"Empowered workers are able to make decisions as good as, if not better than, the decisions made by managers because the workers, in fact, possess the best information."
There is surprisingly much redundancy in this book, too. I am beginning to believe that the prevalent practice of writing course books in the States uses redundancy as a pedagogical tool. If we are one day to translate our own book, this should be taken into consideration. The structure of this book is somewhat confusing, as it is easy to lose track of the nested levels of headings. Several pages long lists do not make it any easier to remember, what is the actual issue of the chapter in question.

This is not a bad book, far from it. Especially the use of actual cases to stress the point of each chapter is very recommendable. This is one of the few books that manage to get into the guts of learning organisations, past conceptual pondering and into nuts-and-bolts of turning the concepts into practices.

Systems thinking and knowledge management seems to be maybe the two most important things we neglected to discuss in our own book. They pop up regularly in these books, and if we are one day to translate our own book they should be given some thought, too.

There was a time when the prime business of business was to make a profit and product. There is now a prior, prime business, which is to become an effective learning organisation. Not that profit and product are no longer important, but without continual learning profits and products will no longer be possible. Hence: the business of business is learning – and all else will follow. Or as Reg Revans has noted: “Learning inside an organisation must be equal to or greater than change outside the organisation.”

And what are some of the critical issues facing today’s corporations?

- Reorganisation, restructuring, and reengineering.
- Increased skills shortages, with schools unable to adequately prepare for work in the twenty-first century.
- Doubling of knowledge every two to three years.
- Global competition from the world’s most powerful companies.
- Overwhelming breakthroughs of new and advanced technologies.
- Spiralling need for organisations to adapt to change.

Or as Shoshana Zuboff has written: “The behaviours that define learning and the behaviours that define being productive are one and the same. Learning is the heart of productive activity. To put it simply, learning is the new form of labour.”

Learning in organisational settings in today’s environment will represent a new form of learning in the following ways:

1. Learning is performance-based (tied to business objectives).
2. Importance is placed on learning processes (learning how to learn).
3. The ability to define learning needs is as important as the answers.
4. Organisationwide opportunities exist to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
5. Learning is part of work, a part of everybody’s job description.

The full richness of the learning organisation incorporates five distinct subsystems – learning, organisation, people, knowledge and technology.
1. Emergence of Learning Organisations

The new species of organisations is called a learning organisation, and it possesses the capability to:

? Anticipate and adapt more readily to environmental impacts.
? Accelerate the development of new products, processes, and services.
? Become more proficient at learning from competitors and collaborators
? Expedite the transfer of knowledge from one part of the organisation to another.
? Learn more effectively from its mistakes
? Make greater organisational use of employees at all levels of the organisation.
? Shorten the time required to implement strategic changes.
? Stimulate continuous improvement in all areas of the organisation.

Organisations that learn faster will be able to adapt quicker and thereby achieve significant strategic advantages.

