LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS FOR
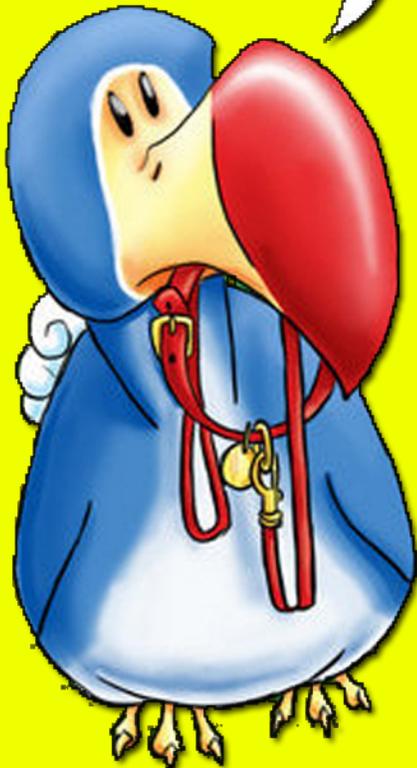
DODOS

PLOCK?

Your personal learning organization coaches will have you ruling the roost in no time!

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About the Authors

Learning Organizations for Dodos was co-written by a team of industry leaders adapting other resources from experts in learning organizations:

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About the Handbook

As long as you don't suffer from Ornithophobia (that's the fear of birds!), you should find that Learning Organization for Dodos will easily guide you through establishing, sustaining and promoting your learning organization. This handbook will lead you through the initial setup and teach you everything from getting buy-in from your staff to seeing conflict in a positive light. We have included team building activities to promote learning and team development in your organization that will prove to be both fun and enlightening.

Now go ahead, and get started—don't forget that the early bird catches the worm!

Chapter 1: Don't be a Dodo!

You own your own company, maybe you are the manager of a department, or you want to start your own business with several others, and you have read that the best type of organization is a "learning organization". But you don't know what it is or where to start. Well, this booklet is a great starting point!

"…Organizations must learn faster and adapt faster to changes in the environment or they simply will not survive. As in any transitional period, the dominant but dying species (non-learning organizations) and the emerging, more adaptive species (learning organizations) presently exist side by side. Within the next 10 years, I predict that only learning organizations will be left. Companies that do not become learning organizations will soon go the way of the dinosaur; they will die out because they were unable to adapt to the changing environment" (Marquardt, 2002, p. xii). If, as Marquardt predicts, non-learning organizations will go the way of the dinosaur (or the dodo birds), then you should make sure that your organization becomes one of Marquardt's "emerging, more adaptive species…" (2002, p. xii).

Let's take a little organizational development trip back in time.   Do you remember the Total Quality Management (TQM) movement? Peter Senge (2006) believed that TQM, as the "organizational learning fad of the early 1990s" (Senge, 2006, p. xv) which used management tools but no transformational techniques, set the stage for the *learning organization*, a place "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 2006, p. 3).

So where do you start to create your learning organization? **With your vision.**

The Vision Statement

Why do you need a vision statement? Isn't it enough that you have an organization and that everyone knows where you are supposed to be going? Nanus (2007) suggested that "a vision is a beckoning symbol of all that is possible for the organization – a shining destination, a distinctive path that no other organization is likely to have, even one that may be in the very same business" (p. 461). It is imperative that you and everyone else in the organization share the vision of where you are going. Why? Because, in addition to providing focus, Nanus (2007) points out that having a vision will:
- Make things more meaningful for everyone because they can see the big picture
- Make people feel important and part of a team
- Energize people and encourage risk-taking
- Make the future real and help with decision making
- Make everyone look in the same direction with common goals and aspirations.

Now that you know why a vision is important, take the time to meet with your group and identify your vision, write it down and make sure that everyone shares it. In doing this, you should use the definition of the learning organization as a starting and ending point and include opportunities for people to:
- Continually grow in their ability to get the results they want
- Think freely and out of the box
- Learn continuously together (Senge, 2006)

The Mission Statement

"A mission statement is a declaration of an organization's 'reason for being'. A clear statement of a company's mission is essential to effectively establishing objectives, formulating strategies, setting goals, devising policies, allocating resources, and motivating employees" (Cochran, David & Gibson, 2008, p. 27). Based on this, we see that, while a vision statement points to the future of the organization, the mission statement defines the organization.

In creating the mission statement for your learning organization, remember that learning organizations are "both more generative and more adaptive than traditional organizations. Because of their commitment, openness, and ability to deal with complexity, people find security not in stability but in the dynamic equilibrium between holding on and letting go – holding on and letting go of beliefs, assumptions, and certainties" (Kofman & Senge, 1995, p. 33).

Based on this, when you meet with your group to write your mission statement, you might consider including words such as *innovation, dynamic, adaptive, non-traditional* and *creative*.

"The combination of trust and a common goal shared by people with the right characteristics can make for a powerful team" (Kotter, 1996, p.35).

Organizational Structure

So now you have people, a vision and a mission. What do you look at next?

The organization's structure.

"Organization structure refers to the pattern of roles, authority, and communication that determines the coordination of the technology and people within an organization" (Osland, Kolb, Rubin & Turner, 2007, p. 604).

Osland, Kolb, Rubin and Turner (2007) described various types of organizational structures and their advantages and disadvantages. They suggested that there are three traditional structures: functional, division and matrix, as well as newer forms which they call horizontal and network organizations.

In the functional model, employee reporting-lines are based on function and, while this structure has the advantages of being able to localize areas of expertise, there are disadvantages that could preclude the development of the learning organization. One of these is that the *silos* of expertise often do not communicate cross-functionally.

The divisional structure is characterized by divisions or departments, based on types of products or services. While this type of structure often results in a high level of customer satisfaction, it has the disadvantage of duplication of services, as each division might have representatives from functional areas. This type of organizational structure, if not managed correctly, may not be conducive to the learning organization paradigm unless members are able to adapt to a constantly changing environment as they learn together.

The matrix is perhaps the organizational structure that will best lend itself to becoming a learning organization. "Matrix structures have the advantages of facilitating the communication and coordination required to meet dual demands from the environment. The organic nature of the matrix (e.g., project groups) makes it flexible and adaptable to environmental changes. They allow for flexible and efficient sharing of human resources

across products, which avoids duplication. They provide the opportunity for both functional and product skill development" (Osland, Kolb, Rubin & Turner, 2007, p. 607).

Horizontal structures have a management focus which is flat, rather than vertical, across the organization. This type of organizational structure is relatively new and has not been researched much, but it is being considered by organizations that have a "short product life and development cycles" (Osland, Kolb, Rubin & Turner, 2007, p. 610). Network organizational structures use brokers for their products and their function is to design, market and advertise the network. In this type of organizational structure, trust plays a key role in the relationship among its few partners and employees.

As you build your learning organization it is imperative that you create an organizational structure that is conducive to environmental adaptability through continuous learning.

THE BIRD FEED

"The cornerstone of the successful learning organization is its ability to repeatedly become" (Rolls, 1995, p.103).

Building the Community of the Learning Organization

Kofman and Senge (1995) believed that "learning organizations are built by communities of servant leaders" (p. 34). They suggested that, in these communities, the leaders are people who are not necessarily in a position of authority but, because collective leadership is allowed to exist, these leaders are able to take on organizational challenges within the community. These servant leaders are also able to promote learning opportunities at all levels of the organization. Kofman and Senge also suggested that for a true learning organization to exist, there must be a "community of commitment" which will have ongoing community building activities espoused both by formal leadership and servant leaders.

As you continue the journey toward creating a learning organization, you will need to analyze the concept of the servant leader as well as the building of a community of commitment within your organization. This community is not only committed to the organization and to each other, but also to the characteristics of the learning organization which include adaptability, openness of thinking and continuous learning.

