

Where did a learning culture come from?

01

Context

Those who work in the area of people and organizational development need to be clear about what a learning culture is. The term is being increasingly bandied about with looser and looser meaning attached. It is clearly a good thing – but we do not know how good or why!

The purpose of this chapter is to take the concept of organizational culture back to its roots and then situate the concept of a learning culture within that frame. What is clear is that these two terms are not the same, but the conditions for the latter depend to a huge extent on the nature of the former. Poor organizational cultures with a lack of trust and disengaged staff, with a climate of fear at their heart, will never build the conditions for a learning culture, or sustain one.

That is not to say that a learning culture has nothing to do with learning. In the case study later in the chapter, I trace how a learning leader can work with the organization to build that culture, and there is much in the remit of a learning team that can make a huge difference in favour of or against a learning culture.

The trajectory of the chapter takes us through Josh Bersin and Towards Maturity's models for developing a learning culture and offers up Marcia Connor's learning culture self-audit to help the reader shape their ideas and assist them on the vital first steps of the learning culture journey. Microsoft is used as an example of an organization transforming rapidly and consciously, under the watchful and dynamic eye of their new CEO, into a highly complex learning

organization, as the company builds a deep and organization-wide learning culture. A short case study is then offered to show the journey one organization took from a traditional attitude to learning to a serious and nascent learning culture.

All of the elements listed above provide some indication of the way to move forward if you are committed to redefining the culture of your organization and building a strong learning culture. No element has all the answers and there is no magic formula, but the combination of insights should help you along that journey.

The link between organizational culture and learning culture

What is organizational culture?

As soon as anyone speaks about organizational culture, one name leaps out from the extensive bibliography of the subject. That person really defined the field almost 40 years ago: the MIT Professor Edgar H Schein. His seminal book on the topic, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, is now in its fifth edition, having first been published in the 1980s. Edgar Schein's son Peter co-authored the fifth edition (2016) and points out the trajectory of organizational culture across those 40 years. That concept has morphed from 'being something everyone at work had a vague sense was guiding behaviour' to being 'touted as a firm's greatest virtue, [and] being leveraged for strategic change' (Schein, 2016). What was once barely articulated is now eagerly debated and actively managed. What emerged with hardly any conscious manipulation is now shared, developed and cultivated. What was implicit is now increasingly, and deliberately, explicit.

In a celebrated book that builds on Schein's research and ideas, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind* (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010), the authors point out that each person absorbs many layers of culture. It is not a single thing or a single experience. It has many layers. The first layer emanates from the country or countries an individual belongs to, and their region or ethnic group also has considerable impact on defining who someone is. Gender plays a part,

as does the generation that the person belongs to. Their social class and occupation are also critical. The final level is ‘the way employees have been socialized by their work organization’ (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). This comes a long way down the scale of influence and is the last significant cultural influence. It is, therefore, impossible to discuss learning culture without at least an acknowledgment of the role that all our cultural experiences play and how they inform and engage with organizational culture, in particular.

The software of the mind refers to the mental constructs and assumptions that we all build, in order to make sense of the world and our place within it. It is a unique attribute of human beings. And it is no less prevalent in an organization than in any other manifestation of culture. These mental models are built out of a number of elements. Schein lists 12 of them. They range from small, observable norms of behaviour, such as when colleagues greet each other, to formal rituals and celebrations which include rites of passage, and traditions established when projects finish or rituals surrounding outstanding endeavour or reward and promotion. It includes ‘espoused values’, which define explicitly the nature of the organization. Google’s exhortation, ‘don’t be evil’, is an example of one such value. They help define the rules by which the organization operates, and the climate both inside the workplace for its workforce as well as how the organization is experienced by customers and by outsiders (Schein, 2016: 56–58).

But what is organizational culture in the first place? Schein favours a dynamic definition of culture. He sees it as: ‘The accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems’ (Schein, 2016: 61).

