BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEWS

Building an Innovative Learning Organization: a Framework to Build a Smarter Workforce, Adapt to Change, and Drive Growth
by Russell Sarder
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With the rapidly changing and fierce competitive business environment, how an organization can effectively thrive? Russell Sarder (2016) authors this book to share the framework that has helped both his organization and himself succeed. His book is about why learning organizations have the advantage in the current rapidly globalizing, highly technological world.

This book has altogether nine chapters. Chapter 1 states the rationale why it is important to become a learning organization. In this chapter, Sarder discusses what are the key changes that affect success, the learning advantage and the framework for building a learning organization. Chapter 2 describes and discusses about how to build a learning culture. It talks about the need to recognize the importance of learning culture and how to build such learning culture with the right leader, people, behaviors and resources. For example, to enable the right behaviors, organizations need to create a safe environment that supports learning behaviors – an environment in which employees at all levels feel safe speaking out and taking the initiative, in which they know that their ideas and suggestions, even their criticism, are valued and will be taken seriously and in which mistakes are seen as an integral part of learning to do a better job. It describes what it takes to build a culture that attracts the best employees and helps the organization to continually improve. Chapter 3 discusses how to develop a learning plan. It identifies the components of a learning plan and that a team is needed in the activities. Chapter 4 highlights the importance of learning goals setting at all levels in the organization and prioritization of goals based on the organization's values, mission and strategic goals and questions to ask when setting learning goals. Chapter 5 describes the key components of the competency model. It describes and discusses the four types of competency models needed for the learning organization. These are in terms of four broad categories: core, functional, job and leadership. The chapter identifies the competencies for both present and future needs of the organization. It describes and discusses how to develop and use a competency model, as well as some examples. Chapter 6 provides some guidelines on how to select the right learning methods, both formal and informal learning. The book suggests five primary learning methods and asks about what would be the best learning methods. Chapter 7 discusses how to assess the results of the organization's learning plan. It suggests some key assessment questions for practical use, as well as suggests some assessment methods. Chapter 8 describes the components of the effective learning operation. It discusses the role of the Chief Learning Organization and the

role of the learning management service, as well as how to select the right learning technologies. Finally, Chapter 9 prescribes the action orientation for those in the organization to become activist in the service of learning and education.

This book provides an easy read. It can be used as a supplementary textbook in any courses related to HRM and specifically Learning Organization. Although the book seems to focus more on large organizations where there is a clear organization structure, it is also possible for small- and medium-sized enterprises to develop themselves as a learning organization for growth.

The past literature tended to focus mainly on what organizations do, but it failed to address how and what organizations should do (Liu, 2018). This book provides a logical presentation of the learning organization concept that is generalized enough for organizations of any types which are playing in the agile environment. The conceptual framework can also be tested and further improved. It highlights the importance of developing a learning organization through first developing a learning culture and then acquires and develops the right people including leadership for the organization. This book gives a detail process of how to develop a framework of learning competencies and learning plan; how to implement it and how to eventually assess the outcomes of the learning plan.

While reading, it is clear that if an organization does not have customer orientation, the learning culture and becoming a learning organization may be very difficult. Further, in terms of the conceptual framework, it is noted that some concerned factors have not been included such as the role of social capital and the absorptive capacity of learning agents (employees) in the organizations. Furthermore, it has been found that the role of social media and the concept of customer co-creation have become factors that expedite organizational learning capability for new product innovation in today's digital environment (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). Thus, there is some room for further improvement in the conceptual model that would be used as a guide for any organization's journey toward becoming a learning organization.

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References

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