WORM OF THE DAY

"In the early stages of working together, the leader is the designer. While multiple points of view make groups powerful, that variety does not always produce the most creative outcomes. At this stage, when a group does not yet have a lot of collective knowledge, it is sometimes useful for the leader to solicit input, envision a design, and then present a plan to the group" (Mohr & Dichter, 2001, p.744).
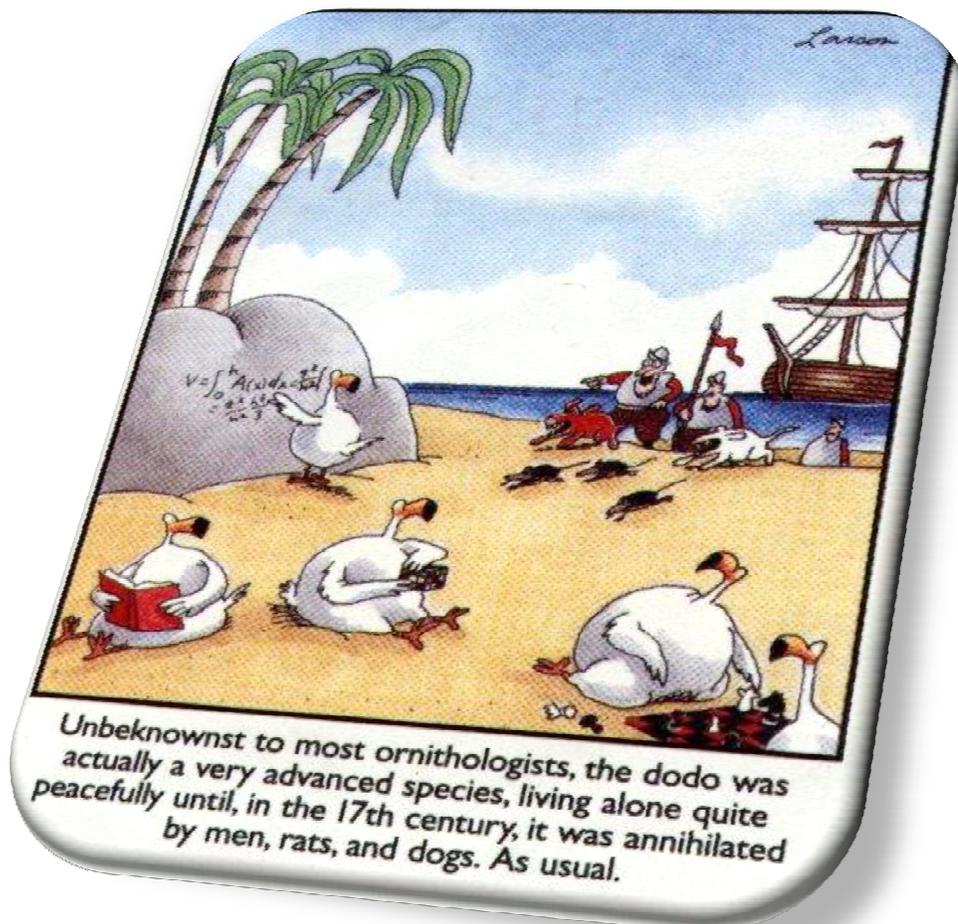
Next, we will look at some of the specifics of day-to-day life in a learning organization.

Chapter 2: Establishing Pecking Order or the Conflict Phase

Congratulations! You have completed the first phase of the work of transforming to a learning organization:

- Initial consensus has been reached by all or most key group members and leadership
- The leader has a solid, working theory or grasp of the organizational culture as well as what makes each individual employee "tick"
- The mission and vision are clear to all the stakeholders as they've had a part in contributing to that company mission and vision
- A sense of urgency has been developed amongst employees to move away from the status quo and into the transformational process as the only way to success
- Group members have been empowered with shared or diffused leadership
  (Marquardt, 2002; Mohr & Dichter, 2001; Waldersee, 1997)

Now that that first foundational part of building the nest is over, the "real" work of becoming an organization at the forefront of its industry in quick customer response and innovation can begin—just as soon as the newly empowered employees establish "pecking order" and negotiate this second phase of becoming a learning organization, the Conflict Stage (Mohr & Dichter, 2001). During this Conflict Stage, the novelty of new leadership and newfound purpose and power has just worn off—also known as "the honeymoon is over" (Mohr & Dichter, 2001). Employees may "strut their stuff" and test power boundaries and old conflicts will definitely resurface—ruffled feathers everywhere. Leaders would do well not only to expect conflict as a natural and necessary process of group development, but also to warn and prepare their employees when they see that the chaotic time is on the horizon (Mohr & Dichter, 2001).

Unbeknownst to most ornithologists, the dodo was actually a very advanced species, living alone quite peacefully until, in the 17th century, it was annihilated by men, rats, and dogs. As usual.

Activity Time!

Try "The Fist" (Activity adapted from Miller, 2007)

Participants Learn:
- ✓ Not every difference of opinion entails a battle.
- ✓ Conflict and chaos can lead to creativity and collaboration for mutual beneficence.

The Object:
This is a paired exercise where one participant is challenged to open the fist of his or her partner.

Materials:
None needed.

Here's How:
1. Have all participants pair up.
2. Have all pairs designate Person A and Person B.
3. Person A is to make a fist and present it to Person B.
4. Person B has exactly 30 seconds to open their partner's fist.

Questions for Dialoguing:
- ➢ How many tried to physically pry open the fist?
- ➢ How many tried a bribe?
- ➢ How many tried tickling your partner?
- ➢ How many tried to manipulate your partner?
- ➢ How many merely asked your partner to open his or her fist?
- ➢ Did some of you make this more difficult than it had to be? Why?
- ➢ Why did you resort to force? (Or, why not resort to force?)
- ➢ Was your reaction similar to how you approach challenges back on the job?
- ➢ What did you learn here today that we can apply to problem-solving back on the job?
- ➢ Has your approach to conflict changed?

Tips for Success:
- ❖ Don't spend a lot of time introducing the activity. The element of surprise is critical.
- ❖ Don't allow time for strategizing; typical reactions are what the activity leader should be after.
- ❖ Don't allow more than 30 seconds for the fist-opening portion of the activity. Remember, the short time frame encourages participants to react without much thinking—just as embedded systems thinking will be someday.

To Make Things More Interesting:
- ▪ Blindfold one of the partners.
- ▪ Have only a few partnerships do the activity. Send all who will participate out of the room and bring them back in two at a time. The rest of the group observes each partnership struggle with the activity and debriefs after all the pairs have taken a turn.
- ▪ Replace the notion of making a fist with holding a penny that Person B has 30 seconds to get away from Person A.

with conflict leads to resentment and mediocrity that comes of too much compromise" (Mohr & Dichter, 2001, The Conflict Stage, para.3) and pulls the organization further away from the systems thinking frame of mind. Absolutely insist on resolving—not hiding, conflicts.

2. **Set ground rules for civil discourse.** While it is expected that people will not agree all of the time, a solid commitment to reach consensus in spite of differences must be obtained from all employees for the good of the organization and ultimately for the good of the individual. Next, leaders move to set up and publish

procedures for verbally and informally addressing grievances and conflicts, being careful not to allow individuals to use the group to resolve matters that belong in private one-to-one settings (Mohr & Dichter, 2001).

Sample Ground Rules for Civil Discourse

- The aim is to learn from others in stimulating, courteous, honest and well-crafted arguments.

- We will endorse no political or religious ideology or bias.

- Our contributions will be substantive and free of wisecracks, insults, or personal attacks on views that are different—although humor is highly encouraged.

- This is a meeting place of ideas—not personalities.

- This is a safe harbor for all of us thoughtful professionals and practitioners.

- If the conflict is not solved today, we will solve it tomorrow or the next day, but solve it we will.

Adapted from Rules of Civil Discourse:
http://www.civildiscourse.com/index.php?showtopic=220

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3. **Understand the Root Cause of Conflict.** Once caught up in the heated vicious cycle of misunderstandings and insults of conflict, the real root of the problem(s) can be lost (Day, Peters, & Race, 1999; Shapiro, 2001). According to Daniel Shapiro of the International Debate Education Association (2001), here are the real culprits when it comes to the root causes of conflict:

What Do We Want? - When Do We Want It?

