

Embedding Team Learning

Provocation to make Learning Stick in Teams

Peter Mayes



PETER MAYES

EMBEDDING TEAM LEARNING

PROVOCATION TO MAKE
LEARNING STICK IN TEAMS

Embedding Team Learning: Provocation to make Learning Stick in Teams

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Working with leaders and managers over the last 30 years where change was imperative to survive and thrive I developed a range of embedding team learning that have ensured success. Having a varied career in organisational development and as an Executive Coach I have implemented many successful team development strategies. My qualifications are in Strategic Human Resource Development (M.Sc.), industrial management, coaching and leadership.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

My aim in creating this book was to explore the many forms of learning, and associated issues that teams encounter in organisations, what helps them to learn, and what gets in their way. To give the reader more choice and as a trigger for acting with more flexibility when helping the team to learn.

Some of it will go against, perceived wisdom. This is deliberate and will help us look outside our own experience and see what else is out there that might be useful. I have drawn upon the creative and artistic worlds to produce a set of thinking prompts that help us look for something different and new.

I have also used a lot of my own experience – gained from thirty years as a trainer, facilitator, coach and mentor – to share what I believe works, as well as reaching out to the worlds of neuroscience and psychology to better understand what is happening in our heads and what is changing in the social world of teams at work.

The approach I have taken starts with some definitions of teams' learning and embedding and how, by looking outside the norm, more learning can be gained and made to stick. Wherever possible, I have avoided specialist jargon.

The first part of the book looks at what influences a teams learning or lack of learning in organisations.

The second part of the book looks at how to improve teams, collaboration and learning abilities.

I have used a summary device at the end of each chapter called "Thinking Points". The aim is to start with the *thinking* which will ultimately change our *feelings* and subsequent *action* taken to make teams' learning stick.

PREFACE

Competition between businesses is even keener than ever before, the rate of change is rapid and constant and people's brains are changing as we interact more and more with technology.

So:

- Why do mistakes happen again and again?
- Why do teams fail to get along?
- Why is learning marginalized?
- What gets in our way when we are in a team whose shared aim is to succeed?
- Are we really the best learner we can be?
- With scarce resources why do organisations waste what they have?

Learning, and ensuring this a way of life for teams, is a critical tool for survival and growth, unfortunately, it has been my experience that this concept is often underused or sidelined.

Having a clear understanding of the barriers and bridges, benefits and key factors in embedding learning in teams provides a way forward organisational, team and personal success. Using the appropriate learning approach for the situation and the stage of the person's development is often ignored and crammed into a 'one size fits all' approach.

Teams that learn to share and stick together really do make a difference to an organisation. Sometimes it's worth taking a radical approach to get a step change in behaviour and team development.

PART ONE

Key themes: generations, embedding, learning, teams, creativity and culture.

My thoughts

Teams do not exist in a vacuum they are an integral part of organisational life they exist to carry out the aims and desires of the organisation as a whole but they also exist as something that can achieve amazing results and transform the organisation from within.

Organisations are fluid and constantly adapting in a world that is even more fluid and transforming so the leader of a team's job no matter where she or he lies in the organisational structure is to ensure the team you have can fulfill its potential as a team and for the individuals.

Part one of this book looks into

1. What is embedding team learning?
2. Harnessing the wealth of creativity?
3. What is culture anyway?

1 WHAT IS EMBEDDING TEAM LEARNING?

When I first encountered this term, I must admit that I was slightly bemused. It sounded like another management school buzz phase and a candidate for buzz word bingo which I'm sure you've all played in a management or strategy meeting when reality has already flown out the window.

Going back to the dictionary for a moment:

Embedding: *The mapping of one set against another (from mathematics), to fix into a surrounding area, to envelop or enclose, to incorporate or contain as an essential part or characteristic (The practice of assigning a journalist to a military unit).*

Team: *A number of persons associated in some joint action; together everyone achieves more – or do they?*

Learning: *Knowledge acquired through systematic study, the modification of behaviour through practice, training or experience.*

1.1 WHAT IS CHANGING IN TEAM LEARNING?

Over the last twenty years team learning has gone through a series of evolutions brought about by the increasing technological advances and the changes that have taken place socially and in the workplace. The pace and extent of working life has changed radically over this time and now, with the advances in neuroscience, our understanding of what motivates people's behaviour and thinking has been brought up to date. So, what is happening to teams today?

The table below highlights some of the factors involved in what's happening:

Up until now	Changing into
Hierarchy leader, manager	Everyone leads
Stable, not changing, predictable	Fluid
Face-to-Face	Virtual

Up until now	Changing into
Permanent	Temporary
Single discipline	Multi-disciplinary
Office, single location	Field-based, multi-locations
Single culture	Multi-cultural
Operational focus	Strategic focus
Unpredictable tasks	Routine tasks
Large	Small
One size fits all	Blended, learner-centred
Market led	Customer led

Table 1

So just about everything is changing. As technology opens up even more possibilities, many of which we cannot anticipate at this time, we truly are in a Volatile Uncertain Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) world. The term was first used in 1987, to describe the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of general conditions and situations; drawing on the leadership theories of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus.

1.2 ARE LEARNERS ALL THE SAME?

Let's take a step back from teams for a moment and look at what affects us as learners. Our own attitude and motivation to learning is formed at a fairly early age. We can all remember the subjects we hated and loved at school, those that filled us with joy and those that filled us with dread. Was it the subject, the teacher, the method, the time of day or our success or failure at the subject? Some say it's impossible to distinguish between each factor. Often learning is seen as an academic activity which might be a hangover from our school days or just some misunderstanding of what learning is. Surely, we all know what it is. Or do we?

Just to confirm what we already know about learning, here are some common descriptions used to describe learning:

- The acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught.
- Study, studying, education, schooling, tuition, teaching, academic, training, work, instruction, research, investigation.

All these descriptions are true and that's the problem. We often see learning as a separate activity which can become remote or distant from the reality of work / life. If that happens, is that really learning? Some really fundamental learning can take place as you start to question why is *this* like *that* and what would it be like if it was different? We should use all the ways in which we learn. For learning to be effective it needs to be active, meaningful and timely. A lot of learning comes to us in an informal way by having a buddy who shared his or her localised wisdom, a thought that comes to us when we are day dreaming or when we are looking for the answer to something else entirely.

Learners come with their own built-in cultural references, baggage, life experience, aims and motivations which often form the basis of much of the conflict that exists within teams. If only everyone was the same, or like me. This can sometimes be expressed as “how we see the world”, our unique perspective on the world formed by our life and how we learn, filtered by our experience, personality and drives creating our perception leading to our view (the truth).

See figure 1 below

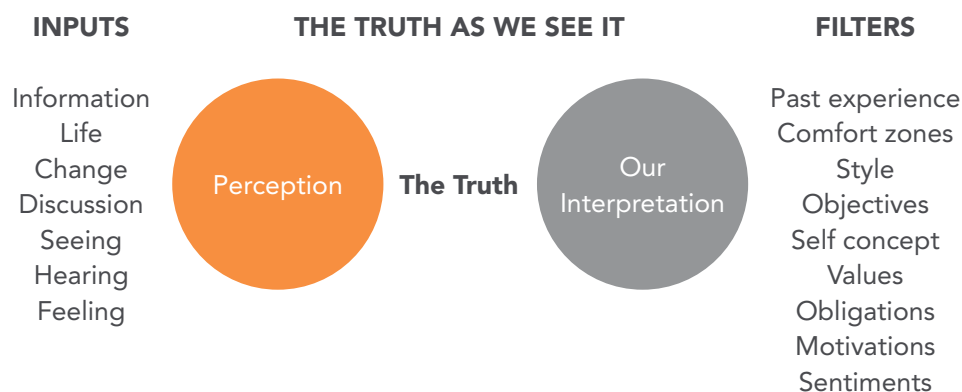


Figure 1

Increasingly, age differences are being pinpointed as problems within organisations and in the world of politics. This is often seen as a prime reason for division where one group is set against another because *some* have and *others* have not.

As a general indicator age groups have been divided into six categories: **Figure 2 below**

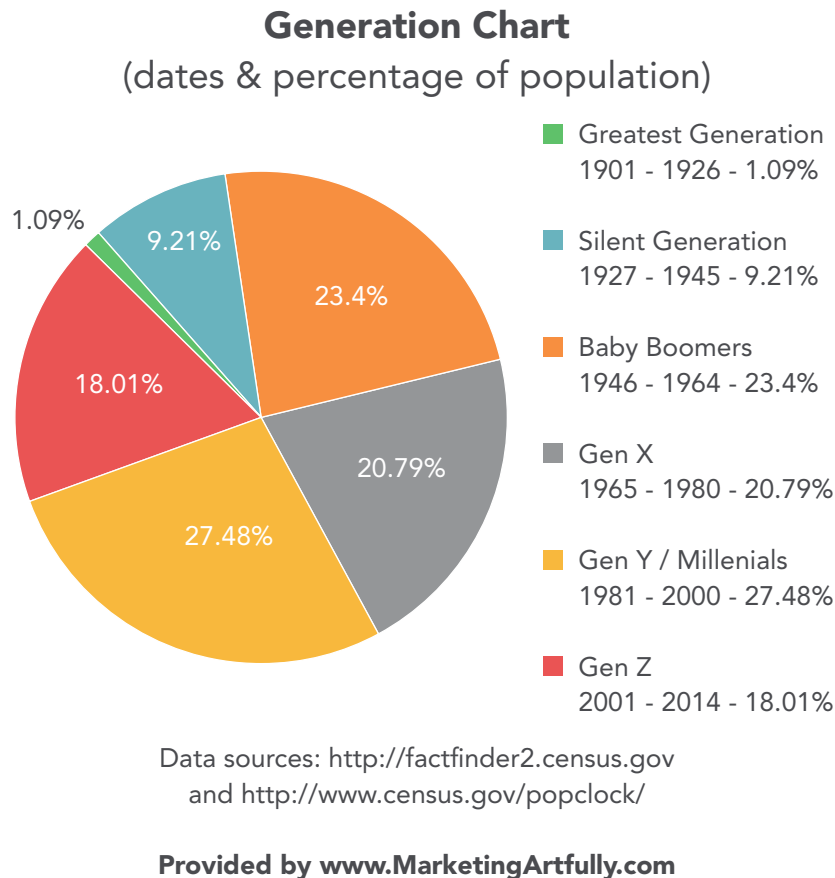


Figure 2

According to MarketingArtfully.com the generation split in the US is as follows:

1. The Greatest Generation Born between 1901-1926 Age 91+ (in 2017) 1%
2. The Silent Generation Born between 1927 and 1945 Age 72-90 (in 2017) 9%
3. The Baby Boomers: Born between 1946 and 1964 Age 53-71 (in 2017) 24%
4. Gen X (Xennial): Born between 1965 and 1980 Age 37-52 (in 2017) 21%
5. Gen Y (Millennials): Born between 1981 and 2000 Age 17-36 (in 2017) 27%
6. Gen Z: Born between 2001 and 2017 age 1-16 (in 2017) 18%

Comparative figures for the UK are: (Converted from the last census figures)

1. The Greatest Generation 0.9%
2. The Silent Generation 11%
3. The Baby Boomers 17%
4. Gen X 25%
5. Gen Y 28%
6. Gen Z 18%

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demography_of_the_United_Kingdom#Age_structure1

Those categories highlighted in blue represent the current working population based on the USA / UK populations and may not be true for other countries where these subdivisions are not used. Interestingly, these terms have been universally adopted in the UK, Europe and the USA but are not so common worldwide. 1 Given that the work population age range is widening (the UK has increased its retirement age to sixty-seven) what are we to do with competing age ranges in technological awareness, thinking styles and individual motivations?

