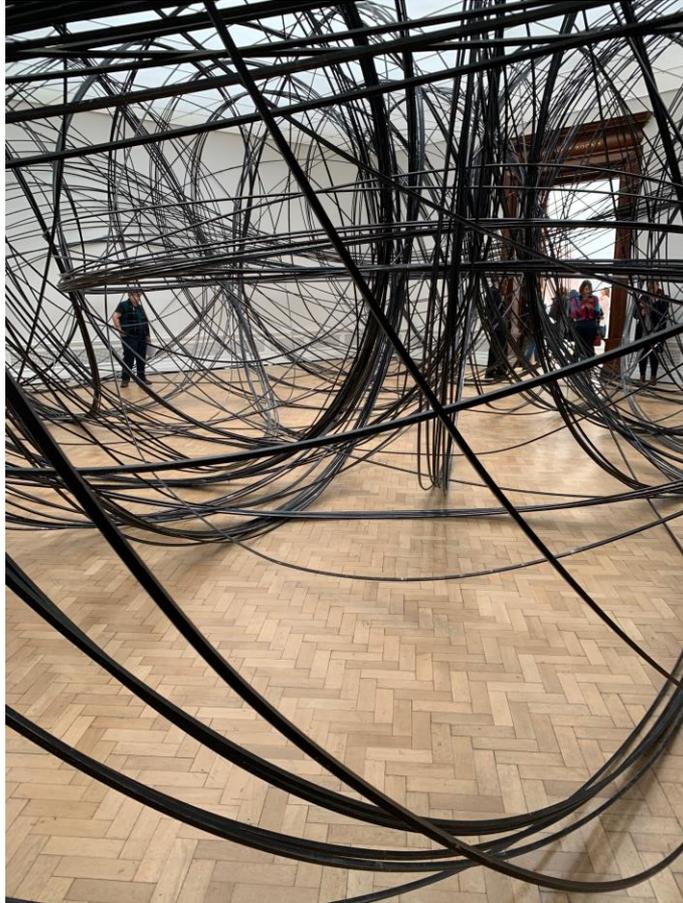


Learning Organisation



The Learning Organisation

An Introduction from Toolshero

Learning Organisation

Senge's Five Disciplines of Learning Organisations

This article (courtesy of toolshero) explains the **five disciplines of learning organisations** by **Peter Senge** in a practical way. After reading it, you will understand the basics of this powerful **leadership** and **learning organisation** philosophy.

Background Senge's five disciplines

According to Peter Senge, one-third of 500 companies will disappear within 15 years, and the average lifetime for the largest enterprises is approximately 40 years. It addresses the question how organisations can experience continuous growth to perform better than their competitors.

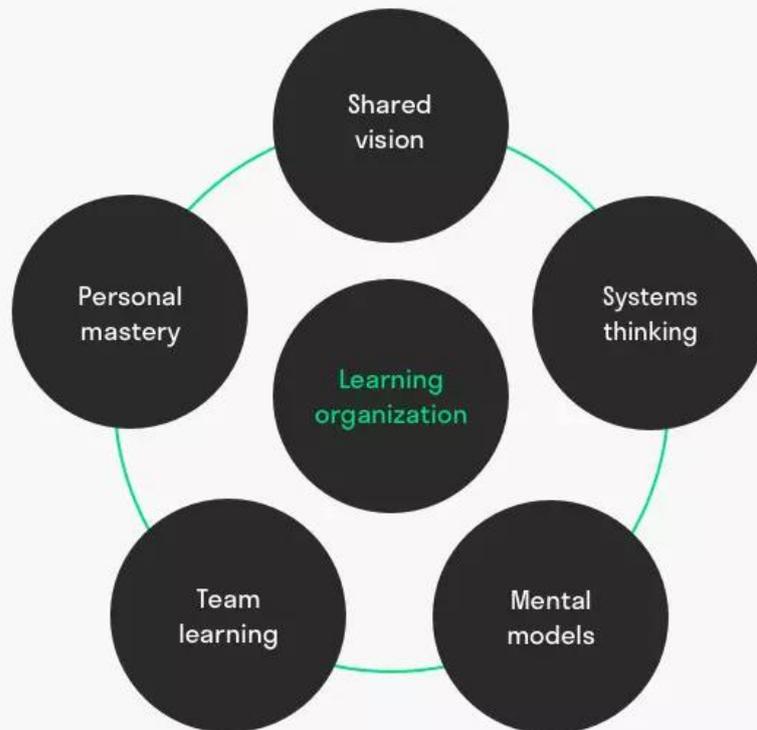
Instead of visualising a traditional hierarchy, today's companies can survive when they succeeds in creating a learning organisation. This is an organisation where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together.