- **Scarcity of basic needs items** for survival like food, water and air
- **Differing values** when people have different beliefs (e.g. religion)
- **Differing perceptions** or different thoughts about the same events
- **Differing interests** when people have different agendas or concerns
- **Limited resources** such as money, technology or supplies
- **Psychological needs** of feeling capable, accepted, and worthy

1. **Put It in Writing.** Once affected members see things in black and white, this exercise in itself may be cathartic enough for them to be satisfied. They may not feel as strongly once it is "up on the wall" on a marker board or flipchart and no longer bottled up and poisoning the employee. It also looks a lot less intimidating and much more tackle-able once it's posted.

Activity Time!

Try "Put It in Writing" (Activity adapted from Day, Peters & Race, 1999)

Participants Learn:
- ✓ The distilled conflict isn't as terrible as it feels.
- ✓ To dialogue effectively and to work conflicts out in an honest and productive manner.

The Object:
Affected members gather in a semi-private area to put issues to paper in a large display visual format.

Materials:
Conference room or break room with a white board or flipchart and easel and writing utensils.

Here's How:
1. Assemble affected group members and a facilitator in the designated area with the materials needed.
2. Reiterate the company mission and vision and that unresolved conflicts are not only counter to those, but also psychologically draining.
3. Recall or pull out established Ground Rules for Civil Discourse.
4. Have each side state their case as the other listens carefully. The mediator should listen for root causes and write these on the board once both parties have finished.
5. Establish ownership of the conflict. Who feels it? Who is being affected by it? Distinguish between and point out individual issues and ones that affect the whole group.
6. Brainstorm solutions from both sides and get commitment from each to attempt them.
7. Summarize and crystallize the learning for future use.

Questions for Dialoguing:
- ➢ How is this impeding your learning or progress?
- ➢ What changes would you like to see?
- ➢ What do you need to get past this?
- ➢ How has your thinking evolved from the beginning of this activity to the end?
- ➢ How can you grow from this experience? What have you learned about yourself? Others?
- ➢ How can we grow as a unit/department/company from this experience?
- ➢ What should we take with us into the future should a similar situation arise?

Tips for Success:
- ❖ Don't allow any one member to spend a lot of time rehashing the same elements of the problem over and over. Kindly remind them that while their particular conflict is currently a priority as it stands in the way of progress, their individual comfort is not a company goal.
- ❖ Move things along; don't get too bogged down in process-oriented details.
- ❖ Remember to always reinforce a safe space to make mistakes on the road to innovation while always maintaining a healthy respect and regard for one another.
- ❖ Also remember to reinforce seeing the "bigger picture" perspective and to promote systems thinking all the way.

Cautions:
- ▪ The Put It in Writing activity is not a substitute for formal complaints to blatant rule violations stipulated in policies and procedures manuals.
- ▪ For larger or more pervasive conflicts, the use of a professional, third party, objective, mediator may be advised.

2. **Distinguish Between People, Actions, and Principles.** When unpacking the causes of group conflict, focus on actions and principles. Try to reconcile any actions that proved conflictive and try to ultimately agree on principles. For differing opinions, reinforce that it is okay to have them but leave the door open for people to reconsider them.

3. **Maintain a Climate of Unconditional Positive Regard.** Easier said than done, no doubt, but if everyone can agree to respect each other as people, this makes the environment more conducive to "talk turkey" and to more profoundly and safely explore individual differences and weaknesses.

4. **Use Conflict Creatively.** Brainstorming can prove a very useful tool in displaying a wide range of views or possibilities. More frequently than not, the controversial view in the minority may appear a lot more reasonable once the entire range of possibilities is aired. People may also find that they are actually in much more agreement than they realized.

5. **Encapsulate the Learning from Conflict.** Reap not just the inconvenience and counter-production of the conflict but also collect on the benefits of learning from conflict for the future of the company should a similar issue arise again.

6. **Say NO to Destruction of Group Work by Conflict.** Keep in mind that group consensus is the means to an end and not an end unto itself. Innovative group work and products are the goal, not being one happy family.

7. **Bring in the Pros.** When there's an impasse, don't shudder away from establishing a procedure for an appellate process or hiring a professional for more hopeless instances. Sometimes, just knowing that there is such recourse may promote conflicted groups to work things out without resorting to more extreme measures.

8. **Make it OK to Fly Away.** Psychologically speaking, when an individual knows there's an escape-hatch, they tend not to feel trapped in hostile circumstances. In fact, just knowing there's a way out can induce an individual to work his own way out effectively. Allow for temporary breaks from the group, especially if things get too heated.

9. **Leader = Cheerleading Captain.** During the Conflict Phase the ruler of the roost needs to keep reminding the group of their priority and of the mission and vision statements. The Australian researcher Waldersee (1997) affirmed that one of the major characteristics of employees who have the learning organization philosophy embedded is that they self-regulate during times of chaos by continually setting new goals and assessing their own progress. Rising conflicts may disrupt this process and it's the leader's role to jumpstart employees to get them back on the self-regulatory and continually-learning track (Waldersee, 1997).

When Will the Eagle Have Landed?

Many successful learning organizations will assert this: there really is no fast way; the process of group maturation just takes years but is well worth the rewards (Day, Peters & Race, 1999; Marquardt, 2002; Miller, 2007; Mohr & Dichter, 2001; Waldersee, 1997). Mohr and Dichter (2001) would assure that your group will know it has "arrived" once collective decision-making is completely devoid of self-interest, resentments and yet virtually seamless and fluid, like water off a duck's back. Not to mention, once your company negotiates the Pecking Order or Conflict Phase, it will move through the other phases and soar like an eagle.

Chapter 3: Going Cuckoo

V Formation

A successful learning organization must be able to function in such a way that as it operates from day to day over time, there will be a seamless connectivity and collation between the different facets of the organization—much like a flock in V-formation. These facets, of course, are the different elements of the learning organization model (Marquardt, 2002) used by the organization. Regardless of the model used, it is imperative that the different units 'buy in' to the overall goal of the organization, which is to become and remain a productive learning organization where everyone in the "nest" is chirping away merrily.

However, no change ever happens easily when it impacts individuals who by nature have their respective views and opinions on whether the change is necessary, worthwhile, or will be accepted and effective. The fact of the matter is that the degree of resistance to the introduction of the change must be expertly managed by you, the leaders (the tip of the V), in order to reduce the existing chaos in the organization. Therefore, you (as leaders) must have a plan in place that you can put into effect when the "resistance" goes cuckoo.

Communication or Bird-Calling

In this atmosphere of chaos, how should you as leaders handle the situation? According to Baker and Camarata (1998) establishing strong lines of communication between all sectors of the organization is paramount. In the transitional process of creating and maintaining a learning organization, the role of communication is central to its success. Additionally, having just the right birdcall plays a crucial role in a number of elements that are critical to the development of a learning organization. Baker and Camarata (1998) referred to them as preconditions, and identified them as:

- Trust
- Commitment
- Perceived Organizational Support

Trust is something that you as leaders must earn if you are to lead the organization through its transformation stage. If the workers do not have trust in you as the leaders of the organization, they will not buy in to the new vision. Not having this bird's eye view will result in a disconnect that will either stagnate the organization or cause its demise. According to Marquardt (2002), "a vision gives employees and the entire organization an overarching goal that helps guide strategic thinking and planning." Therefore, leaders need to be more cognizant of the importance of communicating the vision clearly to all employees and stakeholders. As they identify with the vision, they will develop trust in the leadership taking them through this transition. As Senge (2008, p. 4) phrased it "when more people share a vision, the vision becomes a mental reality that people can truly imagine achieving."