At work each generation has different needs and has a tendency to learn differently too as shown in table 2 below.

MILLENNIALS Early career aspirations	GENERATION X Mid career issues	BABY BOOMERS late career legacies
Seek recognition Socially conscious Want exposure Seek recognition To fit in To get on	Time pressurised Like recognition Need inclusion Want to learn new things To progress Being a go-to person	Are more giving Like to share knowledge Have an identity Want to leave a legacy Want to be remembered well Want to be valued

Table 2

If you combine this with how people receive and process information, then the variety of learning preferences create a whole series of dilemmas for learning designers.

1.3 SO HOW CAN TEAMS WORK TOGETHER?

To start our exploration let's look at an extract from Wikipedia explaining the basis of how teams learn together:

“Teamwork is the process of working collectively to achieve a common objective in a group. In the learning organisation, context, team members tend to share knowledge and complement each other’s skills. If there is no commitment and effort from team members, then working and learning from team work may fail. Diversity increases the potency of team learning, but requires strong team identification.

Scouller (2011) 2 defined the purpose of a leader (including a team leader) as follows: „The purpose of a leader is to make sure there is leadership ... to ensure that all four dimensions of leadership are [being addressed].“ The four dimensions being: (1) a shared, motivating team purpose or vision or goal (2) action, progress and results (3) collective unity or team spirit (4) attention to individuals.

The team membership may not directly report or answer to the team leader. A good team leader listens constructively to the membership and to the customer(s) of the results that the team is charged with delivering.

In addition factors such as team size, maturity, location proximity and overall culture have a huge impact on how teams learn and how learning is retained. **Figure 2**

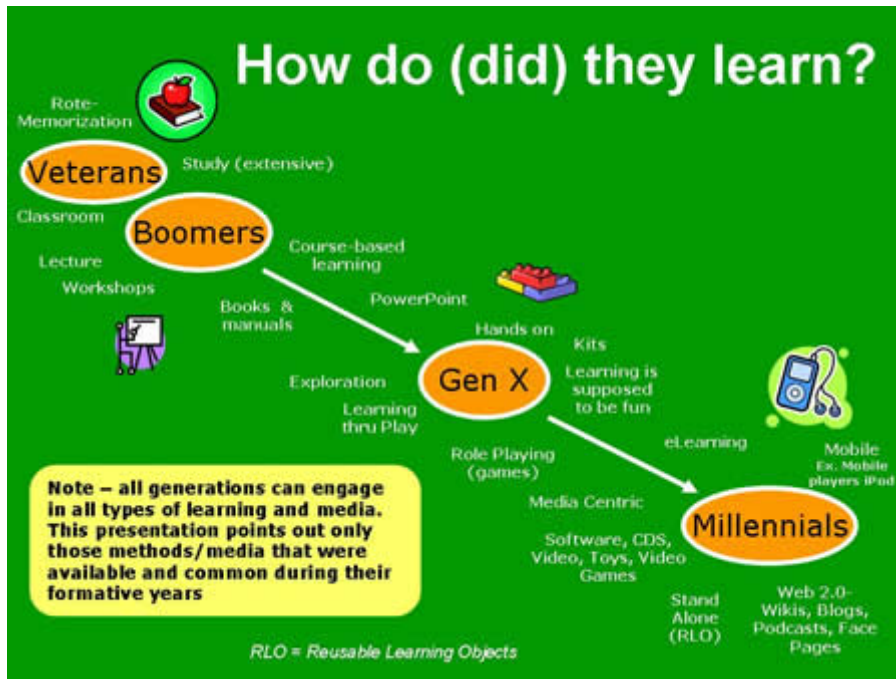


Figure 2



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As shown in the illustration learning needs to be accessible to all types not just one. However the true aim should be to increase everyone’s capacity to learn.

1.4 EVERYONE HAS A LEARNING ROLE

We all take on different roles in the job itself, with the people we work with and the other teams we interact with. We gather information and experiences along the way, therefore most learning is informal. So, what is it that stimulates us to learn? The mind map below illustrates the extent of our capacity to learn.

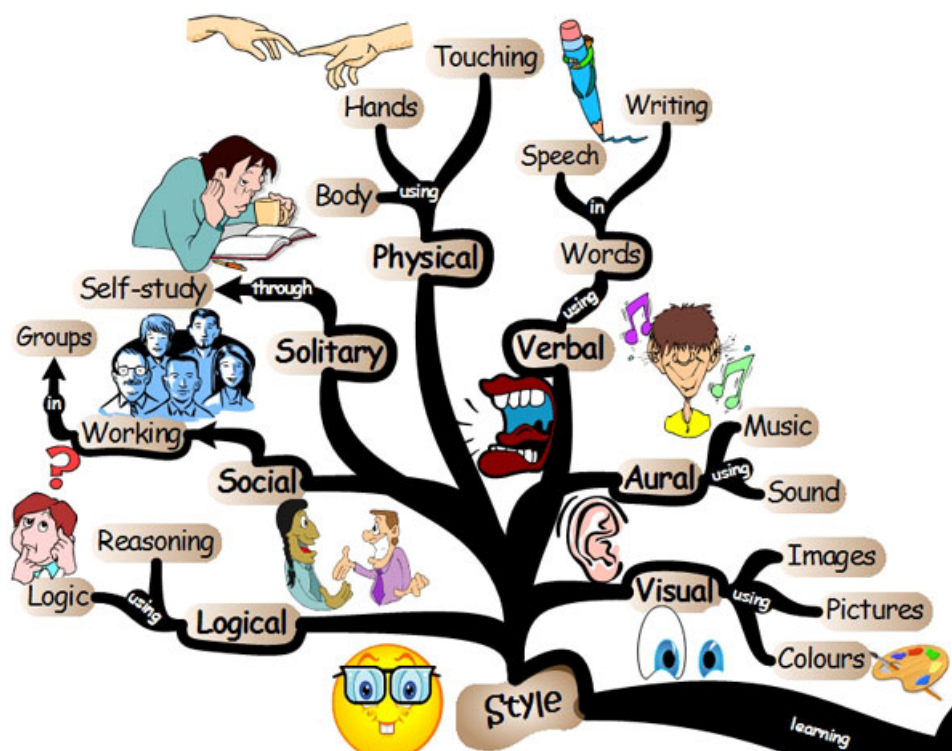


Figure 3

Making connections to what stimulates the individual to learn is a key factor in embedding team learning. Individual motivations and interests need to be harnessed to have learners / team members that are engaged and alert. Many details of how to engage employees are included in my previous book “Employee Engagement: not just another survey.” <https://bookboon.com/en/employee-engagement-ebook> 3 Individual team members motivation should also be recognized as a key factor in learning and making it stick. One of the crucial jobs of leaders of teams is to balance these needs together with the needs of the team and the organisation. This diagram at **Figure 4** shows what each person has inside their head, when deciding to engage with the organisation, because what motivates us affects our learning and our choice to engage with the organisation. **Figure 4**

Employee engagement as a hierarchy of needs (aka Maslow)

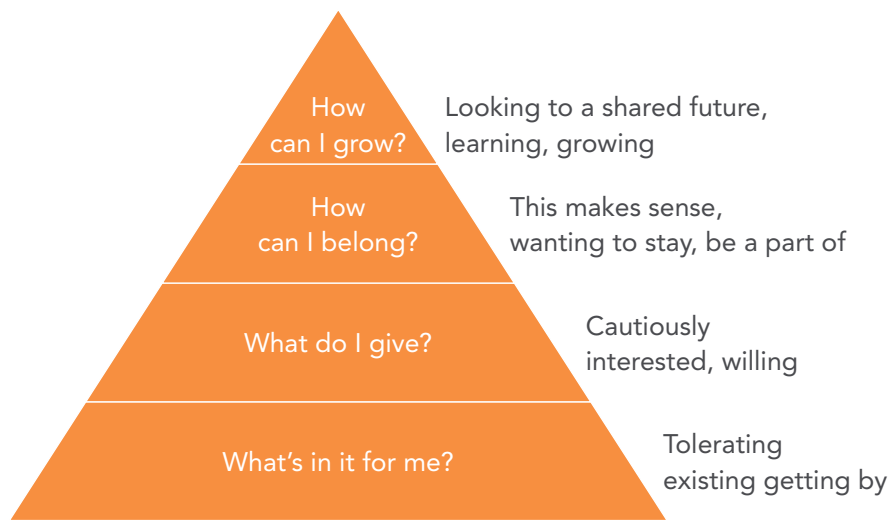


Figure 4

1.5 TP1 THINKING PROMPTS FOR LEADERS (EMBEDDINGS TEAM'S AND LEARNING)

1. Employees development needs are complex and change rapidly
2. Get connected to your people who are different, unique, and complex (what really makes them tick?) (see **Figure 5** below) Understand that reactions to change and learning capacity are interlinked



Figure 5

3. Learning needs to be appropriate to the person, easy to get and repeated.
4. One size does not fit all, flexibility is the key.
5. Your organisation is unique in its people mix and their personal drivers (learn from the better practice not necessarily the best in class practice).
6. Turn engaged employees into engaged learners.
7. Creativity is crucial to an engaged learner's success and making things stick.

2 HARNESSING THE WEALTH OF CREATIVITY?

So if creativity is crucial why is it? Often seen as a fluffy nice to do as compared to the very nature of survival, perhaps being creative is just too difficult to do or staying within the norm is safer.

2.1 CREATIVITY OR INNOVATION WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Let's start with some definitions: (going back to the dictionary again (<http://www.businessdictionary.com>) 4

“Creativity: *The ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules patterns, relationships and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, originality progressiveness or imagination.*”

“Innovation: *Something new or different introduced via the act of innovating introduction of new things or methods.*”

Creativity is much more about starting with a whole new fresh approach while innovation is more about the act of introducing the new, not necessarily starting with something brand new.

The trouble with challenging times or even times of rapid growth is people and organisations adopt a hard approach. So, what's a hard approach? Those adopting a hard approach concentrate on the pennies, mistrust every attempt at questioning and talk all the time about how hard times are.

What does this get you? It gets you fear, secretiveness and an inability to look to the cause of problems. Creativity and exploring options goes out the window, the drawbridge is pulled up and a siege mentality is adopted.

So why is creativity so important to teams now? Well, the latest report from the world economic forum shows how the top ten skills are changing?

