
Preface

I have been researching and working with organizational learning for almost 15 years. Time and again I am struck by just how challenging this is. Viewed from a logical perspective, it seems so simple: if there are some people who need a particular type of knowledge and others who have that knowledge, then it should not be difficult to find a way to share it. We can talk to each other face to face, we can store knowledge in a database so that people can access it at any time, we can talk to each other via an electronic discussion forum or ask someone who possesses a specific skill to record a video which other people can then watch and learn from. Today, we have many opportunities to learn from each other—and yet it is still sometimes so difficult. Why is this?

My point of departure has always been that people are people. Perhaps we do not want to share our knowledge. Doing so may mean losing power and influence. As the well-known saying goes: “Knowledge is power.” Perhaps we are afraid to reveal what we know. In other people’s eyes, my knowledge may not be at all special or unique and if this comes out I run the risk of being ridiculed and losing status. Perhaps we have difficulty in expressing ourselves when what we know seems so obvious. Or perhaps we do not enjoy being fed other people’s skills and advice. It is more fun to be recognized for your own knowledge. Nor should we forget the time factor. In today’s society, time is scarce and this naturally has consequences for learning—learning often takes time.

In 1999, I was offered a doctoral position in the Department of Computer and Systems Sciences at Stockholm University. This gave me the opportunity to start investigating the mystery of learning on a serious basis. My journey led me to the realization that a large part of the problem with regard to learning is essentially that people do not understand the human learning process from a psychological perspective. Regardless of the type of organizational solution we want to implement, we must understand how we function *cognitively* (that is to say, intellectually), our *limitations*, and what *motivates* us to both learn from others and share our own best practices. In my thesis, I developed a structured method which reflects the individual’s natural way of thinking and reflecting in relation to the learning process. The method is based both on theories in the field of organizational learning and also on principles and techniques from the field of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT is based on the assumption that our thoughts, emotions, and behavior

are closely integrated and connected. When this is woven into the learning process, the individual's potential willingness and ability to take part in the learning process increase.

The main purpose of this book is to present eight steps, the eight-step model, which will lead to sustainable organizational learning. The method is general in its nature and builds both on the above-mentioned theories and also on practical experience. I use the global project development and construction company Skanska to illustrate the process. During the years 2009–2012, I had the opportunity, in my role as Global Knowledge Sharing Manager, to work in close collaboration with the Skanska Senior Executive Team to develop and implement a strategy for increased global learning. The eight steps are supported by the experience of myself and others from this work and are illustrated through specific examples, extracts from different types of documents, images used in this work, and citations from people who participate and move in the field of the learning process.

The method has had a positive outcome for Skanska. It has resulted in a better collaboration in relation to Skanska's clients and led to new business. It has had a positive impact on both quality and time with regard to project development and construction operations. The people who actively take part in the learning process confirm that their role is exciting, positive, and rewarding. And in terms of the economic aspects, the cost in relation to the positive outcome has been virtually negligible.

This book has been written both for students who are studying learning in relation to organizations and for organizations who wish to improve their learning and knowledge sharing—in particular, organizations which experience the difficulty of people being unable to find the type of knowledge they are seeking or where it is difficult to transfer knowledge easily from one place to another. The book's eight steps can also be read from a pure change process perspective. My ambition has been to express myself as factually and informatively as possible. I hope I have succeeded in this and that you, the reader, will benefit from reading on.

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How to Tackle Search and Transfer Barriers

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