There are four major areas, which have changed profoundly over the last years:
1. Economic, social and scientific environment
   ? globalisation
   ? economic and marketing competition
   ? environmental end ecological pressures
   ? new sciences of quantum physics and chaos theory (understanding of quantum physics means that one cannot predict with absolute certainty, that chaos is a part of the reality)
   ? Knowledge era (knowledge that exists in an organisation is the sum of everything everybody in your company knows that gives you a competitive edge. The greatest challenge is to create an organisation that can redistribute its knowledge.)
   ? societal turbulence
2. workplace environment
   ? Information technology and the informed organisation (Informed organisations are able to immediately acquire information that can be used to get a job done, generate new information as a by-product, and develop new information)
   ? Organisation structure and size (Key resource of business is not capital, personnel, or facilities, but rather knowledge, information, and ideas. Another form of restructuring is a virtual organisation, a temporary network of independent companies, suppliers, customers, and even rivals linked by information technology to share skills, costs, and access to one another’s markets. Three other emerging management theories gaining popularity is reengineering core competencies and organisational architecture.)
   ? Total quality management movement (Competitive advantage comes from the continuous, incremental innovation and refinement of a variety of ideas that spread throughout the organisation.
   ? Workforce diversity and mobility
   ? Boom in temporary help
3. customer expectations (cost, quality, time, service, innovation, customisation)
4. Workers (Those who thrive will have problem identifier skills, problem solving skills and strategic broker skills. Corporations depend on the specialised knowledge of their employees. Knowledge workers do, in fact, own the means of production and they can take it out of the door with them at any moment.)
Organisational shifts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Bureaucratic</th>
<th>Network</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical tasks</td>
<td>physical</td>
<td>mental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>hierarchical</td>
<td>peer to peer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levels</td>
<td>many</td>
<td>few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structures</td>
<td>functional</td>
<td>multidisciplinary teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>fixed</td>
<td>permeable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive thrust</td>
<td>vertical integration</td>
<td>outsourcing and alliances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management style</td>
<td>autocratic</td>
<td>participative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>compliance and tradition</td>
<td>commitment and results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>homogeneous</td>
<td>diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic focus</td>
<td>efficiency</td>
<td>innovation</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Fortunately, some of the same forces that created the changes in the environment and atmosphere can be used to build the learning organisation.

2. The Systems-Lined Organisation Model

A systematically define learning organisation is an organisation which learns powerfully and collectively and is continually transforming itself to better collect, manage, and use knowledge for corporate success. It empowers people within and outside the company to learn as they work. Organisational learning refers to how organisational learning occurs, the skills and processes of building and utilising knowledge.

There are a number of dimensions of a learning organisation:¹

- Learning is accomplished by the organisational system as a whole.
- Organisational members recognise the importance of ongoing organisationwide learning.
- Learning is a continuous, strategically used process – integrated with and running parallel to work.
- There is a focus on creativity and generative learning.
- Systems thinking is fundamental
- People have continuous access to information and data resources.
- A corporate climate exists that encourages, rewards, and accelerates individual and group learning
- Workers network inside and outside the organisation.
- Change is embraced, and surprises and even failures are viewed as opportunities to learn.
- It is agile and flexible.
- Everyone is driven by a desire for quality and continuous improvement.
- Activities are characterised by aspiration, reflection, and conceptualisation.
- There are well-developed core competencies that serve as a taking-off point for new products and services.
- It possesses the ability to continuously adapt, renew, and revitalise itself in response to the changing environment.

The systems-linked learning organisation model is made up of five closely interrelated subsystems: learning, organisation, people, knowledge, and technology. If any subsystem is weak or absent, the

¹ This is a good example of the overgrown lists Marquardt sometimes falls prey to.
effectiveness of the other subsystems is significantly weakened. Marquardt discusses each of the subsystems in their own chapters so I won’t go into the details here.

3. Building Dynamic Learning through the Organisation

The learning subsystem is composed of three complementary dimensions:
1. Levels of learning (individual, group and organisational)
2. Types of learning (adaptive learning, anticipatory learning, deutero learning and active learning)
3. Critical organisational learning skills (systems thinking, mental models, personal mastery, team learning, shared vision, and dialogue)

Learning, ultimately, is a social phenomenon – our ability to learn and the quality and openness of our relationships determine what we can know. Our mental models of the world and of ourselves grow out of our relationships with others.

Levels

Learning in organisations can occur at three levels. **Individual learning** is needed since individuals form the units of groups and organisations, or as Senge asserts “organisations learn only through individuals who learn”. The factors that can contribute to individual learning in the organisation include:

- Individual and collective accountability for learning
- Locus and focus of individual learning (learning should have immediate application to the job.)
- Accelerated learning techniques.
- Personal development plan (people recognise that employers cannot guarantee them lifelong employment but that they can assist them in achieving lifelong employability. There should be a partnership between the organisation and the employee to assist in the long-term career development.2)
- Abundant opportunities available for professional development
- Individual learning linked to organisational learning in an explicit and structured way.