<http://reports.weforum.org/future-of-jobs-2016/> 5

2015 TOP 10 SKILLS	2020 TOP 10 SKILLS
1. Complex problem solving	1. Complex problem solving
2. Coordinating with others	2. Critical thinking
3. People management	3. Creativity
4. Critical thinking	4. People management

2015 TOP 10 SKILLS	2020 TOP 10 SKILLS
5. Negotiation	5. Coordinating with others
6. Quality control	6. Emotional Intelligence
7. Service orientation	7. Judgement and decision making
8. Judgement and decision making	8. Service orientation
9. Active listening	9. Negotiation
10. Creativity	10. Cognitive flexibility

Table 3

Clearly creativity is on the rise as are the other thinking / cognitive skills. Creativity exists in all organisations however it is not always encouraged or given the space to flourish. Ideas need time and space to grow and time needs for such activity to be treated as just as crucial to organisational success in the same way time for s analysis or reporting activities. **Figure 6**



Figure 6

2.2 WHAT CREATES CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS?

One of the main conditions for success is the willingness to look outside organisational norms, sectors, competitors and targets. As an example, in my own research I reached out to people who are in completely different areas of work. To help gain a deeper understanding of creativity I have found the research and writings by Jen Gash in her book *Coaching Creativity* (<http://www.jengash.co.uk/>)⁶ to be an inspiration and extremely helpful in improving my own understanding. Her book which in the preface starts with “at work companies are told to innovate or die but how creativity manifests or doesn’t at work is complex to say the least - what getting to the stage where life is great and the team is curious and fully engaged organisations want from creativity is even more complex.” She explores the history, science and practice of „creativity“ by artists, makers and creators, translating this into practical advice for coaches. However, I think the book has potentially a much wider audience; those involved in the development of people and the learning gained within Getting to the stage where life is great and the team is curious and fully engaged organisations would find the book a great starting point. The book investigates the concept of creativity and examines the theories surrounding it from psychological, neurological and biological perspectives.

Firstly think of your team as an “ideas centre” rather than a group of roles or people who collect and shift data.

Creativity gives the organisation:

1. **Creative ideas from others (sharing and expanding)**

Not all ideas come from the leader of the team or the corporate office, sometimes you (they) just get in a rut and don’t come up with real creative ideas. The team then has a vital role in filling the gap and adding another perspective. Ask for their ideas and thoughts about the issue or problem.

2. **The organisation is pushed to think wider, more broadly and differently**

When you’re a part of a **creative ideas centre**, people will challenge you to think wider than you’ve probably ever thought before, to encourage you to step out of your comfort zone and stretch yourself to reach for better things. Adopting the thinking of trying things out without a final and fully formed solution allows for new ideas to be uncovered.

3. **Organisations which set up creative buddies expand their creative chances even more**

One of the biggest benefits to being part of a creative team is that you’ll get to know those in the team in a different way allowing you to open up new ways of building relationships with them. You’ll experience how the other person thinks and works, which will in turn encourage you to think differently, to “be creative.” Often, earlier experiences have taught us that we are not personally creative or that “creative’s” are a certain type of people who carry out a certain role.

4. **Organisations need to see creativity part of work**

Building creativity into your work routines so that it becomes a natural work process ensures that the initial burst of energy is not lost but built upon and seen as another valuable contribution to the work effort. To do this it is important for time and space to be given to creativity.

5. **Working within the culture we have**

Often organisations have statements describing their culture and this is displayed and talked about as if it is the reality. It might be or it might be very different from what a CEO on the other side of the pond has dreamt up with his management team. Sometimes it's more helpful to have the culture described as a series of values, beliefs or aspirations that we are working towards. (More of this in chapter 3 and how culture affects learning retention).

2.3 USING SIMPLE AND PROVEN TECHNIQUES TO EXPLORE AND DEVELOP YOUR CREATIVITY

Here are some well researched approaches for creativity at work:

Theory of Inventive Problem Solving, (also known as **TIPS**) was developed by Genrich Altshuller and his colleagues based on examining more than 200,000 patents. This method is designed to foster the creation and development of patentable inventions but is also useful for creating non-product solutions.

“Following Altshuller’s insight, the theory developed on a foundation of extensive research covering hundreds of thousands of inventions across many different fields to produce a theory which defines generalisable patterns in the nature of inventive solutions and the distinguishing characteristics of the problems that these inventions have overcome.

An extract from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TRIZ> 7

Mind mapping is a creativity technique that both reframes the situation and fosters creativity. It enables us to form different types of connections and to see links that initially are not connected. The term „mind map“ was first popularized by Tony Buzan, the use of diagrams that visually „map“ information using branching and radial maps traces back centuries to Leonardo da Vinci. By adopting a non-linear approach, the brain can expand on ideas without the constraints of a list, prioritize or focus.

Brainstorming or collective ideas download is a group activity designed to increase the quantity of fresh ideas. Getting other people involved can help increase knowledge and understanding of the problem and help participants reframe the problem.

Edward de Bono has published numerous books that promote an approach to creative problem solving and creative thinking called **lateral thinking**. (*Idea generation and problem solving techniques in which new concepts are created by looking at things in novel ways. The term was first coined by the Maltese born UK psychologist de Bono in his 1970 book “Lateral Thinking”*) source www.businessdirectory.com 8

Sometimes it can be the most off the wall idea that will spark a train of thought that will lead to the transformation of the organisation. The most important thing to do is to keep thinking and resist the temptation to panic and start doing; because doing without thought leads to desperation and defeat. Using a range of tools can help to define and capture where you are now and where you want to get to, **Table 4** below

Name	Definition	When to use
Brainstorming	A method for generating a lot of creative ideas within a group. Structured, every person gives an idea in turn. Using slips of paper to generate ideas anonymously.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring options, remember to suspend judgement and be inclusive of all • Identify problem areas, possible causes and alternative solutions • Helps with ‘what if’ and ‘what else’ questions
Cause and effect	A cause and effect diagram is used to display the listing of factors (causes) that may contribute to a quality characteristic or problem (effect).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise and display the relationship between causes and effects • Analyse processes and potential effects of proposed actions • Keep asking why is that?
Flowchart	A flowchart is a graphic representation of all the steps in a process and how they relate to each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents the steps within a process, lets you see what is really happening not what you think is happening • Designs a new process • Start a continuous improvement process • Facilitate discussion or reach agreement regarding the steps (what next?)

Name	Definition	When to use
Pareto chart	A Pareto chart is a bar chart that arranges the bars in descending order, largest on the left. Each bar represents a defect type, cause or cost. The chart displays the relative Contribution of each category to the total.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrates the most significant opportunities for improvement, areas to concentrate on • Prioritise problems • Shows which categories contribute the largest percentage to the total

Table 4

2.4 WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR?

When thinking creatively there are no rights or wrongs, nothing is perfect and it may take a leap or jump in thinking to come up with the best idea(s). Therefore setting the tone of the creative session is crucial so that people feel at ease to contribute without ridicule or censure.

The trap of logical thinking, “the Mr Spock syndrome”, shows itself by being safe and selective and because we recognise the triggers we think this is the best way. This often means that creativity is stopped before it’s begun.

Thinking patterns, established as a result of past experience can be automatically limiting us. The fact that we are good at anticipating outcomes means that the assumptions we make might well be the wrong ones.

We also tend to attribute the ‘goodness’ of an idea to the person who came up with it, perhaps because we like them, or see them as the expert. In addition, we continually look for patterns and sometimes these very patterns polarise to make us focus on reasons to disagree rather than recognise related converging patterns.

Creative thinking involves two basic techniques: to escape and to be provocative.

In order to escape your own past thinking you must recognise polarizing ideas, search for alternative ways and refuse to accept assumptions. You must also put aside your own ego. This allows us to escape our previous thinking. By being provocative I mean the ability to suspend judgement during the generation of ideas and postpone evaluation until later. Accept the fact that there may not be a reason to say something until it is said (by opening mouth without engaging brain can sometimes produces a unexpected valid ideas). The word

provocative is often misunderstood to mean that it will lead someone to anger or violence. This is not its true meaning. To provoke is to make something happen, stimulate or give rise to (a reaction or emotion) in someone, to provide the needed stimulus for, to stir up purposefully.

2.5 TP2 THINKING PROMPTS FOR LEADERS (CREATIVITY, MINDSET AND CHANGE)

1. Everything is changing and even more rapidly than before
2. We all need to think differently, using our brains with the skills required for today not yesterday
3. Trying out and provoking some critical thinking only happens when the team feels valued and safe
4. Using tools to explore what's happening is always valuable
5. Watch out for the cynics and the 'we've always done it that way' or "we tried that and it didn't work" blockers
6. Create space and time to be creative and provocative
7. Creativity requires sharing without fear, having a supportive culture that promotes learning and sharing See Figure 7 below.



Figure 7

3 WHAT IS CULTURE ANYWAY?

3.1 CULTURE – A SUM OF THE PARTS OR NOT?

This question could very well result in a book or series of books given the history and examination of this subject by academics and practitioners alike who are all looking for the golden bullets that will transform their current culture into one that inspires, drives and leads the organisation to rapid growth, wealth and sustainability. The goal that all organisations wish to achieve.

Using the www.businessdictionary.com ⁹ as a starting point the definition for organisational culture is as follows:

The values and behaviours that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organisation. Corporate culture, shows its self as

- 1) *The **ways the organisation conducts its business**, treats its employees, customers, and the wider community,*
- 2) *The **extent to which freedom is allowed** in decision making, developing new ideas, and personal expression,*
- 3) *How **power and information flow through its hierarchy**, and*
- 4) *How **committed employees are towards collective objectives**.*

It's culture affects the organisation's productivity and performance, and provides guidelines on customer care and service, product quality and safety, attendance and punctuality, and concern for the environment.

So, the short version is everything we say, do and achieve during our time at work sometimes known as 'the way we do things around here' is influenced by the organisation's culture, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cBN8xH-5Qw> a short video-cartoon by Denison Consulting. ¹⁰

Organisations spend millions on attempting to change their culture through rebranding even though they keep the same leaders in post. Or they embark on "transformation" exercises but without a clue into what they will transform, imitating industry leaders when they themselves are not one. I'm not sure that any of these approaches work. Other schools of thought are based on the tribe approach where in order to succeed you must join the tribe and 'be like me'.

One question I would pose is how dependant is culture on size of organisation? People tend to support their local teams, have affiliations to relatively small groups like family, friends, football teams or hobby groups, so how can they adopt the culture of a twenty thousand

strong multinational whose head office is based in Chicago or Shanghai? (In practice with great difficulty). The feeling of being connected a part of something say a brand that you admire is a great driver, for cultural inclusivity. But it needs to be recognised that cultures are more localised and different interpretations of the overarching culture will be formed at an local level.

Culture affects the way in which learning is valued and obtained within an organisation. While there maybe an attempt to gain from lessons learned, the lessons may not be the ones the organisation wants to be learned and are subsequently ignored.


3.2 WHAT'S THE BENEFIT OF MISTAKES AND HOW CAN WE HANDLE THEM?

Can we learn from our mistakes? We can, providing the learning is not too painful and we avoid self-recrimination and navel gazing.