Commitment is key in this process and according to Marquardt (2002), the organization's position needs to be seen as bleak and strictly for the birds with an unflattering future in order to easily obtain a consensus. In a sense, employees need to be convinced that it is a much better idea to take the risk of flying south for the winter. Marquardt (2002) also stated that it is better to support the change proposed by the leadership than to cling to the status quo. In today's economy, jobs are hard to find and difficult to create, both in the government and cooperative sectors, therefore, commitment from the employees of an organization in chaos may not be too difficult to attain. Once you have a solid employee commitment you will find it a much easier task to change the company into a learning organization. Birds in their little nests agree.

The problem is how do you secure a solid employee commitment to the change? According to Loupe and Koller (2005) commitment to change means "one must be engaged in the head (understanding), the heart (belief), and the hands (action to make it happen)." There are three phases in the commitment process (Loupe & Koller, 2005)

1. Expanding Awareness and Understanding
2. Evoking Belief
3. Building Commitment

They also warned that it is a common mistake for leaders to try to get employees to move from the first phase directly to the third phase. Phase one is necessary so that the vision may be understood. Loupe and Koller (2005) claimed, "The case for change needs to begin to address the following:

- Reasons the change is necessary *[The climate will soon become intolerable here and food will become difficult to find.]*
- The intended results of the change *[We'll find a warmer climate to survive in and food will be plentiful.]*
- Actions needed to affect the change *[Word needs to get around to the flock as to when and how we're leaving; a plan needs to be formulated and communicated.]*
- The "What's in it for me" (WIIFM) *[I love mangoes and we may get to enjoy other tropical fruit indigenous to warmer climates; my mate is ready to nest and our hatchlings would fare better in a warmer place.]*
- Features that distinguish this attempt from previous attempts at change." (p. 75) *[This time I get to fly closer to the tip of the V and therefore I get a stronger say.]*

This phase gives you, the leaders, the opportunity to explain the vision to those employees that form the resistance to the change. Loupe and Koller (2005) also listed--

"Some Ways to Expand Understanding About a Change":

- Use the intended results of the change as a framework for discussing the need for change. Talking about "Why change" is very important in this phase.
- Conduct "Town Hall" type meetings of employees affected by the change to build understanding of the major issues in the change effort. Give them a voice in the session. Post "Frequently Asked Questions" with answers via communication methods that have been successful in the past.
- In employee meetings, limit leadership presentations about the change to 15-20 minutes and then allow people to ask their own "questions of understanding." This format gives each person an opportunity to find out specifically what he or she needs to know.
- Address the "here we go again" mantra by explaining what and how this change will be different.
- Anticipate the rumor mill and head off the [squawking] rumors with the truth. Some leaders we have worked with have asked for the latest rumors in each encounter they have with employees, and then addressed the rumors on the spot.
- Listen to cynics and don't just give them the bird. They often express questions, doubts, and fears that many feel, but do not express. Converted cynics can become strong advocates for the change." (p. 76)

The second phase which is evoking belief from the employees can be achieved if leaders listen, stop their grousing, not be judgmental, do not take resistance personal and give honest responses to questions from employees (Loupe & Koller, 2005). The final phase of the commitment process is the activities that leaders engage in as they attempt to get their employees to participate in their commitment effort. Loupe and Koller (2005) suggested that leaders use "cross-functional" teams and large group meetings to develop and revise plans; recognize those working in support of the change and celebrate even the smallest success of the change process; use mistakes and failures as learning opportunities and continue the change effort as a daily operation (Loupe & Koller, 2005).

Perceived organizational support is the employees' belief that their supervisors, managers, directors, presidents and CEO's are standing firmly behind them as they do their part in making the vision of the organization (flying in a perfect V-formation) a reality. It cannot be over emphasized that it is absolutely important that your employees believe that their jobs are important, and that they are making a valuable contribution to the organization, for even just one out of alignment detracts from the V. If you are able to communicate this element of self-worth to the employees and stakeholders, it will be easier to convince them that they have the full support of the organization. Elevated self-worth and perceived organizational support

contributes to increased employee production and efficiency, which is an added benefit in the overall process of becoming a learning organization.

Leading By Example: Being Cock-of-the-Walk

 It is not enough for you to say to your employees that the organization is going in a new direction, that the old method of doing business is over, or that the new methods being implemented are necessary for the organization to become competitive and remain that way. "Do as I say and not as I do" is no longer effective leadership in the business world or anywhere else. This style of leadership does not galvanize employee support for the organization's vision and goals. Mueller (2009) found that "leader change precedes effective organizational change. In other words, **nothing gets better until the boss does**."

This is one of the first lessons you have to learn, as leaders transforming your organizations into learning organizations.

According to Beamish (2005) there are four distinct characteristics of leaders in a learning organization based on the DISC profile.

DISC provides a non-judgmental language for exploring behavioral issues across four primary dimensions:
   (1) Dominance: Direct and Decisive. Ds are strong-willed, strong-minded people who like accepting challenges, taking action, and getting immediate results.
   (2) Influence: Optimistic and Outgoing. Is are "people" who like participating on teams, sharing ideas, and energizing and entertaining others.
   (3) Steadiness: Sympathetic and Cooperative. Ss are helpful people who like working behind the scenes, performing in consistent and predictable ways, and being good listeners.
   (4) Conscientiousness: Concerned and correct. Cs are sticklers for quality and like planning ahead, employing systematic approaches, and checking and re-checking for accuracy. (p. 138)

Those of you who are operational or on-site leaders, like managers, principals and assistant principals are in a much better position to practice what you preach. You can create opportunities for yourselves to model what you expect of your employees, be it teachers in the classroom, customer service representatives or receptionists. When Operational leaders "roll up their sleeves" and "get into the trenches" with their employees, they build a valuable bond that commands respect, and signals to the employees that the bar of expectation has not been set too high.

Those of you who are presidents, CEOs, assistant superintendents and superintendents, represent the strategic leaders who are the policy makers and you may not have as much of an ideal situation as operational leaders who are by nature of their functions located on the work site. However, even though you are not located on the work site, you may show your commitment to leadership by example by becoming more visible to all employees by attending and speaking at employee functions, and granting more accessibility to your immediate subordinates.

Don't Be a Birdbrain - Learn From Mistakes

Usually, an organization does not just find itself in trouble overnight. Along the way there are signs that go unnoticed, until the state of chaos makes it clear to everyone that the organization is in trouble; and just as it takes time for an organization to sink into trouble, it takes time for it to reemerge as a viable, productive learning organization. It is therefore critical that you the leaders, your employees and stakeholders learn from the mistakes made during the transition process.

Armstrong (2009) wrote of a personal experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Columbia in which he was planning to rebuild a damaged bridge when solicited by some villagers. However, one elderly villager asked him why the bridge had not already been built. Armstrong learned that the bridge would have made it easy for war among the villages to resume. Armstrong (2009) also claimed, "good intentions can create disasters,"

which is what would have happened if he had built the bridge. He advised that leaders should always ask why things are the way they are and why nothing has been done about it. These questions may help you identify mistakes so that you may learn from them.

Taking Risks: Flight Isn't for Chickens

There is no company that has a clear bird's-eye view of the future; hence all companies must take risks if they are to function in the business world. Taking risks are part of the normal business operations. Your personnel manager has to make decisions on whom to hire, promote, or fire, because there is always going to be turn-around in personnel. In some companies, this may be a problem that must be fixed, because attrition can disturb the equilibrium of a learning organization in the form of a brain drain as rare birds seek warmer climates. However, this should not be viewed as a reason for not investing in personnel—on the contrary.

Similarly, your company should not be hesitant to invest in expansion if the market is right. As leaders, you must trust your experts and grow your organization so it may remain competitive. You must also keep up with technology as it changes in the business world. Not keeping up with technology will result in the organization losing productivity, and diminish the attraction to high quality personnel.

Lest it wishes to go the way of the Dodo, your company cannot remain viable in the present day market unless it takes the necessary risks. What is most important is that you learn from every mistake so as not to repeat them.

Continuous Learning: Owls Not Parrots

Continuous learning is the process of learning how to learn, as conditions directly related to the relevance, function, and viability of the organization change. Therefore, as you lead your company into its transition to a learning organization, remember that as long as you keep learning, your organization will always offer a service or product that is relevant at any point in time.