**Group/team learning** means that work teams must be able to think and create and learn as an entity. They must learn how to better create and capture learning (learning to learn). A successful team learning system ensures that teams share their experiences with other groups in the organisation. Team learning will occur more fully if teams are rewarded for the learning they contribute to the organisation. Marquardt uses Watkins and Marsick’s team learning model that shows the learning organisation as the union of individuals and organisation. The key is the overlap, which is where teams function.

Organisation learning (1) occur through the shared insights, knowledge, and mental models of members of the organisation (2) builds on past knowledge and experience which depends on institutional mechanisms (policies, strategies, explicit models...) used to retain knowledge. Though organisations learn through individuals and groups, the process of learning is influenced by a much broader set of variables (for example, symphony’s performance is more than the sum of individuals’ knowledge and skills but the result of the know-how embedded in the whole group working in unison.

2 This was one interesting thought.
**Types**

There are four types in which organisations learn:\(^3\)

1. **Adaptive learning** occurs when an individual or organisation learns from experience and reflection: action ? outcome ? results date ? reflection. Adaptive learning may be either single-loop (focused on gaining information to stabilise and maintain existing systems) or double loop (questioning the system itself and why the errors or successes occurred in the first place).

2. **Anticipatory learning** arises when an organisation learns from expecting the future: vision ? reflection ? action approach.

3. **Deutero learning** occurs when the organisation learns from critically reflecting upon its taken-for-granted assumptions.

4. **Active learning** involves (a group/team) working on real problems, focusing on the learning acquired, and actually implementing solutions.

**Skills**

Marquardt has added Dialogue to the five critical organisational learning skills identified by Peter Senge:

1. **Systems thinking:** “A framework for seeing interrelationships rather than linear cause-effect chains, for seeing underlying structures rather than events, for seeing patterns of change rather than snapshots.” Changes in one part of the organisation can affect other parts with surprising consequences.

2. **Mental models:** An image or perspective of an event, situation, activity or concept

3. **Personal mastery:** A special level of proficiency that is committed to continually improve and perfect skills, a discipline of continually clarifying and deepening one’s personal vision, energies, and patience.

4. **Team learning:** The process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to create the learning and results that its members seek. The team involved must learn to tap the potential of many minds to become more intelligent than one mind.

5. **Shared vision:** Provides a focus, direction and energy for the members of an organisation. And learning is a way of striving to accomplish that vision.

6. **Dialogue:** promotes collecting thinking and communication.

**Top ten strategies to build learning subsystems:**

1. Develop action learning programs throughout the organisation (time and effort!)
2. Increase individuals’ ability to learn how to learn
3. Develop the discipline of dialogue in the organisation
4. Develop career development plans for employability
5. Establish self-development cash programs
6. Build team-learning skills
7. Encourage and practice systems thinking
8. Use scanning and scenario planning for anticipatory learning
9. Encourage/Expand diversity, multicultural and global mindsets and leanings
10. Change the mental model relative to learning (most people retain a negative picture of learning, one acquired in their school days).

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3 It should be noted that there are several versions of this list in the book. For example the first list of this kind grouped the types of learning in a totally different manner that included additional types. In addition the names of the types change. The reasons behind these discrepancies are not discussed. This may be very frustrating to a student trying to memorise these for an exam.
4. Organisation Transformation for Learning Excellence

The organisation subsystem refers to the setting and body in which the learning occurs. The four key dimensions are vision, culture, strategy, and structure.

**Vision.** A solid foundation of shared vision about learning, accompanied by recognition that unless the company becomes a learning organisation, it cannot achieve its vision. A shared vision provides the focus and energy for learning. It can lead multiple strategies and procedures into a common goal.

