Learning Ability

- **Experiment:** “Try new ideas and be receptive towards new products and processes”
  - Learn through experimentation rather than exploiting the experience of others
  - Use simulations to compress time and test “What if?” scenarios
  - Encourage developing new methods and techniques
  - Treat failures as investments in learning
If you don’t fail now and again, it’s a sign you’re playing it safe.

• Woody Allen
• **Acquire:** “Obtain new core competencies”
  - Exploit existing practices – Beg, buy, borrow, or steal from partners, through outsourcing, universities, libraries, etc.
  - *Example:* Treat trade shows and conferences as intelligence missions, with new industry developments under one roof
• **Benchmarking Best Practices:** “Discover how others (i.e., best “in class” non-competitors) operate that activity and try to adopt and adapt this knowledge into own organization”
  - **Caution:** In many instances, others are moving ahead while you benchmark against the past!
Learning Ability

- **Continuous Improvement** (Kaizen): “Constantly exploit what has been done before and master each step before moving on to new steps in a process”
  - We learn from our mistakes
    - *Example:* Set up an idea vault and make it open and easily accessed and added to
MANAGEMENT TRAINING

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU MADE A HUGE, INCREDIBLY STUPID MISTAKE?

I WOULD TRY TO LEARN FROM IT.

DID YOU LEARN ANYTHING FROM YOUR ANSWER?
“Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect.”

• Vince Lombardi
Partner with Key Stakeholders: “Involve customers, employees, stockholders, suppliers, even government officials in determining what and how the products and services are delivered and work together to assess the effectiveness and quality of your work, helping you find opportunities for change”

- Examples: Survey to find out what distributors (dis)like about your competitors’ products ... Customers identify problems while technical people brainstorm solutions ... Brainstorming session following tour ... Joint research with suppliers
Learning Ability

- **Customer Relations Management:** “Stay close to THE customer who is ‘King’” ... But *not* your mainstream customers accounting for current lion’s share, some of whom deserve to be crowned!
  - Disruptive Technologies*:
    - Existing customers don’t value improvements and are unwilling to use them
      - Reluctant to invest in new technologies, replace older infrastructure
      - Initially used by unsophisticated customers at low end of markets
    - Hence, “Destroy-Your-Own-Business” before others do
  - Lead Users‡:
    - Forced to develop own solutions for needs that go far beyond those of the average user and not filled by any existing product
    - They are *not* early adopters or leading-edge customers that companies use for early product testing
*See Christensen, *The Innovator’s Dilemma* (1997)
‡See von Hippel, *Democratizing Innovation* (2005)

Paul Miesing, “Organizational Structure for the Learning Organization”
“Someone is going to make your product obsolete. Make sure it’s you.”

- Edwin Land, founder of Polaroid, 2nd only to Thomas Edison in number of patents, member of the National Inventors Hall of Fame, and recipient of the National Medal of Technology.
Management Training

There are two essential rules of management.

One: The customer is always right.

Two: They must be punished for their arrogance.
Learning Ability

- **Continual Training, Learning, and Practice:**
  "Build competency through training and development activities"

- Learn through direct experience:
  - "Action Learning" – People regularly meet to help each other learn from their experience(s) and integrate learning with work
    - **Examples:** Regular open discussions about near failures or catastrophes
  - Have people teach what they know
    - **Examples:** Formal classroom teaching ... Mentor programs ... Write up and publish "lessons learned" papers ... Lead orientation sessions for new employees
At General Electric, we regard hoarding of knowledge as an ethical violation!

Steve Kerr, former GE Chief Learning Officer
Learning Ability

**Organization Culture:**

1. Is innovation encouraged? Is it better to be late than sorry? Do you protect your assets?
2. Are “safe” jobs sought? Are “best” promoted?
3. Are opportunities seized, or must consensus or permission be gained? Who is involved?
4. Is information power? Or is autonomy given?
5. How long is the time horizon?
6. What results are rewarded? Are only the faithful promoted?
3M Recruiting Brochure

- Creative
- Broad interests
- Highly motivated
- Resourceful
- Work hard
- Solve problems
Imagine thousands of innovations that make work easier no matter where you work.

Today’s office is more than a room with four walls. It’s any place where people discover, organize, communicate and protect ideas.

At 3M we don’t put any limits on our idea of what an office is, so there are no limits on our ideas to make it work better. That’s helped to make us one of the world’s largest manufacturers of office supplies and it’s led to revolutionary inventions like Post-it® Notes that changed the way the world sends a short informal message. 3M Quarter-inch Cartridges that back up thousands of pages of data and protect them for a lifetime; and 3M Visual Presentation products that strengthen and communicate your ideas as clearly as you envisioned them. Those and thousands of other innovative tools serve to make your work easier anywhere you work.

One of the reasons these tools work so well is the way we work at 3M. In an environment that encourages people to think beyond what is and imagine what might be, new ideas come to life every day. Today there are over 60,000 of them that make your work — and your life — simpler, more efficient, more productive. For more information call 1-800-3M-Helps or contact us at our Internet E-mail address: innovation@mmm.com
Here's what I don't understand...

You just asked me to follow a process that has failed thirty times in a row.

And you know it.

At what point can this no longer be called "optimism"?

When it succeeds?

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Notable Quotable

“It’s better to seek forgiveness than to ask for permission.”

• 3M aphorism