

LEARNING AS A SOURCE OF CHANGE



Professor Ph.D. Neculae Năbârjoiu

Keywords: change, learning, creativity, innovation, trust, development

Abstract

I started doing this project at the invitation of the President of Romanian Distribution Committee, Mr. Theodor Valentin Purcarea, whom I thank, and with the strong belief that I can promote learning as a source of change from within an example. For several months I lead as project manager, a top management training branch of a foreign company with no less than 530 (figure rising even during the crisis) employees, both Romanian and foreign.

The Director General has applied such a method because, and I quote "I paid for top and middle management courses for years and ... we found little improvement of skills acquired by these managers. For other trainings, added to the sum of the above-mentioned the less we can speak about". Accordingly, I thought a program, we talked, we defined the expectations we set the target groups and a number of useful topics to be addressed and we started off. Conduct the course, outside working hours, went as expected, with the emergence of a growing interest. Some ideas are discussed, beyond meetings at the headquarters of the company by e-mail or individual approaches. End of the Course is made through the public presentation of projects prepared by groups of students, before a committee consisting of organization's specific services representatives and of subordinates. The winner, the winning team actually benefit in recognition of the value added and expressed the creativity and innovation, a working visit to the company headquarters abroad or in another European location. I assure you it worth it!

I chose the title "Learning as a source of change" because I strongly believe that learning must be continuous, and, once the lessons learned, cleverly activated, are an advantage for the organization development, a recognized standard of performance.

1. Learning organization

Although we tend to easily define, with our words, learning organization, we believe that a definition can not be overcome by the brevity and message of an expression that has the value of the motto: "In an era of drastic change, learners inherit the future. They are usually ready to live in a world that no longer exists". The heritage of future organization can be an advantage that we could benefit from now.

Learning organization involves all employees in identifying and solving problems, making it possible for the organization to continuously experiment, improve and increase their ability to provide new products and services to its customers. It adds value for clients, responding quickly to new needs, creating ways to meet them.

Learning organization finds ways to create sustainable competitive advantage in the activities they undertake. Employees, workers in a learning organization, shall provide each other truthful information. Information on performance, quality customer satisfaction and competition are circulated at top speed. Between employees, rewards are distributed equitably. It creates an extraordinarily high level of trust between managers and employees based on a common set of customer-oriented values.

All employees are actively involved in solving problems of customers. This does not mean simply that employees gain knowledge about marketing and accounting. They must learn to broaden their knowledge and skills to do things differently, always better. These skills are not acquired from books or from past experiences of others, but from continuous experimentation of new ideas and ways to satisfy customers. Employees are respected, trusted and are given and they are offered opportunities to develop their duties.

Learning organization invests heavily in training thus offering to every employee new opportunities for creativity and innovation. Managers need to stimulate and manage change to create learning organizations that are "characterized by similar concepts and attitudes" listed below, relatively easily seen in such structures:

- There is a common vision shared by everyone in the organization;
- People give up their old intellectual schemes and mechanisms they have used, usually in the past to solve problems and perform tasks;
- Members of the organization on all processes, activities, functions and interactions with the environment as part of a system of interrelationships;
- People communicate honestly, beyond vertical and horizontal boundaries without fear of being criticized or penalized;
- People do not put their personal interests to the fore and the fragmentation of departments to work together towards a common vision.

Creativity is the ability of the learning organization to produce innovative and useful ideas. These ideas must be distinguished from those that were used in the past, answer the organizations and problems of the present days. Creativity allows a better assessment and a better understanding of problems, facilitating the identification of all viable options.

Innovation is a particular form of change, a more specialized one. It is about the implementation of a new idea centered upon the improvement or launching of a product, service or process. Formally, the innovation can be defined as the process of creating ideas and putting them into practice. Within this act of converting new ideas into useful applications, two actions are used in particular:

- ☒ the process of innovation that offers new ways to do the things better;
- ☒ the product of innovation, its result being creation of new products and services or improvement of the existing ones.

An organization learns when acquiring information from any source, in all forms, irrespective of means. There are three sources of learning, as follows:

- ☒ organization can learn in its own organizational framework, from experience, for example, failures in connection with certain projects;
- ☒ organization can learn in dealing with the environment - when there are changes in the environment which require adaptation to them;
- ☒ organization can learn from its partners - where relationships with organizational partners highlights differences, adapted to the organization, make possible the recovery of benefits identified.

Learning sources are teaching opportunities which correspond to trigger learning, activators that initiate learning process. They are found in media relations, in their experience (failures, failures, errors, crises, creativity) or partners by showing organizational differences and the acquisition of new skills. Triggered learning is based more on one's own capacity to take advantage of an opportunity rather than by the opportunity itself.

2. 2. Learning - source of change

Organizational learning and change are closely linked. Simply, if the organization changes, it teaches, just as when learners are changing. In other words, a learning organization can be considered as an alternative to traditional methods of management changes and the change appears as a learner driver for the organization.

Change mechanisms are inherent to training capacity both of the individual and of the organization. One might even say that the success of a change is conditioned by the ability of employees and organizational learning.