**Culture.** The culture of most organisations is one of nonlearning, if not antilearning. Taking risks, trying new approaches, sharing information is discouraged. A successful corporate learning culture has a system of values that is supportive to learning.

**Structure.** Although form should follow function, the opposite is often the case. The form or structure of many organisations prevents them from beginning corporatewide learning: rigid boundaries, bulky size, disjointedness of projects and tasks, and bureaucratic restriction. The structural characteristics of learning organisation are based on the need to learn; the driving organising principle is to put the necessary freedom, support, and resources in the hands of the people who need them:

- Streamlined, flat hierarchy
- Seamless, boundaryless, and holistic (boundaries inhibit the flow of knowledge, they keep individuals and groups isolated and tend to reinforce preconceptions, distrust, and bias.)
- Project form of organising and implementing (the smaller size, quickness, and accountability of project teams encourage more efficient and more applicable learning.)
- Networking (networks differ from teams or task forces in that they are not temporary, do not only solve problems that have been defined for them, but take their own initiatives, can make substantive operating decisions of their own.)
- Small units with entrepreneurial thinking (even big organisations are structured like and operate with a dynamism and entrepreneurial spirit similar to that of new, small companies.)
- Bureaucracies are rooted out

Top ten strategies for organisation transformation to learning:
1. Hold a future search conference to develop vision of learning organisation
2. Gain top level management support for becoming a learning organisation and for championing learning projects (financial and human resources need to be allocated to make the vision a reality)
3. Create a corporate climate for continuous learning.
4. Reengineer policies and structures around learning (policies and boundaries are minimised so that knowledge and ideas can quickly move within and outside the organisation).
5. Recognise and reward individual and team learning. (That which gets rewarded gets done. Rewards should cover learning actions, such as risk taking, commitment to learning and personal mastery, teamwork, encouraging new experiences and ideas, being a teacher/trainer, and passing lessons learned on to team-mates and the broader network.)
6. Make learning a part of all policies and procedures
7. Establish centres of excellence and demonstration projects
8. Use measurement of financial areas as a learning activity. (That which gets measured gets done.)
9. Create time, space, and physical environment for learning. (People need time to plan and reflect; they need physical, social and mental space to listen and be creative. They need to take the time to listen.)

10. Make learning intentional at all times and in all locations.

5. Empowering and Enabling People

People are the pivotal part of learning organisations because only people, in fact, learn. The people subsystem includes employees, managers/leaders, customers, business partners, and the community itself. Each of these groups is valuable to the learning organisation, and all need to empowered and enabled to learn.

There are several principles to consider in the empowerment and enablement of employees:

? Treat employees as mature, capable workers and learners
? Encourage employee freedom, energy, and enthusiasm
? Maximise the delegation of authority and responsibility (too many organisations have made employees accountable but have not empowered them.)
? Involve employees in developing strategies and planning (empowered workers are able to make decisions as good as, if not better than, the decisions made by managers because the workers, in fact, possess the best information).
? Strike a balance between individual and organisation needs (Better organisational results are built upon happy, productive individuals. Learning organisations are also conscious of the pressures on workers to meet both family and work obligations.)

Managers/leaders need to move from controlling to empowering, from being a commander to being a steward, from acting as a transitional manager to acting as a transformational leader. The new leadership roles and skills required include:

? Instructor, coach, and mentor
? Knowledge manager
? Colearner and model for learning
? Architect and designer (of the learning organisation)
? Co-ordinator
? Advocate and champion for learning processes and projects.
? Building a shared vision
? Co-ordinating multiple, task-focused teams
? Surfacing and testing mental models
? Engaging in systems thinking (they must help people see the big picture, with the underlying trends, forces and potential surprises)
? Encouraging creativity, innovation, and willingness to risk.
? Conceptualising and inspiring learning and action.

Conversations and information gathering from customers provide new knowledge for customers, after all, have expertise in what they do or buy.

