almost from the start of the Industrial Revolution, most recently include the following in relation to strategies, facilitators and inhibitors of knowledge.

According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1999) a strategy for organizational learning is to stick to the phases of knowledge creation, such as: sharing tacit knowledge, creating concepts, justifying concepts, building an archetype and distribute knowledge. According to Von Krogh, et. al (2001) a key issue in the creation and facilitation of knowledge in organizations is the support that the people involved in the process may receive from other members of the organization at all levels.

According to Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline* (1998) the learning organization cultivates the following disciplines: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking.

Companies that engage their business partners, says Robert Mai (1996), such as customers, distributors and suppliers, in the process of developing knowledge, increase their chances of organizational learning, and distinguishes the following strategies for organizational learning: breaking the limits, promote team learning, open door policy, changing learning habits and learning partnerships.

In studies of organizational learning, most authors devote significant factors distinguish facilitators. Schein (2002) identifies the following: concern for people, belief in people's capacity to learn, loose coupling and diversity, open communication, what in the world is malleable, team work and think systemically.

According to Argyris (2001) learning facilitators are understandable and reliable system, participation of management, model simplification, sensitivity to human needs and organizational development program.

For Nonaka and Takeuchi these are the main facilitators: organizational intention, autonomy, fluctuation and creative chaos, redundancy and variety of requirements, create a vision of knowledge, develop staff knowledge, build a field of interaction in front, supported by the process new product development, administration adopt a center-up-down and build a knowledge network with the outside.

Yeung et. al. (2000) identified the following skills as facilitators: generate ideas with impact, generalizing ideas with impact and identify the seven learning disabilities. For Von Krogh et al are instilling a knowledge vision, driving conversations, mobilizing activists, creating the right context and globalization of local knowledge. Also a high dose of support from management and lateral levels.

According to Clegg and Clark (1998) organizational learning facilitators are learning about themselves, industry and competition, have permissive regulations, capital improvements and trust between people.

As facilitators are identified, also distinguished the factors that act as inhibitors or obstacles to organizational learning. According to Schein, are the legacy patriarchal and hierarchical, male dominance, control and leadership of rugged individualism. Argyris identifies defensive routines, masters programs or defensive mental models and ambiguous communication.

Yeung, et. al., identify them as learning disabilities and are blindness to the environment, the candor, the homogeneity, the tight coupling, paralysis, learning and dissemination poor superstitions.

Groh Von, et. al., call these barriers, both personal and organizational, are: 1) the individual: limited capacity to incorporate and threat to personal identity, 2) organizational: a legitimate language, anecdotes of the organization, procedures and paradigms Company. Distinguish a classification of barriers to knowledge: strategic, organizational, cultural, and individual infrastructure.

Robert Mai identify intended and unintended barriers, created both by the organization and by the people and called perspective barriers and barriers of reason. The former identifies vision problems, self-imposed blind spots, incompetence and myopia capacity or near vision; between motive is fear and the need to retain control.

Schein emphasizes that the lack of communication between the three cultures of the organization's culture-operators, engineering and management, can be cause of failure in organizations.

The literature reviewed for purposes of construction of this space allows me to reflect to propose different strategies that can lead to organizational learning, including the following may be mentioned.

1. Creating learning committees. A committee of organizational learning represents an instance consists of people from different areas and different hierarchical levels, committed to learning, established and conducted by senior management. The strategy is to determine the needs of organizational learning through a diagnosis, and then organize and manage learning events. This diagnosis will have many needs, which must be sorted by priority, according to the mission statement and overall goals of the organization. The committees may be formed by learning teams by functional areas whose leaders act as representatives. The committee is actually a self-directed team led by senior management.

2. Set concept maps. People by nature are curious to learn and learning resistance is due to many factors that have noted the authors. However, in my opinion, one of the main inhibitors of learning it is the absence of strategies people to learn, and more importantly, to recognize that ignorance does not know. In this case, top management should facilitate learning through teaching people to think and build thoughts through concept maps, which we consider a key strategy for learning. Teaching concept maps should be on all levels, starting with the very top management to operational levels.

3. Development of a reflective culture. Most authors agree that one of the sources of organizational learning is the ability to tap into their own experiences and the experiences of others. No desire to discriminate the other strategies proposed, is the strategy that most closely adheres to organizational learning, as it is based on a reflective activity, which in itself implies an epistemological cognitive activity. The learning culture represents a subsystem of the overall organizational culture, guided by the mission of the company and directed to encourage, by all means available, continuous learning behavior in the organization. It becomes a form of organizational life.

4. Rules that encourage innovation. The establishment of a learning organization involves a vision of change, in addition to meeting the current needs and requirements, must strive for constant revision of the status quo, aimed at determining their current situation compared to the desired situation. To act in such a scenario, top management among its main functions will develop a set of rules whose content is aimed at promoting innovation through organizational learning.

5. Feedback processes. Also known as feedback or feedback. English comes from the feedback, that cyber means the return action of the regulations of an information system on the system control center. The concept was introduced following the administration of the integration of computer systems and organizations through the decision making process. Actually, the concept is used in many organizations just like that, as a concept, and in my opinion has underutilized the enormous untapped potential of.

It is also one of the key elements to aspire to acquire a good level of organizational learning, since it involves learning from their own experiences and those of others, through self-reflection or assessments which others have of our performance. Largely involves practicing the skills of emotional intelligence to achieve cognitive epistemological moments. In the new organizational language also appears as iterative activities.

6. Establish processes of unlearning. Few qualified authors who dare to speak of unlearning, these include Hedberg, Schein, Senge and Nonaka, most authors are unlearning in current psychological works of NLP. Consequently the theory and the literature is sparse, however, agree with Hedberg in which to learn new behaviors that often involves organizational learning re-

quires downloading that impede knowledge, such as defensive routines (Argyris ) or mental models Senge. The application process involves a process of unlearning full vector includes learn-unlearn-relearn, which ends in the process of learning to learn and organizational learning.