In their book the “Ending of the Blame Culture”, Pearn, Mulrooney and Payne (ISBN 0-566-07996-8) 11 *describe the factors that indicate the “blame” or “gain” type of culture*

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which is linked to the type of learning that takes place within an organisation. Specifically, they focussed on how organisations learned from mistakes. To illustrate why we fail to learn from mistakes they have described a downward spiral where mistakes are irritating, embarrassing, ignored, concealed, punished, feared and then avoided.

We have learned to fear, we try to conceal them or blame others because mistakes in our past have been punishable. This leads to cynicism, maintaining the status quo, “keeping your head down” and a feeling of powerlessness. A blame culture encourages employees to hide mistakes, which only delays their discovery so they become much larger and more costly mistakes when they are inevitably uncovered. Typically, the types of behaviours seen in these organisations are judging, angry, reacting, blaming, assigning guilt, and highlighting the problems caused as a result of the mistakes- all the time believing this is what “learning from our mistakes” looks like. No wonder the blame cycle perpetuates itself.

In organisations where mistakes are truly seen as a way of learning and producing a better way for the future, the **gains** of the initial mistake happening are celebrated and explored. The aim is to seek understanding and set in place a process that prevents it happening again. This then allows the making of mistakes to be valued, to be learned from, lessons are shared in a supportive way which encourages openness, trust and the early resolution of mistakes, as part of an overall learning process. This in turn enables employees to feel empowered to solve problems, increases their energy and commitment which helps to develop their creativity and ultimately enables them to challenge more often and more effectively so that nothing is taken for granted.

Types of behaviours you might see are *exploring, remaining calm, focusing on the process, providing support and assuming that the person wants to learn.* Often a very key indicator of what type of organisation you have is by the questions people ask, so if they ask “who made the mistake and why”, it’s a blame culture and if they ask “what can we do about it or how did this happen”, it’s a gain culture

3.3 WHAT NOT TO DO WITH MISTAKES?

This can be best summed up as the hunt for the guilty, someone to blame or scapegoat. If mistakes are the product of misinterpretation, misunderstanding or incorrect interpretation of the truth then surely the aim is to understand what happened rather than punish the guilty.

There are many illustrations of where mistakes have ultimately caused problems that far outweigh the original mistake. For example, I worked with a team of consultants who were tasked with the implementation phase of simplifying management review processes. These

processes had become out of control to the extent that thirty people, from all levels of the business, attended project review meetings with each passing blame up and down the hierarchy so that no one owned, or took responsibility for anything. As a result mistakes were not identified or examined at the review stage and an initial. Unreported or unexamined mistake – some incorrect bolts being used – eventually resulted in a complete rebuild of a massive construction. All because no one could actually say, ‘I put the wrong bolts on this.’ This caused the organisation a massive rebuild cost and delays to the contract of over a month; those were very costly bolts.

3.4 WHAT TYPE OF CULTURE EXISTS (THE REALITY)?

In his book, “Eye of the Storm: How Mindful Leaders Can Transform Chaotic Workplaces”, 12 executive coach Ray Williams describes the characteristics of toxic workplaces, and the part that dysfunctional leaders play in creating them. As he writes in “Psychology Today”, toxic workplaces will manifest in the following seven ways:

- 1. All sticks and no carrots, mostly carrots for the best performers, sticks for the rest.**
- 2. The creeping bureaucracy**
There are too many levels of approval and management to get things done and a singular focus on micromanaging employees.
- 3. The gigantic bottom line**
Profits, beating the competition, and cost cutting are solely focused on without consideration of other bottom lines.
- 4. Bullies rule the roost**
Management bullies employees, or tolerates bullying when it occurs among employees.
- 5. Loss of the human touch**
There’s also little evidence of leaders’ compassion and empathy for employees. As a result, you’ll encounter high levels of stress, turnover, absenteeism, and burnout.
- 6. Internal competition**
Employees must compete internally, which is enforced by a performance assessment system that focuses on individual performance rather than team performance.
- 7. Little or no concern for work-life balance**
People’s personal or family lives must be sacrificed for the job; overwork or workaholism is commonly evidenced by 50-hour-plus workweeks, little or no vacation time, and 24/7 availability for work communication.

3.5 HOW CAN WE TURN A TOXIC TEAM INTO A HEALTHY TEAM AND WORKPLACE?

1. Firstly, recognise what toxic behaviours and patterns exist.
2. Take steps to alter the behaviour and thinking that is causing the toxicity by getting a grasp of why it is occurring and by who this is promoted by.
3. You might consider using some form of employee survey designed to provide evidence of your identified concerns, for example, your concerns about the type of leadership or management systems in place.
4. Pull out (or convert) the “weeds” (by weeds I mean people who work in a way that which creates hostility, increases fear and blocks progress). In your performance planning include behaviours like „respect,“ „teamwork,“ and „encouragement“ as part of your performance planning, measure them, follows up and do something about them.
5. Expose any problems by promoting a healthy culture being a role model and living out shared values to squeeze out gossip, bullying, sabotage, disrespect, and sabotage.
6. Have senior leaders talk and act in ways that enable learning and encourage employees to take part in new forms of learning.
7. Invest in coaching for managers in how to coach and mentor their staff and have someone coach them on an ongoing basis.

Some really helpful information is available through the ILM (Institute of leadership and management) www.i-l-m.com 13 about creating a coaching culture, in which questions are welcomed and a desire to learn and develop is promoted.

It describes the purpose of coaching:

Good coaching should be a facilitative process, with an emphasis on unlocking capabilities through guiding and questioning rather than teaching or instructing. As such it is as much to do with personal skills as it is business skills and workplace skills. Creating a coaching culture ILMCCC/0511

3.6 TP3 THINKING PROMPTS FOR LEADERS (CULTURE, MISTAKES AND DESIRE)

1. Be clear about the culture or cultures that exist in your organisation.
2. Make sure the values of the organisation (the way we do things around here) are not just a poster but are embodied in the way we behave and what we really value in employees.
3. Ensure that the key decision makers really want change and be clear about what they want change to do for them *and* their employees.(Figure 7)



Figure 7

4. Keep teams relatively small, effective teams number between six and twelve people much larger and they start to subdivide.
5. Promote tolerance, curiosity and willingness to share not only what went right but what went wrong and avoid treating mistakes as something to be brushed under the carpet.
6. Leaders set the culture of their own teams, so ensure they are setting the one that fits with the rest of the organisation and its values.
7. Promote trust and collaboration across and within departments and teams so that it becomes the norm to ask difficult questions and test out what the organisation is doing.

PART TWO

Key themes: trust, learning, sticking and collaboration

My thoughts

Part two of this book looks at the variety and extent of learning strategies, methods and pitfalls that exist and how to avoid wasting learning opportunities. Unfortunately I have witnessed many well intentioned and innovative learning strategies that fall by the wayside of speed and results when a much better result could have been achieved with some extra thought and less panic.

Often within teams too much is assumed or glossed over. Relationships between team members are sometimes fragile or fraught with over competitiveness and suspicion between the generations rather than using difference of all types to be welcomed and built upon.

This part of the book describes how to lay the foundations and vast range of resources available to the leaders to call upon when generating a learning team culture. For the leader of the team there are many challenges. Including when to lead and when to stay in the background and enable others. I remember my boss once saying to me “You know Peter there is a simple answer to everything (pause for dramatic effect) and it’s wrong, makes you think!”

4. Team learning: through trust and respect
5. Team learning: stories and challenges
6. Team learning: Everyone’s a player
7. Team learning: Getting the lessons learned
8. Team collaboration: bringing people along

4 TEAM LEARNING: THROUGH TRUST AND RESPECT

4.1 TRUST IS LIKE A STEPPING STONE AND RESPECT IS LIKE A BRIDGE

How do we build respect and trust within a team? It comes with everything you say and everything you do. Often the team leader is singled out as the driver for trust within organisations and yes that's true however it takes more than that; each team member has a responsibility for building trust too by:

- listening to each other
- being truly interested in your colleagues / team members (authenticity)
- seeking to help each other

Organisational listening too often boils down to 'what I am hearing that is to my advantage' or "where can I look good / make a good impression or score some points."

Trust is a firm belief in the integrity, ability or character of a person or thing: confidence or reliance. Also described as custody; care or one in whom confidence is placed <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/trust> 14 Trust is like an eraser, it gets smaller and smaller after every mistake."

Respect is a feeling of appreciation, esteem or admiration.

<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/respect> 15 Respect is like air, you really don't notice it until it's gone, and then you notice its absence.

When we are being authentic it means we are able to gain trust from others and show we can be trusted (Authentic, conforming to fact and therefore worthy of trust reliance or belief Genuine, real, true <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/authentic> 16.

In order to build trust in the workplace there needs to be a culture where respect is earned, honesty is appreciated, trust is gained and loyalty is returned.

4.2 THE STEPPING STONES FOR BUILDING TRUE TEAM WORKING

The team's leader and team members must be willing to work together to make team work happen. The team's leader and it's members who develop the five abilities listed below have every chance of gaining the confidence (trust) of their other team members and working well as a team.

Demonstrating that you can do your own job:

- By continually developing and displaying competence
- By keeping up to date in your technical area of expertise
- By continually reading and learning new skills and approaches
- By being open to new ideas and methods and being able to say, 'I don't know'

Demonstrating integrity and being authentic

- Ensuring that your behaviour and actions are consistent with your words
- Stand by and support the values that are important to the team/department
- Be able to say, 'I don't agree,' to others

Following through (do what you say)

- Keeping commitments and make them visible to others
- Keeping promises at all times
- Informing colleagues in advance if you can't fulfil a promise
- Breaking agreements only in an emergency

Showing concern for the well being of others

- Being aware of your impact on others
- Asking someone you trust to describe how your behaviour affect others
- Taking an interest in the personal life of other team members
- Taking time to develop interpersonal relationships

Keeping confidences

- Respect confidentiality agreements
- Not talking behind people's backs
- Not disclose personal details about individuals inappropriately
- Remembering interesting things about other team members

Although these stepping stones seem obvious – why wouldn't any person or team want to work in this way – in practice many teams I have observed and worked with do not have them in place.

Getting to the stage where life is great and the team is curious and fully engaged takes time and effort by all parties as well as the willingness to trust each other based on respect.