Collins (2008), in his research found that there was a singular reason for the improvement of companies from good to great, and it was that they all had "level 5 leaders" (based on the five-level hierarchy). According to Collins (2008) "These leaders quietly go about building greatness step by step, without much fanfare or hoopla, while generating extraordinary results."

As leaders, you need to be as selfless as possible and concentrate your efforts on building your flock (the organization) and not your careers. The data has shown that if you build your organization and see it through to the achievement of its goals and vision, your personal success and public adulation will happen anyway. However, by leading your organization to sustained profitability you would have contributed to the personal success of all your employees and stakeholders, which should bring you greater gratification than personal success alone. You, too, can emerge as the graceful black swan rather than the awkward, flightless and extinct dodo.

"Leadership can vary and move around, but when it comes down to it, no matter how much decision making is shared, there does have to be someone who is in charge – and we have to know who that is" (Mohr & Dicther, 2001).

Chapter 4: Imprinting-Lead and they will follow

Around this time, you can see change-- you just may not be sure that this is the change that you desired. Do not be discouraged, you are half way there! You are learning to communicate, delegate and to encourage risk-taking and may feel that you are losing ground as your organization's leader. You have settled into "The Confusion Stage" (Mohr & Dichter, 2001). Believe it or not, this is just where you should be; by the end of this chapter, you will see past the confusion and will be ready to strut your stuff!

Flying In "V" Formation

At this point, the road to effective leadership has come to a fork, and you must decide which route you will take. Will you be the top down manager-- pressed to meet your personal goals, or the learning leader; intently focused on the good of all? If you chose to be a learning leader, continue reading; you are about to be transformed.

What exactly does it mean to be a learning leader? Simply stated, leaders, "must become models, eager to learn for themselves and encourage others to learn as well. Managers should view themselves as coaches, facilitators and advocates who promote, encourage, and reinforce learning" (Marquardt, 2002). As a leader, you are expected to learn continuously and be sure that others within the organization see you actively involved with the implementation of this process of change. It is your responsibility to make learning an inherent part of the organization and while this process begins with you, you can recruit others to help. After reading about the three types of leaders, take some time to discover who these individuals are within your organization.

THE BIRD FEED

 "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main…" John Donne

Senge (1996) discussed the three types of leaders: (1) The Local Line Leader, (2) The Executive Leader and (3) The Internal Networkers who can positively affect a learning organization. Look hard enough and you will find that these individuals exist in your organization; they just may be a "diamond in the rough." Knowing what to look for is key; take some time to identify which individuals may fit the bill.

- Local Line Leader: This is the individual who has a strong sense of "bottom line" and responsibility. Her effectiveness can be found in owning this experiment of change and applying the skills being learned to her own issues. Line leaders can work together efficiently to design and implement new learning processes.
  Limitations: Line leaders are often skeptical at first and encouraging them to find the patience to "teach" others may be difficult.
- Executive Leader: Serving as a mediator and/or politician, this individual has a bird's-eye view of the players and can assist Line Leaders in conveying their message to others. Limitations: The Executive Leader must work to be seen as more than just the "captain of the ship." Others must recognize this person as a mentor.
- Internal Networkers: Having little to no authority, these individuals provide a priceless connection with the various levels of the organization. These individuals know who can get things done. They are driven by self-motivation and desire, therefore power is not necessary. Working alongside the Executive Leader and the Local Line Leader is when Internal Networkers are most effective.
  Limitations: Internal Networkers may be difficult to identify as they may be at any level. Additionally, their lack of power may dissuade others from listening.

These are only three identifiable leaders within an organization. Do not doubt the ability of others who you have not noticed; they can serve as your greatest allies or your worst enemies. A successful leader recognizes

that there is a potential leader in everyone given the right conditions. These leaders within will serve as your "teachers" as you continue to learn and grow into your newfound role.

THE BIRD FEED

Do not be afraid to allow others to fly forward while you fall back to get recharged.
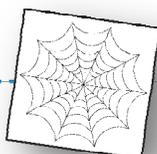
Activity Time!

Try "The Web We Weave": A Focus on Interdependence

Participants Learn:
- ✓ To recognize how the members of the organization are interdependent.
- ✓ To recognize the effects of a gap in the interdependence of a learning organization.

The Object:
This is a large group exercise that should be done with individuals from a variety of departments within the organization so that they may understand the interdependence of one another.

Materials:
Blank Name Badges (Adhesive ones will do)
Ball of yarn (1 per group)
Scissors (1 pair for facilitator)

Here's How:
1. Group participants ensuring that a variety of departments are represented in each group.
2. Participants write the title of their department/position on their name badge.
3. Select one participant to begin. This person will be given the ball of yarn.
4. The participant beginning the activity will hold the ball of yarn in one hand and the end of the yarn in the other.
5. Begin with: "I am the ___ department and I provide ___ to the ___ department."
6. With this statement, the ball of yarn should be tossed to the department being mentioned.
7. Each person will continue with this statement, tossing the ball to another.
8. Each member should be given the opportunity to complete the following statements:
    a. "I am the ___ department and I depend on ___ from the ___ department."
    b. "I am the ___ department and I would like ___ from the ___ department."
9. After the group completes statements, the facilitator should address the group and have them recognize that they have created a web of interdependence.
10. During the discussion the facilitator will cut through the web.
11. Discuss what has happened to the web after the system "disconnect."

Tips For Success:
- ❖ Encourage all participants to complete the statements.
- ❖ Invite a variety of individuals to participate regardless of position within the organization.
- ❖ Do not use individual names as the members should begin seeing themselves as part of a whole.

Preening Your Feathers

THE BIRD FEED

Birds preen to maintain their feathers, to keep themselves warm and dry, to remove parasites, and to strengthen relationships. Have you preened your feathers today?

Your organization is changing and to be successful you and your members will need to undergo a mind shift. You will no longer "practice" learning, you will "live" your learning. Remember that your position does not guarantee knowledge or power; it may only guarantee your salary. Thus you and others in your organization must be willing and able to learn from one another. Following Senge's (2006) Five Discipline model is crucial, considering the complexities of today's organizations and the ability that we posses to create. Realizing that you and your members are interdependent will prove critical to the movement from essential learning to generative learning.

Senge (2006) described these five disciplines:

- **Personal Mastery:** Taking individual responsibility of learning is the only way to ensure that you can create the results that you desire. Continuously strive to clarify and deepen personal goals as you encourage others to do the same.
- **Shared Vision:** Created from a collection of individual goals, shared vision offers a commitment from stakeholders within a group. The vision becomes engrained in the daily processes and is not simply memorized words.
- **Team Learning:** The old adage "two heads are better than one" holds true in this discipline. Opening the lines of communication is essential to developing group intelligence. This talk builds collective thinking skills and in turn increases the group's ability to improve.
- **Mental Models:** We all create pictures in our minds and make assumptions of our environments. It is these assumptions that allow us to act and react to our environment. Senge (2006) suggests that we continue to recreate and clarify our mental pictures of the world so that our actions may better reflect our desires.
- **Systems Thinking:** As the fifth discipline, systems thinking is the "cornerstone of the learning organization." This discipline changes the way we think about connectedness and the interrelationships that shape behavior. Every successful organization recognizes and relies upon the dependency within. Knowing that each decision causes a consequence, either good or bad, for everyone within the organization.

These five disciplines are all interrelated. To be successful, you must develop each of them simultaneously, they cannot be treated as stages in the development. A discipline is "a body of technique, based on underlying theory or understanding of the world, that must be studied and mastered to put into practice" (Senge, et al 1994). As you become proficient in these disciplines you will find that you are able to surrender to a new way of thinking and working.

WORM OF THE DAY

"In reality we are the product of one great mass movement after another. We are in fact, almost totally interdependent, not 'independent'" (Logsdon, 1996).