When a company improves its regular procedures, techniques, its practices, players acquire certain predispositions to change - improve their way of thinking and acting, are more receptive to innovations. It follows that, when undertaking change improves their learning.

Equally true is that change generates learning. When an organization makes a reform their employees improve their skills, their working methods. Even if the change requires more time and be done with many difficulties, they foster individual and organizational learning. In other words, if the organization is changing, she teaches.

Most part of learning organizations is using a concept that is called simple loop learning: for example, when an error is detected, the correction process relies on existing mechanisms and the current policy of the organization. However, learners use and innovation organizations in double loop: for example, when an error is detected, correction is achieved by changing objectives, policy and organization of existing standard mechanisms. This type of assumptions and rules review learning deeply rooted in the organization, thus providing the opportunity to experiment with radically different solutions and often bringing dramatic improvements.

For an organization to learn is necessary for management to take measures such as these:

- ☒ establishing a specific strategy that reflects a clear and precise management for change, innovation and continuous improvement;
- ☒ reviewing organizational structures, given that a formal structure may constitute a serious obstacle to learning;
- ☒ simplifying the organizational structure, abolition or merger of certain departments, strengthening interoperable teams use to reduce the gaps that separate the employees, increasing interdependence
- ☒ reconfiguring the organizational culture, by cultivating the management of risk, learning capacity and transparency of decision-making. Moreover, it must be implemented the strong belief that assuming the risks, carrying out the functional conflicts and even the failures are components of organizational culture.

Those who first formulated the concept of learning organization and the organization qualifies insists on developing collective dimension of work and highlights the growing need for integration, communication and cooperation, namely the development of local employment, the increasingly different.

Between these two types of organizations there are similarities. We refer to the definition of qualifying the organization's office "Development and employment in France" as "an organization capable of responding to a triple challenge richer in content, organization activities, competitive and educational. A qualifying organization is identified by several values:

1. Allow members to work reworked objectives, promoting a better understanding of the purpose of the organization, allowing each member to rebuild the meaning of his work, integrating it into broader objectives. Executants are qualified to "individual and collective intelligence productive situations" closer to experiment than the capitalization of experience. The idea of organizational learning as a collective phenomenon of acquiring and developing skills, change management situations himself.

2. Approach involves the organization of events by substituting the classical approach in operational terms. The event is meant, while what is claimed and what is caused. Event responsive and creative skills required not only to systematically reduce its occurrence. Rather, it seeks and adopts better methods to use, regardless of frequency.

3. Activity is reorganized on a communicational that alters the functional organization. Coordination do not reflect a hierarchical intervention, it is not a function affected, but recovered at each level, the leaders at 360 degrees, i.e. those who are leaders in all directions and emanating positive energy solutions. Communication is not limited a single information transfer becomes a new way of joint work involving the same time, clarifying the objectives the team, acquiring a common language and clarifying the challenges for each of the parties to the activity.

4. Allows each individual to protect the future as it broadcasts the set objectives, promote upgrading of skills and trying to make better use of acquired knowledge in solving everyday events.

Organization that teaches information and knowledge enhances what is now a major competitive advantage. A key concern of organizations is therefore "knowledge management", where you can use the vast possibilities of information technology.

Followers' learning organization "did not make firm principles, making analysis of the processes of creation and transfer of knowledge" that define the organization. A learning organization is "an organization capable of creating, acquiring necessary for experimenting with new behavior knowledge".

Learning organization is dealing with the processes of creating and processing those between individual and group knowledge between tacit and explicit knowledge.

Tacit knowledge is acquired through informal learning and the socialization of individuals within a group. They can enter into the equation of a formalization that will allow them to be objective and to disseminate them.

Conversely, explicit knowledge can be acquired by individuals within the group to share their membership. Collective knowledge transmission occurs mainly through taxation, which are standardized and then imposed.

According to the theory of learning organization, on the contrary, it is necessary to develop forms of flexible and free moving especially for organizations that face the situation becoming more complex and ambiguous.

For an organization to be a source of change is necessary to systematically develop its activities to solve problems in groups that are working to be better coordinated to develop some common practices and make better matching points of view.

A special role is experiencing, activity required to launch an innovative project, achieving a pilot experiences, testing a new system of learning, even if results are not guaranteed accurate.

To convey the experience to future generations is given formulation of lessons, but analysis of successes and failures, developing a thorough review.

Change is the subject of learning with other customers, suppliers, subcontractors, etc., by knowledge transfer, documents, expert systems, training, as well as wider issues such as mobility policy that individuals should be considered as a means of knowledge transfer.

Conclusions

In a changing society, intentionally permanent development and better, you need to learn continuously, to stimulate creativity and innovation to all individuals and departments, to ensure collective and individual performance. Consequently, there is growing confidence in an environment conducive to development and, again, at another level, is added knowledge, to learn, to create conditions for change, building, contrary to the laws of physics, a more perpetual motion generator much positive energy, development through change, change through learning.

