Rise of the Knowledge Worker

Emergence of Learning Organizations

Mike Sanders MA, PMP
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Key Themes

- Knowledge Workers
- Learning Organizations
- Collective Learning
- Systems Thinking
- Intrepreneurship and Innovation
- Perpetual Organizational Change
The Path to Peak Performance

An Interview with

Dr. Edward M. Hallowell
Author, *Shine: Using Brain Science to Get the Best From Your People*
Peter Drucker proposed major changes in society would come from distribution of information. He also predicted the most significant and largest work group in modern organizations would be knowledge workers. Knowledge workers would, through position or knowledge, contribute materially to the ability of organizations to perform and achieve organizational goals.
In 1959, He Predicted the Future

- Peter Drucker proposed major changes in society would come from distribution of information.

- He also predicted the most significant and largest work group in modern organizations would be knowledge workers.

- Knowledge workers would, through position or knowledge, contribute materially to the ability of organizations to perform and achieve organizational goals.
Knowledge Worker Model

• Deep in education and experience
• Well trained in soft skills
• Empowered, collaborative
• Considered experts
• Prefer teaming over teams
• Manage themselves, approach issues with candor
• Spend third of the time looking for more knowledge
They Think for a Living

- Address problems with convergent, divergent, and creative thinking
- Acquire, manipulate, interpret, and apply information and knowledge to perform multidisciplinary, complex, unpredictable work
- Analyze information and apply expertise to solve problems, generate ideas, and create new products and services
How Management Treats Them

• Makes them responsible for their own productivity
• Allows them to self-manage
• Provides opportunities for continual innovation
• Provides continual learning, coaching, and teaching
• Makes value equal to productivity
• Let’s them know “why”
What Learning Organizations Do

- Create Knowledge
- Acquire Knowledge
- Interpret Knowledge
- Transfer Knowledge
- Retain Knowledge
- Act and modify behavior in response to new knowledge
The Importance of Learning in Organizations

An Interview with

David Garvin and Amy Edmondson

Professors

Harvard Business School
Objectives of Learning Organizations

- Adapt/change rapidly to their external environment
- Continually enhance their ability to change
- Develop collective and individual learning
- Use results of learning to achieve better outcomes
- Accumulate and grow knowledge workers
Characteristics of Learning Organizations

• Systems and processes built for rapid organizational change

• Employees learn both individually and collectively

• Assimilate new information broadly to achieve organizational goals
Barriers to Learning Organizations

- Bureaucracy and overlapping, outdated processes
- Bias in interpreting information
- Poor lessons-learned process
- Slow or no dissemination of new information
- Lack of leadership, support
- Hierarchical org structure
- Micromanagement, inhibiting creativity
Strategies to Overcome Barriers

• Flatten the organization for rapid change.
• Create means to disseminate information quickly.
• Develop learning programs to encourage self-mastery.
• Eliminate informal power structures that hamper achieving organizational goals and rapid change.
Outputs of Learning Organizations

- New information/knowledge
- Improved processes/procedures
- New job skills, distributed
- Adaptations from success/failure
- New learning methodologies
- New innovation methodologies
- Reframed, contextual knowledge
Five Disciplines of Learning Organizations
Self-Mastery

- Employees control the development of their abilities and skills to achieve organizational goals
- Employees are accountable for their ultimate value
Mental models are organizational and individual views of the world.

Both views must be continually evaluated, analyzed, and clarified to ensure they are as accurate as possible.
Shared Vision

- Shared views of the future
- Accomplished by developing accepted values and guiding behaviors to achieve goals
- Mission/vision statements are symbols of a shared vision
- Builds commitment, connection
• Promotes networked, unbiased analytical thinking.

• Networked analytical thinking creates a collective intelligence.

• This “super” intelligence is much greater than the sum of individual intelligence.
The Management Tip

Dr. Amy Edmondson
Five Behavior Tips to Teaming

- Speak Up
- Listen Intensely
- Integrate Different Facts & Points of View
- Experiment Iteratively
- Reflect on Ideas and Actions
Typical Organizational Improvement

Milton
Task/Process-Based Improvement Model

- Reduce all functions to inputs, processes, outputs
- Understand the vendor/customer relationship
- Continuously analyze, measure, reduce cycle time
Systems Thinking

• Focus on systems, rather than their parts

• Systems analysis stresses role of interconnections and interdependencies.

• Systems analysis focuses on geometrical feedback, not linear cause-and-effect.
Systems-Based Improvement Model

- Addresses problems in terms of long-term solutions, forces, and unintended consequences
- Systems analysis enables systems improvement and alignment with larger processes inside and outside organization.
Maslow’s Need’s Hierarchy

- **Physiological needs:** food, water, warmth, rest
- **Safety needs:** security, safety
- **Belongingness and love needs:** intimate relationships, friends
- **Esteem needs:** prestige and feeling of accomplishment
- **Self-actualization:** achieving one’s full potential, including creative activities

- Basic needs
- Psychological needs
- Self-fulfillment needs
Content Hierarchy

Knowledge Worker
Content Typology

- Joining of wholes
- Formation of a whole
- Connection of parts
- Gathering of Parts

Understanding:
- Researching
- Absorbing
- Doing
- Interacting
- Reflecting

Past:
- Experience

Future:
- Novelty

Wisdom
Increasing Efficiency (Linear)

- **Data** represents symbols of objects, events, properties.

- **Information** is data useful in describing the “who, what, where, and when.”

- **Knowledge** provides instructions and explains the “how.”

- **Meta Knowledge** or understanding (info about knowledge) explains the “why.”
Wisdom produces the ability to perceive outcomes, determine their value, and decide on the best course of action.
Organizational Effectiveness

- Peter Drucker suggested a difference between doing things right (efficient) and doing the right thing (effective).
- Essentially, the righter you do the wrong thing, the wronger you become.
- Better to do the right thing wrong, than the wrong thing right.
- Most organizational issues can be directly related to doing the wrong thing right.
Intrepreneurship and Innovation

• Encourages risk taking, challenges status quo
• Resulting conflicts, mistakes, failures viewed as learning opportunities
• Requires soft skills such as, negotiation, interpersonal, and conflict management
• Knowledge workers become masters of their jobs and feel empowered to create.
Knowledge workers choose to be effective, over efficient, and continually re-examine objectives.

Learning organizations outperform others by hiring, nurturing and empowering knowledge workers.

Both change rapidly and perpetually.