In his book, *“Eleven Rings: The Soul of Success”*, *Phil Jackson* 17 references the book, *“Tribal Leadership,”* where authors *Dave Logan, John King and Halee Fischer-Wright* highlight the five stages of Tribal Culture. 18 See figure 8 below

THE 5 STAGES OF TRIBAL CULTURE

RELATIONSHIP TO PEOPLE		BEHAVIOR	% OF ORGS
Team	STAGE 5 “LIFE IS GREAT”	Innocent Wonderment The language revolves around infinite potential and how the group is going to make history-not to beat a competitor, but because doing so will make a global impact. This group is in competition with what’s possible, not with another tribe	2%
Stable Partnership	STAGE 4 “WE’RE GREAT”	Tribal Pride People are fully themselves, & everyone seems happy, inspired & genuine; the culture emphasizes shared core values and interdependent strategies; a 'we're great' tribe always has an adversary, & the bigger the foe, the more powerful the tribe.	22%
Personal Domination	STAGE 3 “I’M GREAT (AND YOU’RE NOT)”	Lone Warrior Knowledge is power, so people hoard it; they have to win, and winning is personal; the mood is one of wanting help and support, yet being continually disappointed that others “don’t have their ambition or skill”.	49%
Separate	STAGE 2 “*MY* LIFE SUCKS”	Apathetic Victim People are passively antagonistic; seen it all before and watched it fail; quietly sarcastic and resigned; judging, yet never interested enough to spark any passion	25%
Alienated	STAGE 1 “<ALL> LIFE SUCKS”	Undermining People are despairingly hostile, banding together to get ahead in a violent and unfair world	2%

Figure 8

One of the most important reasons for advocating trust is the sheer amount of bureaucracy and time wasting it stops within an organisation. In the book *“The Speed of Trust”* by *Stephen M. R. Covey and Rebecca R Merrill ISBN 978-0-7432-9432-9560-4* 19 the benefits of having trust are fully outlined and explained.

Start with the ability to trust yourself and then cascade this into your relationships. Trust is likened to a series of ripples that create waves of behaviour which cut across the political manoeuvring and buck passing that is seen in many organisations. The first wave concentrates

on your own credibility which is divided into four cores: integrity, intent, capabilities and results.

The authors go on to describe the thirteen behaviours required to build trust. These overlap with the previous stepping stones listed and are: *describing, talking straight, demonstrating, respect, creating transparency, righting wrongs, showing loyalty, delivering results, getting better, confronting reality, clarifying expectations, practicing accountability, listening first, keeping commitments and finally extending trust.*

Peter Drucker sums up the importance of trust as “*Organisations are no longer built on force but on trust.*” In 2001 he wrote *The Essential Drucker* 20. The first volume, a combination of the past sixty years of Peter Drucker’s work on management, draws upon his previous 39 books on management thinking.

Our ability to gain trust and respect is founded on what we believe in and what we believe about people. So we need to recognise what goes on underneath the surface of people’s thinking and subsequent actions. (see figure 9)

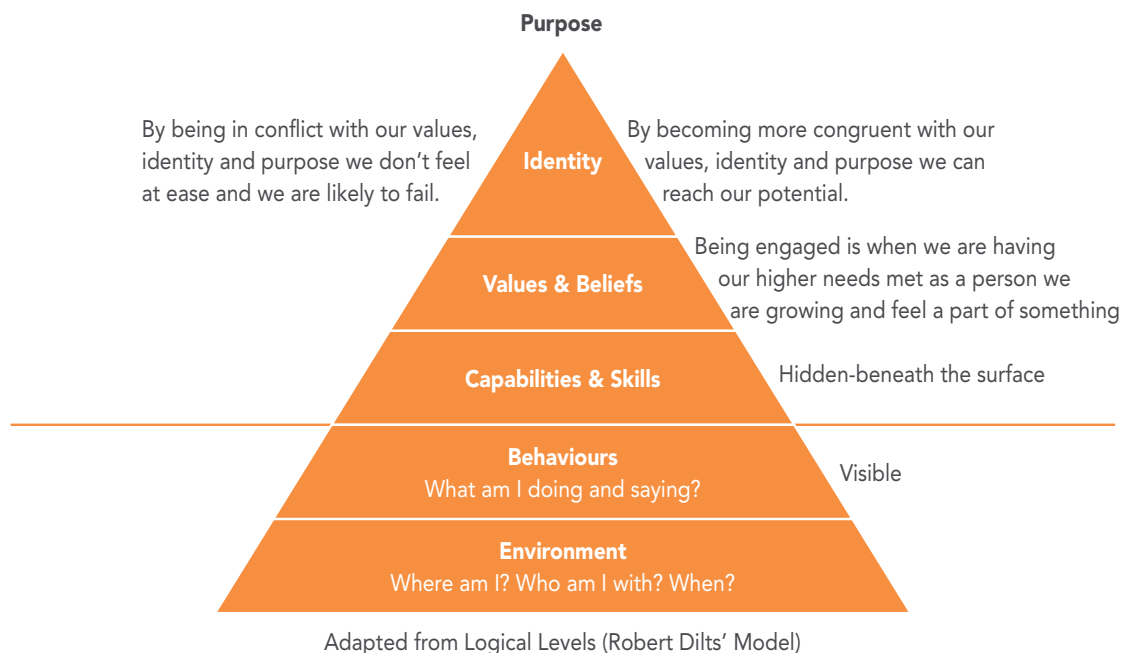


Figure 9

Originally used this model in my book *Employee Engagement, not just another survey* by Peter Mayes 2016 Bookboon <https://bookboon.com/en/employee-engagement-ebook> 21 to demonstrate what drives our desires to be engaged with an organisation or team.

4.3 TP4 THINKING POINTS FOR LEADERS (TRUST, RESPECT AND PROVOCATION)

1. “Great teams” have a strategy, goals and a purpose
2. Work with humour and provocation (to build a sense of “esprit de corps”)
3. Understand conflict and collaboration. Catch conflict early and share concerns.
4. Have a way of working with each other that includes everyone.



<https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/z/trust-process-business-concept-diagram-58379129.jpg>

5. Teams are led by their values and culture and everyone’s sense of purpose
6. Attitude and effort are equal to our intention and attention; be sure you have a good intent.
7. Remember, without trust all else is based on a false promise.

5 TEAM LEARNING: STORIES AND CHALLENGES

5.1 ARE WE REALLY LEARNING?

Some really old problems that occur again and again as evidenced in **Three Biggest Challenges facing HR Managers and Learning Specialists** (In fact, I believe all leaders, managers and members of teams have these challenges too.) A survey by **Training Provider MBM** of HR Managers, L&D Managers, and Training Officers, predominantly in the UK Grocery Industry, revealed that the top three biggest training challenges are:

1. **Team members do very little with what they have learnt**

Ebbinghaus' 'Forgetting Curve' strongly suggests that unless a piece of learning is repeated it is lost within 30 days, or less. (Figure 10)

If we could only remember all that we have forgotten!

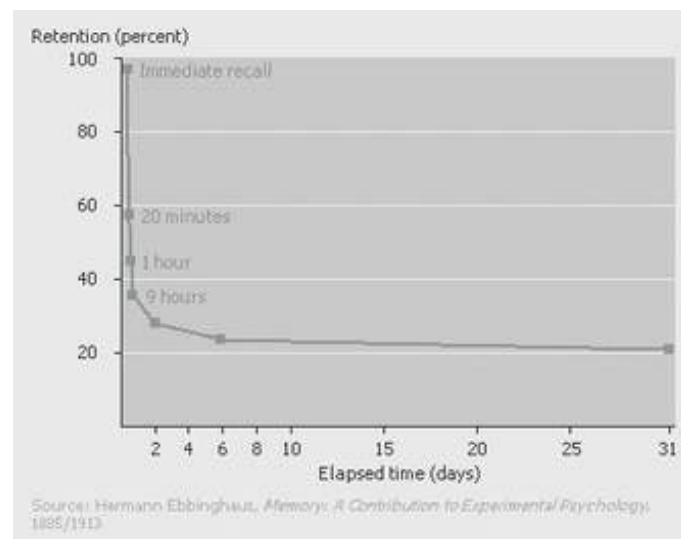


Figure 10

“The forgetting curve hypothesizes the decline of memory retention in time. This curve shows how information is lost over time when there is no attempt to retain it. A related concept is the strength of memory (refers to the durability that memory traces in the brain). The stronger the memory, the longer period of time that a person is able to recall it. The original uploader was Icez at English Wikipedia.

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2214107> 22

2. Line Managers rarely support the learning of their teams

A CIPD Learning and Development survey conducted in 2007 concluded that “23% of line managers do not take learning and development seriously. We suspect that a further 50% pay some attention, leaving only a quarter of line managers who are fully supportive.”

3. Training evaluations are rarely completed

In the 2015 CIPD annual report, L&D professionals were asked, *How are the majority of L&D initiatives evaluated?* The results concluded that over 50% of L&D professionals either did not evaluate the initiatives, or evaluated only by asking the learners their thoughts.

The MBM survey participants were frustrated by the three biggest training problems because the problems are longstanding, **a bone of contention with other departments**, and that they felt powerless to significantly improve them. Team members came back from training courses moaning about lunch and not even mentioning the training course, or when the team members were asked days later about the training course, most of the content had been forgotten. The engagement from line managers was nearly zero, and even when prompted the line managers paid lip service to supporting their teams, yet the line managers were the ones that had wanted their teams to have the training in the first place. And training evaluations were so complex to do that it was almost a losing battle. 23

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Anyone who has provided (or attended) training for organisations will immediately recognise these symptoms of what can potentially go wrong with well intentioned, by ultimately unsuccessful, learning.

Is it time to get serious about learning in teams?

- What if learning was seen as a growth of the person, team and business?
- What if rather than box ticking it's about box expanding?
- What if the specialists cascaded their expertise rather than holding on to it, as a way of showing they are indispensable?
- What if managers were measured on their ability to transfer learning and grow staff?
- What if the most important part of managers' / leaders' development was to understand their own learning and how to enable their staff to learn best?

Learning needs to be immediate, relevant, followed up on, shared and given time and repetition to sink in no matter what the process or mechanism used to deliver the learning.

5.2 SO WHAT NEXT AND WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?

If the rules by which we help people to learn in organisations need to change, then how we prioritise and apply resources to enable learning to happen need to change too. No more Training Departments / Human Resource Development Strategists, no more driven just from the top. Responsibility needs to be taken by each team leader / manager and team member to build the learning that works and is truly embedded. The Training and developing of their team members becomes a key part of their role.

Taking the themes from the last chapter – trust needs to grow, development needs to be the responsibility of each person and each team member needs to be grown from within in a manner appropriate for the changing world and times.

The times we are living in are changing – this piece from the Australian Institute of Management sums up what's happening well.

Educational trends, Australian Institute of Management, (AIM) May 2017 24

Like any industry, digital innovation is driving big changes in the organisational learning and development field. Here are five future education trends that could fundamentally change the way we enable our team members to learn.

1. Gamification

(Gamification techniques are intended to leverage people's natural desires for socializing, learning, mastery, competition, achievement, status, self-expression, altruism, or closure, or simply their response to the framing of a situation as game or play.)

It may seem like a gimmick for engaging Gen Ys and Millennials, however Gamification in learning and development has the potential to deliver big results in embedding new knowledge. Since integrating gamification into their Leadership Academy, Deloitte has seen a 37 percent increase in the number of users returning to the site each week.

2. Social learning tools

(Blogging, Facebook, Google, Skype, Instagram, Twitter, Tedtalks, YouTube)

As advocates of the 70:20:10 learning model, at AIM (based on a survey asking nearly 200 executives to self-report how they believed they learned, 70% from challenging assignments, 20% from developmental relationships and 10% from coursework and training) we know that 20% of learning is through mentoring, role modelling and learning from others. We also know that people get more of their information from social media platforms than any other medium. Social learning tools take elements of popular social media channels and contextualise them within an organisation to allow team members to share and collaborate on content in new ways.