Each of the five "disciplines provides a vital dimension. Each is necessary to the others if organizations are to learn" (Smith, 2001). Movement towards achieving these disciplines can be done in three ways:

Practices: what you do. ◆ Principles: guiding ideas and insights. ◆ Essences: high levels of mastery.

Activity Time!

Try "The Five Whys": A Systems Thinking Activity (Adapted from Senge, et al 1994)

Participants Learn:
- ✓ To hunt backwards for the root cause of pernicious, recurring problems.
- ✓ To recognize the difference between event-oriented explanation, and a systemic explanation.

The Object:
This is an intact team exercise that may be done by pairs or more where participants investigate the reason for recurring problems.

Materials:
Flip Chart Paper
Markers
Self-adhesive Notes

Here's How:
1. Group participants into intact teams who are working on a real problem.
2. Designate or have groups select a recorder.
3. The group should select a symptom of the organization that they would like to unravel.
4. Ask the first "why" of the group. "Why is such-and-such taking place?"
5. Encourage a variety of answers. (One "why" question may elicit several responses.)
6. Put all the responses on the wall with plenty of room around them.
7. Repeat the "why" process with each statement that was offered in response to the first.
8. Post the answer to each "parent" item.
9. Encourage the group to follow up all responses that seem likely.
10. The groups should see a convergence of the symptoms being traced to one or two systemic sources.

Tips for Success:
- ❖ Avoid fixation on the events.
- ❖ Steer away from blaming individuals for their actions.
- ❖ After each answer is recorded say, "Okay is that the only reason?"

Do not expect that you will reach mastery. Remember that practice makes perfect, repetition creates habit, and only until you adopt a habit can you be expected to be a master. Let's take a deeper look into the how you can put these disciplines to work for you and your organization.

"A learning organization promotes learning at three levels: the individual worker, the group or team and the organization itself. All three levels complement and invigorate one another, so none should be neglected when it comes to learning" (Marquardt, 2002). These levels mirror those of
Yanowitz, Ober & Kantor (1999), who found that there are three levels of structure that influence team learning and allow results to be produced; social structures, face-to-face structures and individual structures.
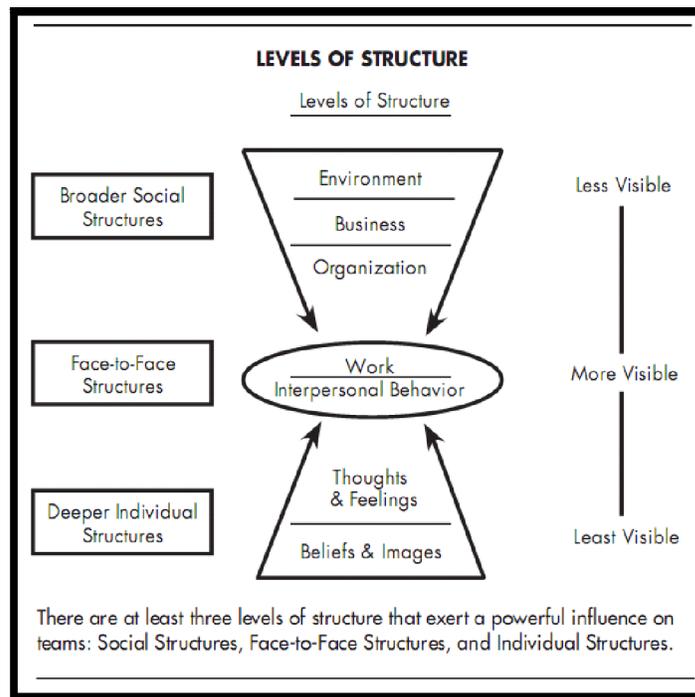
Adopted from Yanowitz, Ober & Kantor (1999)

Social structures consist of the business of the organization, the culture and norms and the business operations. Gaining insight and gathering information about the organization's environment is a powerful tool. To be successful learning organizations must be aware of how to maintain their interests.

Face-to face structures involve actual communication and are the most visible of the three structures. Here the team participates in activities that require personal interactions. Fostering interaction and team learning can be accomplished through in-house activities and team projects.

Individual structures involve personal "baggage." Each member will bring to the team her individual life experiences, beliefs and genetics. Members of learning organizations hold a position of double duty; their current job and learning how to improve at it. Self-improvement should be a daily goal.

"For team learning to be a viable discipline in an organization, it must be linked directly to results. In other words, it must enhance a team's ability to do its work, to make decisions, and to deal effectively with the business issues team members face every day" (Yanowitz, Ober & Kantor, 1999).

By now, you have realized that becoming a learning organization requires continuous effort on the part of all members. In a systems thinking approach, each member is integrally connected and dependent upon one another. It is imperative that you realize that this will require systemic change as opposed to individual correction. As the leader, you are the model to emulate.

"Leaders need to model the desired behaviors of the preferred culture, teach others how to enact such behaviors, and ensure that appropriate formal and informal practices required to embed such behaviors in daily work life are established (Levin & Gottlieb, 2009). Essentially, as the leader of a learning organization, your job does not end. You must do more, learn more and your organization will be more!
Being aware that your learning organization will begin and end with you, it is necessary that you look at accountability and the role it will play in the decisions you make. Chapter 5 will put this into perspective and help you understand how to set goals, assess progress and make corrections without placing blame.

Chapter 5: Proud as a Peacock: Where Responsibility & Accountability Meet

You are still committed and have realized that change does not come easy! However, knowing now that you are not expected to fly solo must be reassuring. Your organization is in full motion and you want nothing more than to begin to see positive results. But just who is responsible for the change that you yearn for? Now that you are in the process of a systems change the only answer is "everyone!" Being a member of a learning organization gives individuals authority to make decisions. Making decisions places the pressures of accountability on each person, in a variety of levels.

"Participation in making decisions automatically takes on real responsibility for what happens; in fact, the group can sometimes get the urge to back off and look around for someone or something to blame" (Mohr & Dichter, 2001). To prevent the urge to blame, decisions must be based on the collection of data and information that is substantial. Many confuse blame for accountability. In reality, blame simply allows for immediate satisfaction for the one issuing blame. For the individual that is being blamed, it causes a lack of trust and team effort.

As the leader of your learning organization it will be your responsibility to produce teams that are accountable for themselves so that effective communication can lead to continued learning.

"The group is moving into genuinely shared leadership and understands that what makes a community truly professional in a systemic approach to collective ather than individual accounting" (Morh & Dichter, 2001).

Bird Fight! Watching Feathers Fly!

Now that your teams have established their desire to make decisions and take responsibility for the work they must perform! Your organization is fully interdependent which should place added pressure on the teams to do their part for the success of the entire organization. What will happen when some pieces of the puzzle just do not fit properly? You will find that team members may group together and begin to target others if production does not meet the required expectancy. Teams may be inclined to justify their decisions based on the mistakes of others, ensuring that they highlight those errors in a purposeful way. The inclination to place blame is natural. By naming the offender, members of the organization feel as though they have solved the problem. This cannot be any further from the truth.

Anyone working towards building a learning organization recognizes that innovation and creativity are essential to the survival of the organization. In order to promote this, members must be encouraged to take risks and solve problems, without fear of ridicule from peers and leaders. One thing is certain, people will fail. Regardless of their knowledge and ability, this failure may be seen as the explanation to a problem.

 Just as the activity "The Five Whys" from chapter 5 suggests, it is important to get down to the grassroots of recurring problems when they arrive as opposed to looking at individuals to determine why things are not getting done efficiently and effectively. The process of moving towards accountability is yet another systemic change. It will take earnest effort to change the behaviors of your members.

THE BIRD FEED

"Where there is blame, there is no learning. Where there is blame, open minds close, inquiry tends to cease, and the desire to understand the whole system diminishes" (Paul, 1997).

According to Paul (1997), there are three levels; (1) the Individual (2) the Interpersonal and (3) the Group levels which will aid in the transition from blame to accountability. The use of these three levels, along with the implementation of the systems thinking discipline will help to create a culture willing to accept accountability.