7. Identify and promote organizational learning facilitators. Although preceding paragraphs summarize the enabling factors identified by researchers in the field, it is important to say that this stage is of great significance for the organization doomed to learning, which should distinguish, within their own functions and activities, which elements can act as facilitators of learning, as well as incorporating those reported by the authors. According to its own internal culture each organization has a set of factors in a very particular can act as facilitators, task for sponsoring the organizational learning.

8. Identify and dispose of resistance to organizational learning. This is similar to the previous point, in addition to recognizing and incorporating inhibitors or hindering factors of organizational learning, it is up to the same set, according to their internal culture, factors that can act as inhibitors, with order to remove them to make way for learning. In both cases the methodology can vary from simple observation to the use of questionnaires and surveys of staff involved in the learning process.

9. Management should develop a transformational leadership. A key factor that should be considered a learning organization, agrees most researchers, is related to the role of senior management. It is likely that the starting point of any effort to turn the organization into a learning organization, start by converting the mindset of executives, ie changing the leadership paradigm of a simple management by objectives based on the leader-follower relationship, a relationship of leader-follower power transformer, and probably not converted to upper management intended all efforts towards achieving organizational learning, will be in vain.

10. Achieving a shared vision and goals. This strategy is closely identified with the previous one, to develop a transformational leadership. Most authors defend this thesis organizational learning to achieve a vision and be able to share it with the staff of the organization. Perhaps one of the most prized skills of execu-

tives consists of the ability to establish a realistic and formulate objectives to achieve, but also requires the ability of managers to communicate that vision to all staff. This vision is to display and transmit a continuous learning organization based on the constant generation of new knowledge to foster innovation.

11. Creating organizational learning programs. Motivational theories in management sciences deal extensively with issues related to how to motivate staff, and some of them weigh more stimuli intangible issues such as participation, recognition, challenging tasks, pushed into the background a factor essential motivators for most people in the organization: the stimulus cash or in kind. Most of the workers, it is clear, is eager for economic stimulus, therefore, a basic strategy of top management in relation to organizational learning is to implement programs to improve staff incentives and encouragement to help others improve. This means offering and meet employees with attractive rewards in cash, kind, promotions and other mechanisms to promote organizational learning. Thus, in the end organizational learning becomes money for everyone.

12. Management of information and knowledge systems. New technologies based on learning management and organizational knowledge have led to world-class organizations to incorporate this feature into significant levels of the structure. Functional areas have been created to address general levels of knowledge management, that is, the institutionalization of learning and knowledge in the organization becomes part of the strategic areas of the same. The area of knowledge management (also known as knowledge management or KM, for its acronym in English) is concentrating function and promote the initiatives and efforts to generate knowledge from all areas of the company, using many of the strategies described in this section, as well as being the repository of knowledge throughout the organization, which represents its competitive advantage and its essential heritage.

13. Establish planning Organizational Learning. Closely related to the previous strategy, and as one of its main functions, the organization, through its knowledge management area, must implement planning programs of organizational learning, involving various aspects of the administration process, from the mission, vision and goals of higher order, diagnosis, forecasting, scheduling, self-planning, organization, implementation and control of learning actions, setting their own goals, standards,

policies, management of resources both financial, human, material, logistics.

14. Evaluation of organizational learning. An organization that claims to be oriented to implement organizational learning processes learning assessment at intervals to allow promote rather than inhibit at different levels that can be found on the organization learning, ie, individual, group and organization . For this you can make use of the information collection techniques such as surveys, interviews, observations, among others.

15. Applications of the techniques to deal with change. There are different techniques to deal with change in organizations, most of them, but arose independently, have been integrated into the overall strategy of organizational development, considered a model of planned change designed to address both scenarios of change : spontaneous change, natural and the change brought about by human intervention to generate innovations. In my view, the best model of change is found in the field theory of Kurt Lewin forces, widely known in academic circles.

According to Beckhard and Pritchard (1996) processes of learning and change are part of each other, the change is a learning process and learning is a process of change and argue that the learning process includes: 1) thawing of current beliefs, knowledge or attitudes, 2) adopt new attitudes or behaviors or alternate, 3) refreezing in the new state. Similarly in the change process comprising: 1) a current or current, 2) a state of transition, and 3) an altered state. Although the authors do not mention it, it appears that this process is based on the theory of Lewin's force field.

## Conclusions

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, the ability to learn and create new knowledge in an organization allows you to create strategic competitive advantages and establish the position of market competition. Most world-class companies, several authors agree, are in leadership positions simply because they have used the learning that the business environment has given them, and if they fail to acquire knowledge at the speed that they have done, in soon lose its privileged position.

One of the main problems in this learning in organizations is that managers and people in general do not know what to do with their experiences, not document their learning, share knowledge no, no consciousness of daily learning, there are many types of resistance (to learn, to teach, to provide), being of a social knowledge is difficult to work in teams, organizations do not know how to generate learning and create an environment for this purpose.

In this paper we propose several strategies for organizational learning, among which: the establishment of committees of learning, learning concept maps, developing a culture reflective, setting standards that encourage innovation, and establish feedback processes unlearning, identify and promote organizational learning facilitators, identifying and eliminating the inhibiting factors of learning, develop transformative leadership management, develop a shared vision and goals, creating organizational learning programs, establishing knowledge management systems.

Each of these strategies are actions that require a multi-stage development, which lead to different routes so as to obtain access organizational learning. Implementation of these strategies, as noted above, can take from a few months to several years of work, depending on the nature and complexity of the organization.

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