3. Microlearning

Another learning and development trend that will better enable team members to learn on the job is what's known as microlearning. By delivering short, fast learning modules that take less than five minutes to complete, people can get the information they need, when they need it. This concept also underpins the continued popularity of short courses for providing targeted skills and knowledge precisely when your team members need them.

4. Mobile learning

For many of us, smartphones are the last thing we look at before we go to sleep and the first thing we see when we wake up. Mobile phones and devices are now so omnipresent in our daily lives that it's a logical progression to deliver learning and development modules through mobile platforms. Mobile learning provides the opportunity for team members to learn when they want, wherever they are. By combining the concepts of gamification, microlearning and social learning into a mobile platform, organisations can greatly increase employee engagement with learning and development programs.

5. Personalisation

Learning and development programs are also becoming more personalised as organisations see enhanced outcomes as a result of customising an individual's career goals and aspirations within the context of an organisation. Formal learning outcomes are then arranged around the individual's needs as well as the organisation's to deliver optimum capability development, particularly in leadership development qualifications.

Further evidence of some new approaches based on what the future may look like are described by Nipun Sharma <https://elearningindustry.com> March 15th 2018:

Here are the top 10 Learning and Development trends for 2018. 25

1. *Personalization*
2. *Bite-Sized Support Resources*
3. *Robust Reports and Analytics*
4. *Self-Paced Online Training*
5. *Gamification*
6. *Responsive Design*
7. *Collaborative Online Learning Cultures*
8. *Virtual and Augmented Reality*
9. *Online Mentorship Programs*
10. *Social Learning Experiences*

These top 10 Learning and Development trends for 2018 give a good indication of where the eLearning industry is heading. It's all about personalization, ongoing support, and making the most of today's cutting-edge technologies, as well as giving your corporate learners the incentives and social interactions they need to actively engage. Some of the key competencies we can teach and coach people to help prepare them for a future they cannot predict include:

- ***Design, Creative & Critical thinking*** to help them make sense of and perceive their worlds with fresh eyes.
- ***Start Up Methodologies*** to experiment with new business models, with iteration and pivoting new services, products and delivery streams that can be scaled and leveraged.
- ***Generative Discovery Skills*** in deep listening, questioning and debating to provoke and disrupt the status quo.
- ***Teaming and Networking*** to break down silos, identify and maximize interdependencies, collaborate and build high value delivery eco-systems.

In Josh Bersin's "The Disruption of Digital Learning: Ten Things we have learned" he revealed that team members are feeling overwhelmed and in reality, only have 24 minutes a day to learn. *To seriously prepare people for a future we cannot predict, then we must work harder at making people feel and believe that they matter. Doing this strategically and systemically, will energize, catalyze, mobilize and harness your people's receptivity to change and uncertainty and*

unleash their innovation potential. The additional points I would make are that it's about being inclusive of all team members, age, race, gender and position in the company. Time is critical and learning needs to be purposeful and leading to action.

5.3 ENABLING TEAM MEMBERS TO LEARN

Least we forget the team members we are working with are adults and adults learn differently (Andragogy: adult learning) to children and we need to be aware of these differences before adopting methods that are great in the schoolroom but may not sit well with different age ranges. This most succinctly expressed in the following link:

<http://teachinglearningresources.pbworks.com/w/page/30310516/Andragogy--Adult%20Learning%20Theory> 26

Malcolm Shepherd Knowles in his book "The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy" ISBN10:0695814729 Follet publishing 1980 27 sets out his assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners and the process elements of adult education that stem from these characteristics.

1. **Self-concept:** *As people mature, they move beyond a dependent personality toward being more **self-directed***
2. **Experience:** *As people mature, they amass a growing set of experiences that provide a fertile **resource for learning***
3. **Readiness to learn:** *As people mature, they are **more interested in learning subjects** that have immediate relevance to their jobs or personal lives*
4. **Orientation to learning:** *As people mature, their time perspective changes from gathering knowledge for future use **to immediate application of knowledge.** As such, adult learners become more problem-centered rather than subject-centered (Knowles, 1980)*
5. **Motivation to learn:** *As people mature, they become more motivated by various internal incentives, such as need for **self-esteem, curiosity, desire to achieve, and satisfaction of accomplishment***
6. **Relevance:** *As people mature, they need to know why they need to learn something (Knowles, 1984). Furthermore, because adults manage other aspects of their lives, they are **capable of directing or, at least, assisting in the planning and implementation of their own learning.***

So where is all this learning? It's all around us, formal, non-formal, informal or virtual.

- **Formal learning** is the planned process of acquiring knowledge that happens within a structured educational or institute setting.
- **Non-formal learning** is a planned process of learning that is voluntary and not in a structured environment.
- **Informal learning** is when information is gained inadvertently or is unstructured, which usually happens on a day-to-day basis.
- **Virtual learning**, is when learning is done via the use of web-based platforms it, encourages people to explore, discover and exchange information quickly, creatively and independently. (For example [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) or [YouTube](#)).



We can we best do this by;

- Having a passion
- Making it relevant
- Being imaginative and engaging
- Making it easy and playful

These ideas are illustrated by the videos by Garry Stern and Douglas Thomas. Garry Stern is a committed individual, passionate about leadership, employee engagement, lifelong learning and organisational culture as applied to the working environment. Garry is a Director of EBC Think Limited a company that specialises in advising businesses on Change and Operations. Previously Garry was Director of Corporate Operations at the Royal Bank of Scotland. In this role he was responsible for leading circa 3000 people.

Lifelong learning and organisational culture.

Garry Stern TED x St Helier https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-H3JZ_Q0iGs 28

Douglas Thomas is Associate Professor in the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California. He is co-author of the book „The New Culture of Learning“. He received his Ph. D. from the University of Minnesota in Communication in 1992 and specializes in Critical Theory and Cultural Studies of Technology. He is founding editor of Games & Culture: A Journal of Interactive Media, a quarterly international journal that aims to publish innovative theoretical and empirical research about games and culture within the context of interactive media.

A New Culture Of Learning Douglas Tomas Ted Ufm
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1M80GXlyX0U> 29

5.4 TP5 THINKING POINTS FOR LEADERS (LEARNING, MECHANISMS AND REMEMBERING)

1. As illustrated above the way in which we can be distracted and tend to forget what is not repeated.
2. Using all the types and facets of learning that are available to be used.
3. All learning has equal value but not always equal usefulness.
4. Technology's immediacy and flexibility can help in producing flexible solutions but is not the solution for everything.
5. Learners are from all different backgrounds – these have to be accounted for if learning is to work.
6. Organisations only grow if their people grow.
7. Teams that learn, grow and adapt more quickly and easily and are able to make a breakthrough and to keep pace with today's rapid change.

6 TEAM LEARNING: EVERYONE'S A PLAYER

6.1 WHERE DOES THIS TEAM LEARNING STUFF COME FROM?

Initially, one of the most influential thinkers on organisational learning was Peter Senge, he stated that a learning organisation is a group of people **working together collectively to enhance their capacities** to create results they really care about, he popularized the concept of the learning organisation through his book **The Fifth Discipline** 30 (*April 2006 ISBN-10: 9781905211203*). He followed this up in 1999 with **The Dance of Change**, in 2004 with **Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future** and in 2008 with, **The Necessary Revolution**.

Senge stated that there are four challenges when initiating changes.

- *There must be a compelling case for change.*
- *There must be time to change.*
- *There must be help during the change process.*
- *As perceived barriers to change are removed, be aware that new problems may become a critical barrier.*

“When you ask people about what it is like being part of a great team, what is most striking is the meaningfulness of the experience. People talk about being part of something larger than them, of being connected, of being generative”

He proposed the following five characteristics:

Systems Thinking: *This is a conceptual framework that allows people to study businesses as bounded objects. Learning Getting to the stage where life is great and the team is curious and fully engaged organisations use this method of thinking when assessing their company and have information systems that measure the performance of the organisation as a whole and of its various components.*

Personal Mastery: *The commitment by an individual to the process of learning is known as personal mastery. Individual learning is acquired through staff training, development and continuous self-improvement; however, learning cannot be forced upon an individual who is not receptive to learning. (Building this receptiveness is the key, engaged learners take advantage of the opportunities presented to them.)* Figure 11 below



Figure 11

Mental models: *The assumptions held by individuals and Getting to the stage where life is great and the team is curious and fully engaged organisations are called mental models. In creating a learning environment, it is important to replace confrontational attitudes with an open culture that promotes inquiry and trust.*

Shared vision: *The development of a shared vision is important in motivating the staff to learn, as it creates a common identity that provides focus and energy for learning. The most successful visions build on the individual visions of the team members at all levels of the organisation, thus the creation of a shared vision can be hindered by traditional structures where the company vision is imposed from above.*

Team learning: *The accumulation of individual learning constitutes team learning. The benefit of team or shared learning is that staff grows more quickly and the problem-solving capacity of the organisation is improved through better access to knowledge and expertise. Getting to the stage where life is great and the team is curious and fully engaged organisations typically have excellent knowledge management structures, allowing creation, acquisition, dissemination, and implementation of this knowledge in the organisation.*

Further detailed analysis and review of his thinking is contained in the article <http://infed.org/mobi/peter-senge-and-the-learning-organisation/>

The key area I wish to focus on here is the development of team learning processes and actions. Over the years I have read management team and leadership books and the vast majority of them repeat the lessons of a previous book by a previous author with very little new or insightful thinking. There are always exceptions to the rule and the books described and highlighted below are exceptional in their sheer range of ideas and practical ways forward for teams and leaders of teams.

