



Effective Learning Organization: A case analysis

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ABSTRACT

This case study deals with the creation of employee learning in relation to the work they perform. This paper describes various steps taken by a medium sized company to evolve into a learning organization. The data informing this paper are the result of the author conducting a structured interview with the CEO and the HR head of the company and through a questionnaire feedback.

Keywords: *Learning, learning structures, social interaction, work process, work learning*

Learning is a process through which knowledge or skill is acquired by means of education/training or experience. Organisational learning has become increasingly important because of the internal (workplace) and external complexities. We all know that the organizations taking care of furthering the learning environment and activity are best suited to adapt better and eventually outperform the competitors. It has been observed in the organizational history that any challenge faced by the organization shifts its focus to its people for taking a pro-active decision and this increases the scope of learning for its employees. In such situations, the leader of the organization initiates some training moves for the people who are entrusted the task of taking the organization to the next best level, both in terms of performance and mission achievement. This is also the beginning of a learning community in the organization. In fact, people visualize their general intellectual ability to handle this challenge and take initiative to accept the procedures for adapting learning methods. Many researchers have conducted studies to reveal the process by which learning occurs and transferring this knowledge to the work they perform. This case analysis is an attempt in this regard.

The name of the company and the characters revealed are kept in strict confidence and has been changed for this analysis.

Foundry Corporation is a medium sized engineering company engaged in manufacturing of cast iron products. The unit is established in the industrial town of Howrah, West Bengal. The company has established in the production, design and manufacture of cast iron products in the international market. The core team consists of engineers, management professional (especially in export and import management), accountants, and the support staff.

In 2008, Mr.B.Agarwal, Managing Director of the company reviewed the managerial competencies of company's personnel. This strategic move was a deliberate attempt by the top management to equip the personnel in the latest techniques of quality management. Mr.Choudhury, export manager, Mr.Ghosh, the engineer, Mr.Mishra, the foundry supervisor and Mr.Das, the accountant were asked to attend an in house management development program to brush up their respective levels of competence in the area of quality management. All were aged between 35 to 40 years except accountant who was aged 56 years.

The persons selected for the management development program although worked in Foundry Corporation, yet they never knew so well prior to the beginning of this program. After a few days the members were very closely bonded and effective in their workings. The core component of company's competitive advantage is the learning ability and style of its members in the group. Members of the group have realized that in the arena of globalization, they need to enhance their individual competence. This management development program was conducive to individual and group based learning.

In our conversation with the top management we asked a few questions to ascertain the creation and effectiveness of a learning organization.

a) The need for managers to learn and renew their individual competencies.

The dynamics of globalization and the changing environment asks the organization to scan the people's capabilities in handling complexities and creating a competitive advantage. It is a fact that the mental system of acquired knowledge is limited and needs to be upgraded, refreshed and renewed.

b) Difficulties associated with the process of learning.

It has been observed that learning is not the motivation of the employees or learning will not necessarily occur because of a management development program. Each individual member of the organization has respective cognitive structures and they use mental frames to evaluate the organizational input. They match a particular learning style and inventory with their mental make up and act accordingly. In this case, it has been observed that Mr.Das, accountant has reiterated that he is old and finds it difficult to cope. We find the rigidity in learning.

Factors like personal background, age, experience, education and position in the organization shape members mental structures towards learning. It was found that there was fear of losing face and a negative impact on the career development. Some of the members were reluctant to diminish their credibility.

Since the members were asked to work in group. Initially it was difficult all the members to maintain coherence; but late their personal rivalry and internal conflict reduced and they learnt to work in a group.

To conclude, the group developed appositve attitude towards the assignment, build-up mutual trust and took each member into their confidence. The members were found focused on their work, respect alternative viewpoints and enhancement of interpersonal relation and communication.

Additional Readings:

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