Within the **Individual Level**, you and your teams will begin to break their mental models of how problems and mistakes are addressed. Paul (1997) offered six recommendations that individuals may use to divert the reaction to blame an individual for chronic issues.

1. Remember that others are acting upon their individual perspectives.
2. Realize that you have a role in the situation.
3. Remember that judgment and criticism make it difficult to see clearly.
4. Use a systems thinking perspective to explore the pressures on the players involved.
5. Be willing to be held accountable.
6. Work constructively with your anger.

Rather than rushing to find out who made the mistake, individuals may look to the systems and structures in place that may be contributing to the errors. Instead of asking who created the error, ask what happened. This allows all members to see the problem for what it is. Investigate what needs to be changed to yield the desired results rather than punish. These simple changes will promote openness to learn from mistakes instead of covering them up.

The **Interpersonal Level** endorses protocol to deal with whom, when and how, others will be held accountable. Paul (1997) has determined that initial contracting and accountability conversations will minimize problems in the long run. Initial Contracting is just as the title implies, members must establish agreements that determine tasks, methods for completing work, expectations and outcomes. This contract should include what team members will do to handle lapses in the agreement.

Accountability conversations are necessary once work is underway. It is a series of checkpoints to ensure that the team is on the right course and that agreements are continuously clarified. Here are steps that you can take to facilitate these conversations.

1. You should provide a place that is conducive to learning. Take into consideration the location, time, and confidentiality.
2. When a problem arises, gather those interested in the problem to begin the conversation. Having a variety of perspectives will prove to be helpful even if members are not directly involved in the problem.
3. Clarify the purpose of the meeting. Remind others that blaming is not an option to solving the problem.
4. Provide real data that supports the problem at hand and analyze it from a systems perspective.
5. Identify new ways to conquer to problem.

At the **Group Level**, members must recognize that accountability and trust are affected by the way people talk about one another. Inappropriate discussions can lead to conflict. Thus, Paul (1997) offered five recommendations to resolve conflict directly.

1. Get coaching on how to raise your concerns. (Utilize a third party).
2. Bring your concern directly to the other person.
   a. Identify the data for concern
   b. Discuss the assumptions made and feeling about the situation
   c. Present your requests for change

3. Discuss the outcome with the coach
4. Refrain from making negative comments
5. Do not listen to third party complaints unless they are willing to follow protocol.

THE BIRD FEED

 "A boss creates fear, a leader confidence. A boss fixes blame, a leader corrects mistakes. A boss knows all, a leader asks questions. A boss makes work drudgery, a leader makes it interesting."
-Russell H. Ewing

Strengthen Your Wings

With teams moving away from blame and towards accountability it is important to have them willingly accept the responsibility of accountability. Many times members of the organization are open to making decisions but are not as responsive to being held accountable for them. Empowering teams is the way to make this happen; team members do not allow each other to fail. To become empowered, Brower (1995), stated that teams require the four A's: Authority, Accountability, Alignment and Ableness, to be successful.

Authority
Authority to make decisions is the first step to empowerment. The authority granted to teams must be given cautiously. Teams should not be given all authority at the beginning of this change. Rather, "plan with teams the phasing of increasing authority, with some decisions delegated immediately, the scope of others increasing over time, and others perhaps never turned over completely to teams (Brower, 1995).
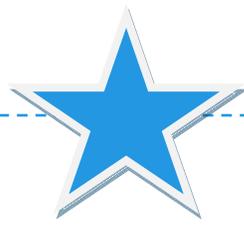
Accountability
Authority leads to accountability. If teams are not willing or able to handle accountability then they will not be able to have released authority. To connect teams with accountability, they should be made responsible for the aspects where there decisions of authority lay. This form of accountability offers the possibility of improving the entire organization.

Alignment
If empowerment yields authority and authority yields accountability, surely you are asking, "how does a team become empowered?" Empowerment requires team alignment of direction internally, horizontally and vertically. If within a team, members are being driven by independent goals, their efforts will eventually be futile. As a leader, you can help your teams become internally aligned through discussion and opportunities to communicate with other aligned teams. Horizontal alignments stem from the discussions with other teams, customers, and charting work progress. Vertical alignment refers to the team's ability to align with the priorities of the organization. Teams are expected to not only know the vision and mission of the organization but also embrace it as their own.
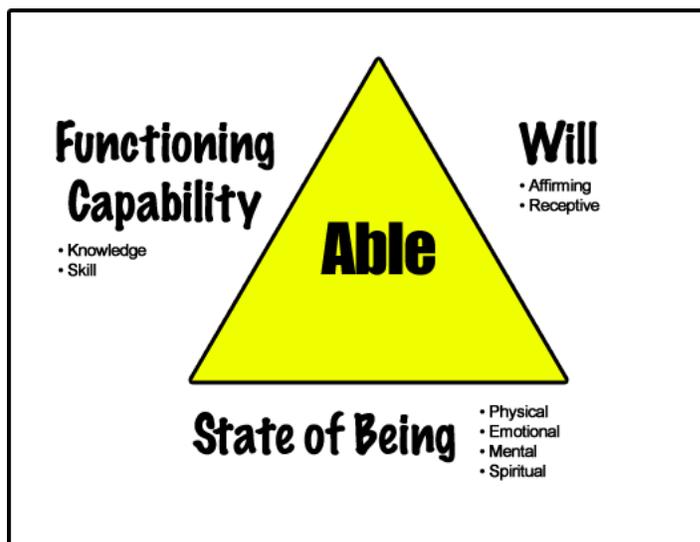
Activity Time!

Try "The Pentad of Operational Processes' (adapted from Brower, 1995)

Participants Learn:
- ✓ To take accountability for self management
- ✓ To understand and organize accountability processes

The Object:
This is a single team activity that is working towards empowerment. The team will use the five-pointed star to determine accountability.