*Patrick Lencioni (born c. 1965^[1]) is an American writer of books on business management, particularly in relation to team management. He is best known as the author of **The Five Dysfunctions of a Team**, 31 (Fable Apr 2002 ISBN-10: 0787960756) a popular business fable that explores work team dynamics and offers solutions to help teams perform better.^[2]*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Lencioni 32

Some further insights from the book are outlined by Patrick
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z53wniDCKZU> 33

And a mini summary of the book is included hear
<https://youtu.be/-T4zFj4KTBg> 34

The five dysfunctions of team principles

1. Absence of **trust**
2. Fear of **conflict**
3. Lack of **commitment**
4. Avoidance of **accountability**
5. Inattention to **results**



William Gibb Dyer was an American educator who served as the fourth Dean of the Marriott School of Management at Brigham Young University (BYU). 35 Bill consulted companies including Exxon, General Foods, AT&T, and Honeywell. Bill was also a founding partner of Business for Social Responsibility, Inc. Author of Team Building, Dyer also co-developed of the world's first 360-degree feedback instrument to evaluate managerial style and effectiveness.^[3]
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_G._Dyer 36

In his book ***Team building issues and alternatives***, William Dyer describes how different teams at different stages of their team life need different types of team development to enable them to overcome issues and offers alternatives. As a guide to how to take a pragmatic approach to the issues that arise Dyer's book is practical and offers specific ways of using the identifying the real problem stage as a way of applying the appropriate type of development. Too often I have seen the 'flavour of the month' or 'one size fits all' applied to generically different and unique teams (us as people are not generic and but unique). Part three: Applications of team development is particularly useful. This book has now been updated into ***Team Building: Proven Strategies for Improving Team Performance 19 Feb 2013 by W. Gibb Dyer Jr., Jeffrey H. Dyer, William G. Dyer and is split into 4 sections***

Part one, the four Cs of team development and the search for the high performing team



- The number 1 MOOC for Primary Education
- Free Digital Learning for Children 5-12
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About e-Learning for Kids Established in 2004, e-Learning for Kids is a global nonprofit foundation dedicated to fun and free learning on the Internet for children ages 5 - 12 with courses in math, science, language arts, computers, health and environmental skills. Since 2005, more than 15 million children in over 190 countries have benefitted from eLessons provided by EFKI. An all-volunteer staff consists of education and e-learning experts and business professionals from around the world committed to making difference. eLearning for Kids is actively seeking funding, volunteers, sponsors and courseware developers; get involved! For more information, please visit www.e-learningforkids.org.



Context the foundation

Composition the right people

Competencies developing the skills

Change the most effective ways

Part two looks at conflict management, part three, examines the type of team and part four focuses on the challenges teams have.

The *Team Development Manual Nov 1979* by Mike Woodcock ISBN-10: 0566021153 37
Illustrates a series of building blocks by use of a questionnaire that allows the manager or trainer to identify specific weaknesses in his or her team and to decide an appropriate action for overcoming them. The questionnaire covers the following areas:

1. *Balanced roles*
2. *Clear objectives and agreed goals*
3. *Openness and confrontation*
4. *Support and trust*
5. *Cooperation and conflict*
6. *Sound procedures*
7. *Appropriate leadership*
8. *Regular review*
9. *Individual development*
10. *Sound inter-group relations*
11. *Good communications*

6.2 TP6 THINKING POINTS FOR LEADERS (RELATIONSHIPS, TEAMS AND WORKING)

1. Personal mastery and team learning both form the foundation of our drive and mind set to create a team that learns and grows.
2. We have to start from where we are now, what's realistic and from the bottom up in order to bring the team with us.
3. Sometimes we start with the wrong thinking by starting out focusing on results that we will automatically achieve them, the foundations of trust and effective team relationships need to be in place.
4. By deepening relationships and developing of a feeling of camaraderie we will ensure the foundation is firm.
5. It's worthwhile to check what's working and not working in the team and the audit questionnaires like the one created by Mike Woodcock helps to draw out where the blocks are.

7 TEAM LEARNING: GETTING THE LESSONS LEARNED

7.1 LEARNING BY LOOPS - SINGLE, DOUBLE OR TRIPLE

Learning takes place in a number of ways. As we continue to reflect upon the experiences and activities we can draw different meaning from them. This premise was developed by Chris Argyris 38 (July 16, 1923 – November 16, 2013) who was an American business theorist, Professor Emeritus at Harvard Business School, and held the position of „Thought Leader“ at Monitor Group, co-founder of organisation development, and known for seminal work of learning organisations. He developed the theories of single, double and triple loop learning to explain how, when we look more deeply into a problem, we can see connections to other situations.

The following explanation shows clearly the differences and the point at which each loop is needed in organisations. I have adapted this from Adam Kahane: Solving Tough Problems, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler 2004 39

Single-Loop Learning

*Single-loop learning assumes that problems and their solutions are close to each other in time and space (though they often aren't). In this form of learning, we are primarily considering our actions. Small changes are made to specific practices or behaviours, based on what has or has not worked in the past. This involves doing things better without necessarily examining or challenging our underlying beliefs and assumptions. The goal is improvements and fixes that often take the form of procedures or rules. Single-loop learning leads to making minor fixes or adjustments. **Are we doing things right? (To follow the procedures or rules).***

Double-Loop Learning

*Double-loop learning leads to insights about why a solution works. In this form of learning, we are considering our actions in the framework of our operating assumptions. This is the level of process analysis where people become observers of themselves, asking, “What is going on here? What are the patterns?” We need this insight to understand the pattern. We change the way we make decisions and deepen understanding of our assumptions. Double-loop learning works with major fixes or changes, like redesigning an organisational function or structure. **Are we doing the right things? (Why this works, insights and patterns)***

Triple-Loop Learning

*Triple-loop learning involves principles. The learning goes beyond insight and patterns to context. The result creates a shift in understanding our context or point of view. We produce new commitments and ways of learning. This form of learning challenges us to understand how problems and solutions are related, even when separated widely by time and space. It also challenges us to understand how our previous actions created the conditions that led to our current problems. The relationship between organisational structure and behaviour is fundamentally changed because the organisation learns how to learn. The results of this learning includes enhancing ways to comprehend and change our purpose, developing better understanding of how to respond to our environment, and deepening our comprehension of why we chose to do things we do. **How do we decide what is right? (Why we want to be doing this, the principles).***

Within organisations there is often a drive to get onto the next thing, to move forward, to go to the next phase. Often it can be helpful to reflect on what just happened, to examine what led to this happening and what else could be done.

Types of Complexity—Why Double and Triple-Loop Learning Are Needed

When there are low levels of complexity, single-loop learning often will be enough to stay on track. Simple problems can be solved using processes that:

- *focus on the parts of a problem in isolation*
- *rely heavily on what has worked in the past or elsewhere (“best practices”), and*
- *are open to solutions proposed by leaders or experts*

When the levels of complexity in our work and the issues we are working with are high, it becomes more critical for us to be able to also use double- and triple-loop learning to:

- *succeed in new contexts*
- *make learning an integral activity*
- *to achieve results*

As we focus on lasting change in the organisation, we are dealing with increasingly high levels of complexity where success only comes through using processes that:

- *focus on working with all the parts as a single system*
- *accept that solutions emerge as situations unfold*
- *involve the concerned people in developing the solutions*

Organisations often apply the wrong type of loop as the solution and therefore end up redoing the work thus wasting time and effort in the long run.

7.2 USING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AS A NORMAL PROCESS

We all think through problems at work either to avoid repeating an experience or when we want to be better next time. As we reflect more often our ability to be self critical and pay attention to the details grows with practice.

Reflective practice is „*the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning*“. According to one definition it involves „paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively. This leads to developmental insight“. Davies (2012) *identifies that there are both benefits as well as limitations to reflective practice* (see table 5)

Benefits of reflection	Limitations of reflection
Increased learning from an experience for situation Promotion of deep learning Identification of personal and professional strengths and areas for improvement Identification of educational needs Acquisition of new knowledge and skills Further understanding of own beliefs, attitudes and values Encouragement of self-motivation and self-directed learning	Not everyone may understand the reflective process May feel uncomfortable challenging and evaluating own practice Could be time consuming May have confusion as to which situations/ experiences to reflect upon

For teams to be more effective in their decision making and promote learning and creativity, practising reflection adds value to:

- Coaching and mentoring
- Can be consolidated by keeping a journal
- Receiving and giving feedback in a more receptive way
- View experiences objectively
- Taking time to reflect-on-actions (even 5 or 10 minutes can pay dividends)
- Group discussion and building learning networks

7.3 USING ACTION LEARNING SETS, GROUPS AND TEAMS

Active learning occurs when a person takes control of their learning experience. Since understanding information is the key aspect of learning, it is important for people to recognize what they understand and what they do not. By doing so, they can monitor their own mastery of subjects.

Sometimes action learning is described as **L=P+Q+R** where L= **learning**, P = **programming (knowledge)** Q = **questioning** and R = **reflection** (pioneered by Reg Revans 40) <http://www.actionlearningassociates.co.uk/action-learning/reg-revans/reg-revans-a-biography/>

In her book *Group and Team coaching; Christine Thornton ISBN978-1-138-92358-4 Routledge (Chapter 7, learning group coaching, page 151)* 41 explains that: *Action learning is a means of structuring an individual's learning from experience, using the resources of other individuals in a group, to enable fuller more effective learning.*

- *It is a rigorous method with benefits in seeing the bigger picture*
- *Understanding complex situations more fully*
- *Reviewing and exploring options for action.*

Below is an illustration of what happens during an action learning session where team member ask for support with an issue



An Action Learning programme involves the following key elements:

- The Set: a group of 5 - 8 people who meet regularly
- The Projects: each participant works on a project or task over the life of the set
- The Set Advisor / leader: a facilitator (this might be the team's leader or external person from another department or an external facilitator/coach) who helps the group to work and learn together.

A 'meeting' involves a series of individual time slots where participants take turns in presenting their project/ challenge/ issue to the set. This will normally involve:

- An update of progress on actions from the last meeting
- A presentation of current issues/problems
- An agreement on actions for the future

Throughout the meeting other participants will work with the facilitator / leader (by listening and questioning) to help the presenting participant to decide what actions to take. Creating a learning agenda gives purpose focus and direction to the Set's activity rather than it being just a group of managers/leaders/coaches sitting around talking about things in general.

Each person should create an individual learning agenda. It should be based around a key task or project you are already engaged in (or will shortly be engaged in) at work. It should be sufficiently big to last the length of the programme (4-6 months or 5-6 contracted meetings) and should be complex enough for you to value the questions ideas and support and, challenge of people in your set.

A learning agenda should address the following questions: (that allows each team member to as themselves).

- What problems and issues am I currently facing within the team that I would like to manage better? Why is that important?
- Where am I now? What do I already know? What is the context? What is the history? What are my strengths and weaknesses in this area? How do other people see me?
- Where do I want to get to? What does success look like? What are my learning goals? How will I be different?
- How am I going to get there? How will I achieve my learning goals? What learning methods and resources will I use? Who can help me?
- How will I know if I've got there? What are the success indicators? What will I be able to do differently as a result?

One thing is clear. More and more corporations are turning to Action Learning because it is viewed as a way of transforming the culture and providing continuous learning. Some view it as the gateway to learning organisations. Most importantly, they have found it an excellent tonic for driving performance improvement.

Reflection is one of the most powerful forms of learning but in a 24/7 environment – faster and ever faster – it is often ignored. So, end each day by asking yourself what you have learned today and what does your business need to learn to be even better. Many studies

from large organisations like HO, CISCO and investigations from international consultancies like Mckinsey's have shown time and again that learning on the job, coaching and mentoring provide the best return and most significant learning for organisations.

Relevance of the learning is of the utmost importance so just-in-time and the right-time learning creates immediate and long term gains.

Using simple recording systems encourages a little and often approaches.

Six key questions for this are:

1. What's working?
2. What's not working?
3. What needs to start happening?
4. What do we need to do more of?
5. What do we need to do less of?
6. What do we need to stop doing?

Organisations need to create a learning environment that gets small ideas and micro forms of learning established and encouraged, reflect more to gain real insight (a real challenge today's rapid and immediate age).