Business partners are to be included because company’s success is dependent to a large extent to the success of its entire business network.
Involving the **community** as a part of the learning process brings many benefits, it may, for example prepare potential future workforce and enhance the company’s image.

The top strategies for people empowerment and enablement in learning organisations:
1. Institute personnel policies that reward learners.
2. Create self-managed work teams
3. Empower employees to learn and produce (informate workers with knowledge about financial, technical, and other data so that they can make wiser decisions)\(^4\)
4. Encourage leaders to model and demonstrate learning
5. Invite leaders to champion learning processes and projects
6. Balance learning and development needs of the individual and organisation
7. Encourage and enhance customer participation in organisation learning
8. Provide education opportunities for community
9. Build long-term learning partnerships with vendors and suppliers
10. Maximise learning from alliances and joint ventures

### 6. Knowledge Management in Learning Organisations

Knowledge has become more important for organisations than financial resources, market position, technology, or any other company asset. Individuals may come and go, but valuable knowledge cannot be lost or the company starves to death. The knowledge subsystem refers to the management of acquired and generated knowledge or the organisation. It includes the acquisition, creation, storage, transfer, and utilisation of knowledge.

**Acquisition:** Organisations acquire knowledge from both external and internal sources. Companies can acquire information from the external environment through various methods, for example conferences, consultants, benchmarking other organisations, hiring new staff and collaborating with other organisations. Internal collection of knowledge means learning from what other parts of the organisation are doing.

It should be noted that information acquired is subject to perceptual filters that influence what information the organisation listens to and accepts. In addition, acquiring knowledge is not always intentional.

**Creation** of knowledge is generative. Marquardt refers to Nonaka and Takeuchi’s four patterns of creative knowledge production that happen at the transformations of tacit and explicit and individual and shared knowledge. The other mentioned knowledge creation approaches are action learning, systematic problem solving (current situation and problems), experimentation (opportunities and possibilities) and learning from past experiences (including failures).

**Storage and retrieval:** In order to store knowledge, on organisation must first determine what is important to retain and then how best to retain it. Knowledge storage involves technical (records, databases, etc.) and human processes (collective and individual memory, consensus). The knowledge stored should be:

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\(^4\) An interesting example of the effect of added responsibility on absenteeism in a GM plant is provided. The added responsibility that also made workers more accountable is considered one of the main reasons that reduced absenteeism from 10-15 percent at other Gm plants to 2,5 percent at the plant in question.
Structured and stored so the system can find and deliver it quickly and correctly. (information will be retrieved by different groups of people in different manners)

Divided into categories such as facts, policies, or procedures on a learning-need basis

Organised so that it can be delivered in a clear and concise way to the user

Accurate, timely, and available to those who need it.

The retrieval of knowledge may be either controlled (users trigger retrieval) or automatic (situations trigger retrieval).

Knowledge transfer and utilisation involves the mechanical, electronic and interpersonal movement of information and knowledge both intentionally (memos, reports, training, briefings, tours, mentoring, etc.) and unintentionally (job rotation, stories, task forces, informal networks etc.). Four factors may limit the transfer: cost, cognitive capacity of receiving unit, message delay due to priorities of sending knowledge, and message modification or distortion of meaning either intentionally or unintentionally.

Top ten strategies for knowledge management:
1. Create expectation that everyone is responsible for collecting and transferring knowledge
2. Systematically capture relevant knowledge external to the organisation.
3. Organise learning events within the organisation to capture and share knowledge
4. Develop creative and generative ways of thinking and learning
5. Encourage and reward innovations and inventions
6. Train staff in storage and retrieval of knowledge
7. Encourage team mixing and job rotation to maximise knowledge transfer across boundaries
8. Develop a knowledge base around the values and learning needs of the organisation
9. Create mechanisms for collecting and storing learning
10. Transfer classroom learning to the job (less than 10 percent of the learning that occurs in the classroom is ever transferred to the job. This percentage can be increased by a deliberate strategy).