The Senge five disciplines of learning organisations describe how to manage the success and development of an organisation and how employees give the extra mile that goes beyond the expectations of the company.

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Senge's Five Disciplines of Learning Organizations

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1. Building a Shared vision

In learning organisations, the vision should be created through interaction with the employees. Many leaders have personal visions but lack the skills and understanding that this must be co-created to result in a shared vision. People who do not share the same vision might not contribute as much to the organisation. The effect of creating and sharing the same vision is that employees do tasks because they want to do so instead of they are told to do so. It changes the relationship with the company, and it turns its performances into a learning mechanism.

2. Systems Thinking

Instead of focusing on individual issues, systems thinking, reflects, and observes the behaviour of an entire system. Leaders have to understand that every action and consequence is correlated with another. Many times it happens that leaders focus on individual actions, and therefore, forget about seeing the bigger picture, there are many unintended consequences. When the correlation is understood, it enables us to see interrelationships and patterns of change in particular situations. Enabling everyone to understand and act on cause and effect.

3. Mental Models

According to Peter Senge, the employees must identify with the values of the company and what the business is all about. A correct understanding of who we are will enable us to visualise where to go and how to develop further. The organisation has to be flexible in accepting changes to new mental models and a new image of the company. The most successful companies are those who can learn and adapt to new models to become faster than its competitors.

4. Team Learning

To accomplish excellent functional team dynamics, team-learning is a primary importance. It is the discipline by which personal mastery and shared vision are brought together. It is crucial for the workforce to consider its colleagues as team members instead of rivals. It is the first step to set up dialogues wherein people dare to be vulnerable and express their real personality. The working environment should be safe where honest mistakes are forgiven. Otherwise, no learning can be experienced.

5. Personal Mastery

Personal mastery occurs when an individual has a clear vision of a goal, combined with an accurate perception of reality. The gap between the vision and reality drives the employee to practice all necessary related activities to realise the vision. This creative tension depends on a clear understanding of current reality. For this reason, sharing the multitude of truths that co-exist in any given situation is fundamental. Employees may believe they lack the competencies to achieve their goals, according to Peter Senge, we should train our subconscious mind because it can handle more complex problems quicker than what our consciousness can. When people believe in their own power, it will enable them to realise their vision.

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Application of the five disciplines

Applying the five disciplines of learning organisations can be challenging. It would be more attractive to only focus on one or a few of these disciplines. However, the utilisation of all disciplines is critical.

For instance, when an organisation starts to build a Shared Vision with its team, an important aspect is to have better conversations with its team members (Team Learning). In addition, if an organisation starts to work on System Thinking to identify common problems, its employees need to understand the Mental Models they are using. Since all disciplines are linked to another, it does not matter where you start. On the other hand, the five disciplines of learning organisations focus on long-term growth for both internal and external the organisation.

Conclusion

The key point of understanding and applying the five disciplines of learning organisations is that they are all interrelated. Each discipline cannot stand independently. Even though the focus can be set at one or two disciplines before proceeding to the next, the interrelation will enable the organisation to identify complexities and opportunities both internal and external the organisation. For this reason, the implementation of the five disciplines of learning organisations will lead to a continuous learning process, and therefore, created a learning and competitive organisation.

However, some systems, such as the experience of a traditional hierarchy in the organisation can make the implementation challenging.

Tips to experience a learning organisation

Sharing your vision

Before sharing your vision, ask everyone else first to share their vision. Creating a vision is everyone's job. Thus, even though you might be confident of your vision, you should also ask what the rest of team thinks of it.

Accomplishing goals

Focus on outcomes, and not on output. When thinking strategically, it is the result and not the process and activities that have to be executed. Do not rush in developing a strategic plan, give it time to permeate.

Previous results

All documents and related activities that have been performed at an early stage or project do not expire. It can provide background and lead into a direction to complete certain tasks. Use other people's knowledge and share this with others.