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I was a construction supervisor in the North Sea advising and helping foremen solve problems

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7.4 TEAM COACHING THE NEXT STEP FOR TEAM EVOLUTION?



There are a range of approaches to enable a team to develop, one of which is Team Coaching *Team coaching is coaching a team to achieve a common goal paying attention both to individual performance and group collaboration and performance.*

To be able to be coached as a team the team must be small enough (3-10) for all individuals to be actively involved when they are in one group **Group and Team coaching Christine Thornton ISBN978-1-138-92358-4 Routledge (chapter 6 Team Coaching). 41**

Team coaching may be a one off event or a series of events and is usually the product of one or more members of the team having a successful coaching relationship with an external executive coach.

Described below are the main factors in coaching and mentoring and how each can be helpful to a team. See table 6 below

Main factors	Coaching	Mentoring
Focus	Focus is generally on development/ issues at work.	The focus is on career and personal development.
Relationship		
Roles	The relationship between the coach and individual generally has a short duration, 3 to 6 months.	Ongoing relationship that can last for a long time, 2 to 3 years in some cases.
Processes		
Environment	To enable insight, learning and realisation to take place.	To impart experience of the organisation's culture, leadership style and strategy.
Duration	Generally more structured in nature and meetings scheduled on a regular basis.	Can be more informal and meetings can take place as and when the mentored individual needs some guidance and/or support.
Experience required or not	The need for privacy applies in both disciplines.	The need for privacy applies in both disciplines.
Agenda		
Progression	Short-term (sometimes time bounded) and focused on specific development areas/issues.	More long term and takes a broader view of the person.
	Generally performed on the basis that coach needs no direct experience of the client's formal occupational role.	Mentor usually passes on experience and is normally more senior in organisation.
	Agenda focused on achieving specific, immediate goals.	Agenda is set by the mentored person with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare them for future roles.
	Evolves more around specific development areas/issues.	Revolves more around developing the client professionally.

This table is adapted from the book: What is effective coaching and mentoring at work and shows the key elements and differences between coaching and mentoring (Conner& Pokora 2012 p.16) 42

7.5 TP7 THINKING POINTS FOR LEADERS (ACTION, REFLECTION AND SUPPORT)

1. Learning needs time to be reflected upon (create the space) and to go around the learning loops

2. Teams need to have discussions that are meaningful and sometimes difficult, to say the things that have been unsaid; support is essential through appropriate coaching and mentoring.
3. Trust and openness are key (I say this in nearly every chapter).
4. Action learning has two elements – action and learning – both are equally important.
5. There are many tools available to teams; understand what the team wants to achieve before selecting one (providing experiences is the greatest tool: secondments, multi-function project, outside organisations).
6. Insight comes from a sense of unease or provocation that moves the person to act differently (being comfortable is sometimes the enemy).
7. Watch out for the little things they might not be little- what is little to you may be a big thing for others.

8 TEAM COLLABORATION: BRINGING PEOPLE ALONG

8.1 MAKING IT STICK

In a recent (October 2018) Trainingzone article <https://www.trainingzone.co.uk/> by Becky Norman 43 summarised some of the main themes from the world of learning conference. Describing the learning she had gained when attending a series of workshops she reported that *Should L&D be a curator or an enforcer of organisational learning as described by Rafal Szaniawski Former Chief Learning Officer of Deloitte Switzerland, Learning transfer is not given the love and care it needs to work. We are at a moment in time where learning teams need to assess how they wish to operate in the future, and Szaniawski highlights that curation is a bold and exciting path to take as it gives L&D professionals the freedom to “experiment, invent and reinvent” with their approach.*

According to research by Robert Brinkerhoff, only 15% of learners try to apply what they've learnt and get positive results.

The requirement to make learning stick is crucial to learning's success

Haven't we heard this all before twenty and thirty or more years ago by all forms of educationalists and specialist learning professionals. The trouble is all these well intentioned and highly skilled people don't in many circumstances have the organisational clout to follow through on the many highly inventive and well thought out changes they can identify. Without the leadership and organisational will to embed learning as a change strategy into the organisations way of working, learning and changing mind sets becomes sidelined.

8.2 FOLLOWING THROUGH

The trick is to work towards a collaborative approach as early in the teams' life as possible so that it becomes the norm. Collaboration is about getting everyone involved and is often defined as *Collaboration is the process of two or more people getting to the stage where life is great and the team is curious and fully engaged to complete a task or achieve a goal. Most collaboration requires leadership, although the form of leadership can be social within a decentralized and egalitarian group. Teams that work collaboratively often access greater resources, recognition and rewards when facing competition for finite resources.*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaboration> 44

So be persistent (as the leader) be consistent and keep it going. Avoid the pressure and the panic of the now.

8.3 CHANGING THE PATTERN

In today's highly competitive and potentially highly destructive market, business leaders need to be able to collaborate and work with the best in their industry. Being able to move forward quickly and take advantage of spur of the moment opportunities is essential for success and any delay to decisions is costly. The problem can sometimes be that the system inside the organisation starts to grow and develop one set of principles while the stated aim and values of the organisation shows another set of principles resulting in a paradox of reality against aspiration.

Organisations need to explore what binds them and keeps them together; the glue that holds the tension in place. The glue is much more about how to grow these shared values and understanding so people can feel involved, recognise their part in the wider business and feel valued.

Think reflectively, think differently but above all else think.

8.4 WHAT'S REALLY THE PROBLEM?

Well it's you and me and them, it's looking for a quick fix where none exists and it's using speed to replace effectiveness.

Embedding team learning is complex but organisational life and human beings are complex too and we have lived with complexity all our lives, sometimes we underestimate the adaptability and ability of teams however we need to give our teams the focus and motivation to see that learning will provide the answers.

Ten hacks for embedding learning through collaboration

1. Focus on building trust and respect, the foundation of everything.
2. Highly/ over competitive people can kill your team, watch out for the tipping point when it becomes a problem for the team.
3. Build an embedding collaboration strategy around your people that helps everyone to succeed.
4. Sharing successes and sharing when things go wrong is essential to help the learning to stick, avoiding blame and looking for what can be gained is the only way forward.

5. Use embedding as an organisational change strategy so that the effectiveness of how learning is achieved and developed in teams is a lynchpin of your employee engagement activities.
6. Promote the desire of team members to develop effective relationships with each other.
7. Watch everyone's body language and your own, there are always lots of non verbal signals.
8. Use envisioning as a team sport (think of the All Blacks in Rugby or Manchester City in Football or the USA Woman's Gymnastics Team).
9. Utilise everyone's different views and diverse experiences to build a rounded team of learners.
10. Watch out for when a close team becomes a closed team thinking that only its own team members are important rather than the larger organisational team. A closed team causes another form of unhelpful competitiveness.

The three Tedtalks below illustrate how teamwork is being reviewed as an activity and how in the future we will need to draw upon all our resources to survive and thrive in an ever increasingly competitive work (by the way the future is here now)

Teamwork Reimagined Kevin Cahill 45

<https://youtu.be/UwsMogSQmYI>

Imagine the possibilities of a world powered by teamwork, guided by a culture of “we” not “me” thinking and actions. Kevin Cahill, Executive Director of The W. Edwards Deming Institute¹, explores a new vision of teamwork and the limitless potential and connecting power of a collaborative society. Kevin Cahill volunteers full-time as the Executive Director of The W. Edwards Deming Institute¹, a non-profit organisation dedicated to enriching society through The Deming Philosophy.

Making the Future JP Cadoso 46

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fd_nkBHgX8s

JP Cardoso is a young engineering exchange student from Brazil who is studying at the Fontys University of Applied Sciences. JP will give an easy-going talk about motivation, serendipity and

collaboration that shows that the most important things in our lives are not what we do, make, build and create - but the people who are there doing it with us.

Creating a culture of collaborative innovation Claire Madden 47

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaN6FtJ8inA>

What will workplaces look like when the most material endowed, technologically literate, formally educated, and globally connected generations reach employment age? Claire gives us an insight into what the future of work could look like with Gen Z and Gen Alpha at the wheel. Claire Madden is a social researcher who effectively bridges the gap between the emerging generations and the business leaders and educators of today.

How to encourage a learning-orientated team?

1. How **team members and humans** as a whole learn is understood and used as a platform for greater learning
2. A climate of trust and mutual respect is established where team members can be sensitive to one another's' feelings and feel free from coercion.
3. Team learning is an **action orientated process** - something must happen as a result of the learning
4. Team members can: **participate freely and fully** in collaborative problem-solving through dialogue and shared leadership roles, they can engage in continual re-negotiation of activities and priorities in which competing claims may be put forward, assessed and deliberated
5. Team members can **share progressively in decision making** and are encouraged to take different perspectives, attitudes and roles
6. Team members can **ask questions, receive accurate and considerate feedback,** and reflect themselves.
7. Team members can **think critically and reflectively;** can question what is taken for granted and challenge established ways of thinking and belief systems; they can engage in problem-setting and re-framing.
8. Team members can **experiment and use their creativity** without suffering detrimental consequences
9. Team members are **free to pursue self-directed learning** and are encouraged to become increasingly empowered in their work.
10. Learning through **mentoring, coaching and small group work is used** as a normal practice with team members being coached and coaching others

(adapted and updated from the initial work of Source: Mezirow 1987) 48

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Mezirow (Jack Mezirow was one of the major theorists of the Humanism theory of Transformative Learning. Mezirow is notably considered the founder of Transformative Learning. This theory operates under the idea that learning is more than merely the acquisition of information. Rather, Transformative Learning is process where learners critically reflect on life experiences, including culture, religion, etc. allowing their perspectives and points of view to be challenged, thus evolving in new learning)

8.5 TP8 THINKING POINTS (COLLABORATION, COLLABORATION, COLLABORATION)

1. Use the thinking points from chapters 1-7 as a way of challenging “how and what” you are working on with your team.
2. Creativity, learning and making it (the learning) stick helps the team to become more resilient and adaptable.
3. Realise that learning is not always easy, but it’s always useful.
4. Be open, even to criticism (defensiveness gives you defeat).
5. Conflict and provocation within the team, if well managed and facilitated, can help the team grow (you too).
6. Working with different team members is the key (in age, in heritage, in gender, in experience, in outlook).
7. Work with people as fellow learners and adults who may have different roles and skills but need to have the same desire to succeed (the true leader’s job).

In conclusion the team’s ability to learn, share its learning and respect and use the differences in the team is a key competitive advantage. The leader needs to act as a facilitator and educator with a highly developed range of interpersonal skills that can promote effective relationships within the team, to the benefit of the individual team itself and the organisation as a whole. This is what separates us from artificial intelligences’ (at the moment) and defines our ability to adapt and be the highly creative beings that have made flights to the moon and created such complex and diverse organisations.

9 ENDNOTES

I have used the references below to illustrate and explain the nature of employee engagement; I have used books, academic papers, online resources and appropriate blogs so that readers who prefer a range of media can access them more easily. If the link doesn't open please copy and paste it into your browser.

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Web sites and blogs that have further information

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www.viame.org/survey VIA Character Strengths survey
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