7. Adding Technological Power to Organisational Learning

The technology subsystem is the supporting, integrated technological networks and information tools that allow access to and exchange of information and learning. It includes technical processes, systems, and structure for collaboration, coaching, co-ordination, and other knowledge skills. The three major components are information technology, technology-based learning, and electronic performance support systems.

Information technology is the computer-based technology used to gather code, process, store, transfer, and apply data between machines, people, and organisations. Information technology enhances knowledge transfer in organisations:

- It can improve the ability of people to communicate with one another, because it blurs the boundaries of the company and increases the range of possible relationships beyond hierarchies.
- It makes it easier for people to communicate directly with one another across time and space.
- It reduces the number of management levels needed; yet at the same time provides and enhanced potential for span of control.

5 An interesting point: information technology is as much an organisational as a technical issue.
It contributes to flexibility, with mobile workstations, relational databases, and the storage of knowledge in open databases rather than in the minds of individuals.

**Technology-based learning** refers to the video, audio and computer-based multimedia training for the deliver and sharing of knowledge and skills away from the job site. The future learning environment will be modular (single skills), multisensory, portable, transferable (across languages and cultures) and interruptible. Technology-based learning will be under the control of the employee, because most jobs are becoming ever more complex and require higher levels of skills. In addition, the skill and knowledge mix required will be in a state of flux.

**Electronic performance support systems** use databases and knowledge bases to capture, store, and distribute information throughout the organisation so as to help workers reach the highest level of performance in the fastest possible time, with the least personnel support. The system consists of several components including, but not limited to, interactive training, productivity and application software, and expert and feedback systems. An EPSS can

- Help improve the learner’s job performance, not just their knowledge
- Provide this help just in time, when and where the worker needs it
- Furnish instant access to information, methods, tools, and decision aides
- Use computer technology to leverage the expertise of a coach or mentor
- Accelerate on-the-job training and retention of learning.
- Significantly reduce training time and cost.
- Increase flexibility with worker assignments
- Enable the organisation to train difficult-to-reach workers
- Decrease paper documentation, such as user manuals, evaluations, and tests
- Increase employee self-sufficiency and empowerment.

Performance support systems can be either manual or electronic. Manual systems incorporate coaches and paper-based texts and tools. EPSS use computers to capture, store, and distribute knowledge throughout the organisation. According to Scott Levin, an EPSS should have nine key components:

1. Competency profiles for each worker.
2. Expert knowledge base
3. On-line help
4. Integrated training and job aids.
5. Electronic integrated reference system
6. On-line documentation (including any continuous improvements that the employees themselves devise)
7. Monitoring, assessment, and feedback system
8. Link to external applications
9. System information

An EPSS cannot work in isolation. There must be experts available who can provide advice beyond that of the computer. This combination of humans and machines blends creativity with vast information resources.

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6 Some of the discussion in this part was a bit off-the-ground and sounded more like a sales pitch than a result of critical thinking: “The mind is cut off from outside distractions and one’s attention becomes focused on the powerful sensory stimulation (light-sound matrix) that bombards the imagination. It becomes possible for ideas and mental images to float in and out of a person’s consciousness. While in this highly euphoric mental state, the learning disc opens one’s learning centres to peak receptivity while pouring in a new knowledge and skills.” Huh!

7 Here this definition comes again!
Top ten strategies for technology application:
1. Encourage and enable all staff to connect into the information highway (Internet).
2. Develop multimedia, technology-based learning centres (CBT and CD-ROM are generally more effective for knowledge-based skills, and interactive technology may be most effective in behavioural training).
3. Create or expand interactive video instruction.
4. Use technology to capture knowledge and ideas from people within and outside the organisation.
5. Acquire and develop competencies in groupware and self-learning technology.
6. Install electronic performance support systems.
7. Plan and develop just-in-time learning system.
8. Build internal courseware technology and capability.
9. Develop awareness and appreciation of technology as a powerful tool for corporatewide learning.
10. Increase technological responsibilities of management and human resources staff.