Materials:
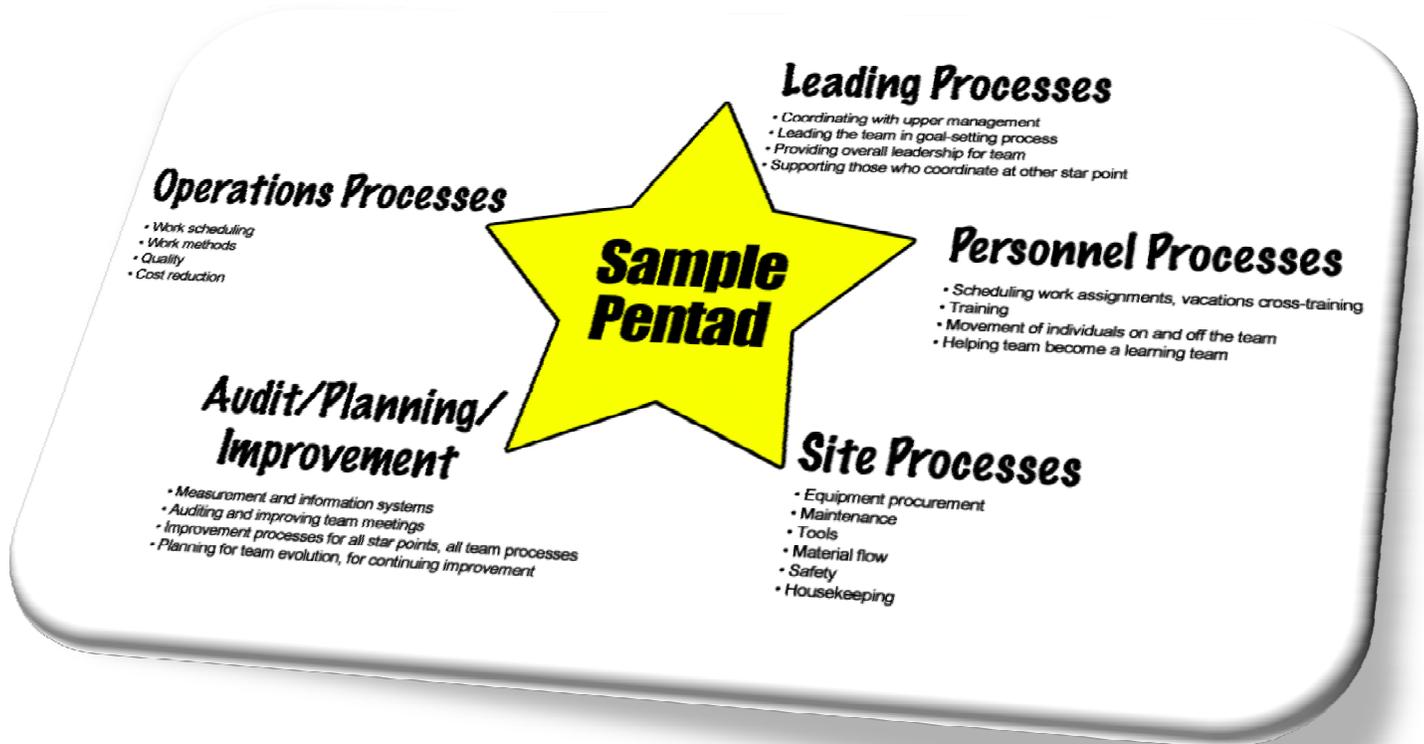Large chart paper
Markers

Here's How:
1. Select a single team who is working towards empowerment and accountability
2. Provide the materials
3. Each team must draw a five-pointed star in the center of the paper. Leave room around the edges to write
4. Put generic headings on each point. Under each heading, teams must list the recurring processes that they depend on to perform and improve their work
5. Ask team members whom they feel manages these processes and who they think will take responsibility in future process
6. Through discussion, help the team come to the conclusion that they (the team) should be accountable for these processes as they pertain to their team
7. Have the team group five to ten processes that they are willing to take accountability for
8. The team will decide who will take accountability for the selected processes and for how long.
9. Help newly designated coordinators understand their new roles

Tips For Success:
- ❖ Recommend that roles be rotated every 6 to 12 months. This will allow members to learn about the role without "owning" it exclusive to other team members.
- ❖ Define roles through dialogue with the teams.
- ❖ Schedule regular meetings to discuss progress and room for improvement.

Ableness is the fourth requirement of empowerment. As the illustration below suggests ableness encompasses capability, will and state of being.

Functioning capability is easily defined as the knowledge that one has gained be it by schooling, life and work experiences or otherwise. This is an essential component of ableness. Equally important to capability is a member's state of being. You may have all the knowledge needed to perform a duty but if the state of being is not positive, the outcome could still result in error. One's state of being dictates how he will handle situations. This may be affected by fear, fatigue, health, diet and more. Will is based on individual choice. We choose to accept the vision and mission of the organization. Receptive will allows us to choose to be open-minded, good listeners and understanding of others needs.

Leading Processes
- Coordinating with upper management
- Leading the team in goal-setting process
- Providing overall leadership for team
- Supporting those who coordinate at other star point

Operations Processes
- Work scheduling
- Work methods
- Quality
- Cost reduction

Sample Pentad

Personnel Processes
- Scheduling work assignments, vacations cross-training
- Training
- Movement of individuals on and off the team
- Helping team become a learning team

Audit/Planning/Improvement
- Measurement and information systems
- Auditing and improving team meetings
- Improvement processes for all star points, all team processes
- Planning for team evolution, for continuing improvement

Site Processes
- Equipment procurement
- Maintenance
- Tools
- Material flow
- Safety
- Housekeeping

Counting Your Eggs

Now that your teams are willing and able to be accountable for their actions, as a leader you must determine their measurement of success. As with all great things, the positive return to your change efforts will happen in good time. You and your teams will be eager to see the evidence that your efforts have paid off. It may take years before your organization improves productivity. It is imperative that you be steadfast and continue regardless of the results in the beginning of this transformation. Often times, you will yield negative results as things become unsteady.

To encourage the members of your organization and assure them that their efforts are not in vain, Kotter (1996) insisted that short-term wins are recognized. It is easy to mistake a minor success as a short-term win. The three characteristics of a short-term win as delineated by Kotter (1996) are: (1) the results are real and can be seen by many, (2) it is unambiguous and (3) the win is related to the change effort.

These small successes are essential to continued buy-in of the change efforts. No one wants to feel as though his or her efforts have gone unnoticed or are being conducted in a futile attempt to make progress. Recognizing the work of others allows them to maintain momentum and be driven to continue the efforts to change.

Senge & Kauefer (2000) offered strategies for meeting the challenge of assessment and measurement that include:
- Appreciate the time delays that are involved in profound change
- Build partnership with executive leaders around assessing progress, as well as assessing the assessment process
- Become proactive around assessment: make assessing progress a priority among advocates of change
- Learn to distinguish the needs of those participating in a change effort.

 It is important to continue seeking success without adding too much pressure of short-term wins. While this pressure can prove to be good, placing extra demands during a time of change can lead to intense stress and exhaustion. Remember to take care in the importance you place of the continuance of small successes. The

lack of continued successes may discourage members and cause them to return to their old ways of business. Plan how and when you expect these short-term wins to reach your ultimate goals.

"People just don't hope and pray for performance improvements. They plan for short-term wins, organize accordingly, and implement the plan to make things happen" (Kotter, 1996).

Now that you understand the importance of accountability in your organization, you are almost ready to spread your wings and fly. Continuing the success of transforming your learning organization is only a few pages away.

Chapter 6: Taking Flight

Are you ready to fly yet? You should be!

Your journey into learning organizations has taken you from developing a vision and a mission to analyzing and implementing an organizational structure that works for your group and promotes the concepts of a learning organization. From there, you moved through the conflict phase (Mohr & Dichter, 2001) of growing a learning organization. During this phase, the real work began in the building of your learning organization. Your staff developed a "pecking order", which you survived, negotiated and understood as a necessary part of the organizational growth process.

After the conflict phase, you began to understand the importance of communication, which involved trust, commitment and perceived organizational support. You realized the importance of leading by example, learning from your mistakes and taking risks which paved the road to continuous learning for your organization. Following the conflict stage, you entered the confusion stage (Mohr & Dichter, 2001). You began to solidify your leadership style and the members of your organization began to learn from one another. You understood the power of systems thinking and its critical place within a learning organization (Senge, 2006).

Now your organizational members have begun to take responsibility for themselves and their activities and you have entered the scary stage (Mohr & Dichter, 2001). Now your staff begins to see themselves as a learning community and not just as a decision-making body and they begin to understand the need to share and to learn together. So where do you go from here? Are you ready to fly?

Kotter (1996) has a few *commandment*s for organizations that have taken flight. These commandments, or suggestions, should be understood within the context of the learning organization. They include:

- Developing an increased sense of urgency, as this will help your organization change more easily and adapt better to rapidly changing business environments
- Encouraging teamwork at all levels of the organization, especially at the top, because in a rapidly changing world responsibilities can be shared which will help to keep your organization healthy
- Becoming an "incubator of leadership" within your learning organization. This will help you have members that can take over at a moment's notice.
- Promoting an adaptive corporate culture that can respond to changes in demand, customer base and environmental change.

So you are ready to take flight! We have armed you with the tools, now it's up to you. But there's one more activity you need to do. It's very simple. Just look into a mirror and ask yourself three questions:
- Am I a lifelong learner?
- Why do I need to become one?
- Why is it important for my learning organization and I to embrace lifelong learning?

We will help you with the answer, as you will need to remember this as you take flight.

"Lifelong learners actively solicit opinions and ideas from others. They don't make the assumption that they know it all or that most other people have little to contribute. Just the opposite, they believe that with the right approach, they can learn from anyone under almost any circumstance.

Much more than the average person, lifelong learners also listen carefully, and they do so with an open mind. They don't assume that listening will produce big ideas or important information very often. Quite the contrary. But they know that careful listening will help give them accurate feedback on the effect of their actions. And without honest feedback, learning becomes almost impossible" (Kotter, 1996).

So, go for it. Fly away! As long as you remember this, you and your organization will never face extinction, like our friend the dodo!

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