

The Learning Organisation

We hear a lot today about learning organisations, but what does this really mean in practice?

Being a learning organisation can mean something different for each company depending on their size, sector and profile, but of course there are the basic principles that apply to everyone. These include:

1. Making sure that staff have the skills that they need to do the job that they are employed to do, in a way that brings the company, customers and themselves benefits.
2. Keeping track of the knowledge that the company has. Did you know that 90% of a company's knowledge is kept in the employees' heads? Implementing a simple knowledge management system that documents this and makes it available to other staff members (where appropriate) can bring enormous benefits in time saving, proactivity and revenue generation. (This doesn't mean that you have to invest a lot of money in expensive technology either)
3. Innovation – yes we know that this is the latest management buzzword, but it is also critical to a company's long term sustainability in this ever more competitive world. In order to innovate, a company must be able to learn from mistakes and make continual adjustments along the way. Innovation can take the form of bringing new products or services to market, or doing what they do in a different way.
4. Awareness of the environment that the company does business in. We are in a world where things change much faster than ever before and in order to stay ahead of the game companies need to monitor these changes and be proactive in how they do business in the new environment rather than reacting to competitor challenges.
5. Customer knowledge. The more a company understands what its customers need and want (and this includes purchase patterns and potential for buying other products and services that they provide) the better they can be served. This leads to an increased customer lifetime value and higher profits.

Of course there is a lot more fine tuning that a company can do regardless of whether they are a micro business, SME or global corporation but if the above points are covered then any company will be well on the way to becoming market leaders in their fields and reaping the rewards that this brings.

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