8. Steps in Becoming a Learning Organisation

It is important to remember that one never fully is a learning organisation. Change always continues, as well as learning. The chapter presents the 16 steps taken by various organisations in order to become learning organisations:
1. Commit to becoming a learning organisation.
2. Connect learning with business operations (direct connections between learning and improved business operations makes it easier to persuade people).
3. Assess the organisation’s capability on each subsystem of the systems learning model.
4. Communicate the vision of a learning organisation (the most sophisticated vision is of no use unless it can be clearly understood by others).
5. Recognise the importance of systems thinking and action (a company cannot become a learning organisation by focusing on just one subsystem or on one part of the organisation).
7. Transform the organisational culture to one of continuous learning and improvement.
8. Establish corporatewide strategies of learning (encourage experimentation, recognise and praise learners, reward learning, spread the word about new learnings, apply the new learnings).
9. Cut bureaucracy and streamline the structure.
10. Empower (to possess the necessary freedom, trust, influence, opportunity, recognition, and authority) and enable (to possess the necessary skills, knowledge, values, and ability) employees. Significant resources of time, money, and people are allocated to increase employees’ skills not only in present job but also for future, unforeseen challenges.
11. Extend organisational learning to the entire business chain.
12. Capture learnings and release knowledge (quickly throughout the organisation).
13. Acquire and apply best of technology to the best of learning.
14. Encourage, expect, and enhance learning at individual, group, and organisation levels.
15. Learn more about learning organisations.

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8 Largely outdated by now.
9. Rover – One organisation’s Journey to Success as a Learning Organisation

A comprehensive case description of how Rover turned annual $100 million losses into large profits ($56 million) in the early 1990’s by deciding to become a learning organisation with a focus on total-quality culture.

10. Building, Maintaining, and Sustaining the Learning Organisation

Building a learning organisation may be difficult, but so is maintaining and sustaining it when it is operating. Many an excellent, even learning company has dropped from its high perch.

It is preferable to begin building a learning organisation at the very top – to get top leadership committed. But it is possible to begin in any part that has the potential to affect the others. Start where the energy is! Things to consider include:

- Work with the directors, managers, union and human resources department
- Begin with a diagnosis
- Raise consciousness and start with a company conference
- Start with one department and Focus on one of the key business issues.

Keys to a successful transformation into a learning organisation:
- Establish a strong sense of urgency about becoming a learning organisation. The idea is to make the status quo seem more dangerous than the unknown.
- Form a powerful coalition pushing for the learning organisation
- Create a vision of the learning organisation. Without a vision, the effort can dissolve into a list of confusing and incompatible projects. Communicate and practice the vision. Remove obstacles (bureaucracy, competitiveness of individuals rather than collaboration, control. Poor communications, poor leaders, rigid hierarchy) that prevent others from acting on the new vision of a learning organisation.
- Create short-term wins. Most people won’t stay on the long march unless the journey has some short-term successes.
- Consolidate progress achieved and push for continued movement. Declaring the war won can be catastrophic until changes sink deeply into the culture.

Ten facilitating factors that support and sustain the learning organisation:
1. Scanning imperative. Learning cannot continue without a solid awareness of the environment
3. Concern for measurement. Discourse over metrics is a learning activity.
4. Experimental mindset. Support the practice of trying new things and being curious about how things work.
5. Climate of openness. Debate and conflict remain acceptable ways of solving problems.
6. Continuous education. One is never finished learning and practising.
7. Operational variety. There is more ways than one to accomplish business objectives and work goals.
8. Multiple advocates or champions.
9. Involved leadership. Creating vision is not enough. Leadership at any organisational level must engage in hands-on implementation of the vision.
10. Systems perspective.