



Organizational Learning Capability: Generating and Generalizing Ideas with Impact

Arthur K. Yeung, Dave Ulrich, Stephen W. Nason, Mary A. Von Glinow

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Organizational learning matters now more than ever. In today's hypercompetitive business environment, successful executives must be able to discover opportunities, face problems, and pursue innovative ideas, then turn those ideas into action throughout an organization. Based on both empirical research and practice experience, this book gives managers the tools to do just that.

Organizational learning capability is the capacity to generate and generalize ideas with impact. Managers generate new ideas in four basic ways: experimentation, in which organizations learn by trying many new products and processes; continuous improvement, in which they learn by constantly improving what they have done before and mastering each step in a process before moving on to other processes; knowledge acquisition, in which they learn by encouraging individuals and teams to acquire new knowledge continuously; and benchmarking, in which they learn by studying how other groups do things and trying to adapt their techniques. Each learning types leads to different performance consequences.

Managers must also be able to generalize information through technology, movement of people, incentives, and learning processes. By both generating and generalizing ideas with impact, managers have a blueprint for making learning happen. Learning may not be sustained, however, unless it is congruent with the larger business context--the organization's strategy and culture and the industry's characteristics. Unfortunately, just as organizations develop learning capabilities, they also suffer from certain learning disabilities. This book outlines common disabilities and the means to overcome them.

The authors assist practicing managers by providing several examples of successful and unsuccessful organizations and describing the ways in which they have helped organizations improve learning capability in their consulting practices. Based on detailed case studies, a review of past literature, and data gleaned from a worldwide survey of companies, *Organizational Learning Capability* is an accessible and useful guide for managers competing in the information economy. This book turns abstract ideas into practice, offers tools that managers can use, and presents a simple yet profound road map for making learning a reality.



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