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Get Ready for Organizational Change
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How many times have you heard someone say, "You can't get anything changed around here" or "I don't think anyone really listens to my ideas"? Changing the way your organization, department, or team does business might prove frustrating. The following paragraphs discuss ways both managers and their subordinates might look at change.

One way companies learn to cope with rapid changes is by increasing their abilities to learn and change. In a learning organization, each employee is charged with identifying and solving problems. This allows the organization to continuously experiment, improve and increase its capabilities. Where traditional organizations are run with efficiency in mind, in learning organizations problem solving is an essential value. Employees practice understanding customer needs, therefore identifying problems, and they solve problems with creative ideas that are unique for that customer. By defining new needs and solving them, the company adds value through ideas and information, not just a physical product. Even though a company may have a great product, ideas and information provide the competitive advantage.

Traditional ways of gaining competitive advantage are through financial, marketing and technological capabilities. Financial capabilities pertain to financial efficiencies, as in wise investments and profitable returns. Marketing capability pertains to building the right products, establishing a close relationship with the customer, and effectively marketing products and services. Technology capability refers to technical innovation, research and development, new products, and up-to-date production technologies. However, the world of business is shifting from machines to ideas. The traditional capabilities must now be combined with a learning capability. We must disengage ourselves from these traditional notions of efficiency and engage in active problem-solving that helps our organizations change. Learning organizations are more adaptable and successful.

Learning capability is not studying the principles of accounting or marketing; it is about enhancing each person's capacity to do things he or she was not able to do. It is knowledge gained by taking action, trial and error, and experimentation. The breakthrough of the learning organization is that employees are empowered to think and act to design work methods on behalf of the company. The learning organization resembles a web in which different parts of the organization are flexing independently while at the same time striving to accomplish the one mission.

In addition to increased employee responsibility, the shift to a learning organization is associated with mindful leadership, a strong culture, widespread information sharing and a shift from formal structures and systems.

A learning organization starts in the minds of the organization's leaders. A learning organization requires mindful leadership and people who understand and can help other people succeed. Leaders in a learning organization design the social architecture of the company, create a shared vision among the employees and devote themselves to the success of the organization's members.