



INNOVATION BEST PRACTICES

Lessons Learned in the Innovation Expedition in its Global Search for Best Practices Aimed at Building High Performing Organizations by Unleashing Innovation

- All organizations are facing a host of new realities (social and cultural; technological; economic; ecological; and political) which must be dealt with in some integrated, holistic manner.
- We are living through a period of fundamental and discontinuous change in which a focus purely on improving internal efficiency will not be sufficient. In periods of fundamental change it is the innovators who survive and thrive.
- In responding to this challenge of a fast-changing, global, knowledge-based economy, social innovations are lagging behind hard technological innovations.
- The restructuring of organizations to become high performers in a knowledge economy is a key social innovation (organizational design and leadership).
- The nurturing of a collaborative culture (with cooperation among the for-profit and the not-for-profit sectors and among management, labour and government) increasingly is being seen as an important factor for success in the new economy.
- Competitiveness in this new economy is not so dependent on cheap labour, cheap power and technology. Increasingly, it depends on a well-trained work force, an ability to learn from others and an entrepreneurial leadership team.
- Thus, the organizing metaphor for many organizations has become the Learning Organization—an organization that has the capacity to continually reinvent itself. In an age where knowledge is a key asset, the organization which learns widely, learns quickly and learns how to integrate that learning into its operations has a key advantage.
- In the old economy rigidity (certainty) was the standard of excellence. People then were seen as potential problems which threatened the efficiency of a rigidly uniform assembly line system. In today's uncertain and fast-changing knowledge economy, flexibility and nimbleness are the standards of excellence and people are seen increasingly as the organization's most important asset.
- The standard of excellence for organizational structures has moved from vertically integrated organizations, with long range plans, hierarchical structures and command and control management systems to flexible, nimble, market-driven organizations which concentrate on their core competencies and build strategic alliances with other organizations that have complementary competencies.

- The concept of "virtual products" and "virtual organizations" is emerging (both within and between organizations). In this concept teams are formed to understand specific tasks and then may be dissolved until another new challenge is identified. The concept of "virtual product" and "virtual organization" is being driven by clients' and customers' demands for instantaneous, customized, high quality, low cost products and services.
- Organizations are utilizing various strategies and structures in responding to the new challenges. However, a common characteristic of most successful organizations is their ability to push authority and responsibility down to lower levels in the organization. Thus, the hierarchical command and control organization is shifting often to a flatter, horizontal organization.
- In this knowledge economy the Human Resource Development department (which has often been seen as a peripheral support group supplying personnel services) has become a part of the core business. HRD departments are being confronted with huge new challenges to provide added value in this new role.
- All organizations are being pressed to reshape their social architecture by rethinking and reshaping strategies, structures, support systems, skills and shared values. In skills development, leaders need help in improving not only their "doing skills" (based on problem solving and implementation skills) but also their skills of "knowing" (based on integrating new information) and their skills of "being" (based on the strength of sets of personal attributes).
- This age can also be represented as the Age of Paradox in which operating strategies for most organizations have become not only increasingly complex but also paradoxical. The ability to function effectively while holding onto and balancing paradoxical strategies is a key new competency required of leaders.
- Most individuals in organizations are being forced to reconcile what appear to be irreconcilable opposites. In operating they have to show both the characteristics of a merchant (concerned with the bottom line) and a visionary (concerned with new lifestyles and new products for the future). In a similar way they are being pressed to exhibit ethical standards in working collaboratively with others while at the same time they need to have the courage to push ahead competitively with their individual ideas and incentives as their focus.
- Organizations, in a similar way, have to hold and reconcile these paradoxical positions. Thus, while developing into a Learning Organization the institution, at the same time, has to focus on becoming entrepreneurial and high performing.
- If the key common element in the workplace becomes learning then perhaps the key management tool becomes the nurturing of high level conversation or dialogue to support accelerated learning and its application.
- Organizations have to become more efficient and effective in ensuring that the money they spend on individual training also leads to some form of organizational learning. The goal is to have a Learning Community as well as a Community of Individual Learners.

- In a Learning Organization, then, the building of collective intelligence or collective knowledge becomes critical. This means the creation of customized knowledge management systems has taken on a new importance.
- Tribal organizations, in which oral communication is a paramount, depend on the storytellers to gather, synthesize and communicate the collective intelligence of the tribe to assist in the solving of new problems. Organizations are being pressed by the new realities to identify their storytellers and their methodology for collecting, synthesizing, storing and sharing the collective intelligence of the organizations.