The process therefore has ‘accumulated learning’ at its heart as ‘beliefs, values, and behavioural norms’ are absorbed and adopted to the point that they are unconscious in the organization and the individual (Schein, 2016: 61). At this point they become a way of being, rather than a way of knowing. But this process is never concluded. As circumstances change, the culture evolves and adapts

almost seamlessly as new problems are solved, new people arrive or the external environment changes.

Schein has continued to explore organizational culture over a number of decades and his model has become – if anything – more complex over the years. But one factor is consistent throughout his research, and that is his belief in the primacy of the CEO. In an interview with Tim Kuppler, which is on Schein's Organizational Culture and Leadership Institute website (www.scheinocil.org), he claims that: 'if you are really dealing with a cultural variable, like the degree to which it is constructive, you really have to start with the CEO. You cannot change culture in the middle... the culture piece is owned by the CEO, whether he or she admits it or not.' This simple but striking point can be illustrated by looking at the huge changes in workplace culture in Microsoft since Satya Nadella took over the running of the company.

The change of CEO at Microsoft

Satya Nadella became the CEO of Microsoft in February 2014, replacing Steve Ballmer, who had been appointed by Bill Gates in the early days of the company and took over the CEO role from him in 2000. Ballmer had signalled his intention to retire in August 2013 and that six-month search for a replacement had led to much speculation about who would be named as his successor. The role was seen as slightly toxic as Microsoft was underperforming; however, many outstanding CEOs had been touted for the role including the former CEO of Ford, and CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes Alan Mulally, who is now on the Google board of directors. But when the name emerged, it was greeted with a degree of astonishment. Up until that moment, Nadella had been a well-respected senior executive in the company running the Cloud Services division. He was not a Ballmer insider, and was not well known to the outside world... and he had never run a company. So, the naming of Nadella sent shockwaves through the tech industry sector. The appointment was perceived as a signal that big changes were needed at the company and that a seismic shift for Microsoft was about to occur. Many saw this as putting the future of the company at risk.

Although Ballmer had grown revenues by 300 per cent and doubled profits during his tenure, Microsoft's share price had stalled. It was no longer the poster child of Wall Street. While still being a huge, profitable corporation, its growth was slowing down and it appeared to rely on, essentially, 'old' technologies for the majority of that revenue (Nazario, 2014; Curtis, 2013). In a world gravitating from the desktop PC to the smartphone, Microsoft was locked into the past, and its attempts to gain a foothold, initially with its own Windows phones and then its purchase of Nokia, were both seen as expensive failures. Indeed, when Ballmer had been shown the first iPhone in a TV interview in 2007, he treated it as an alien object, and was reluctant to even touch it. And finally, having given it a cursory glance, he declared that it would fail in the market as no one would want a phone that did not have a proper keyboard with real keys! That interview appeared, particularly in retrospect, to sum up Ballmer as someone who simply 'did not get it'. And Microsoft was seen by many as a failing giant. No one was very surprised when Ballmer stepped down, but the appointment of Nadella was a completely different story.

In stark contrast with Microsoft was the fate of its once fierce competitor Apple – the inventor of the touchscreen smartphone. Apple's revenues had rocketed after the 2007 iPhone launch, and that process of rapid adoption created a shift away from tethered computers to a 'super computer in your pocket'. The rapid shift to wireless and mobile computing became a defining moment both in terms of technology and a younger generation's dominant lifestyle. So successful was this process that, in 2017, over two-thirds of Apple's entire company revenue came from iPhone sales. And its computer operating system, MACos, a competitor to the ubiquitous Windows environment, kept ahead of Windows and was updated every year. But unlike Windows the new version had been given away as a free download to its customers for many years so the vast majority of customers were up to date, and this simplified processes. Microsoft had to manage multiple iterations of its operating system, some of which (notably Windows XP) were nearly 10 years old. This turnaround in Apple's fortunes transitioned it from a niche player into the largest company in the world by market capitalization, a status once occupied by Microsoft at the turn of the 21st century.

Fast Company published an extensive interview with Nadella by Harry McCracken, the technology editor for the journal (McCracken, 2017). It is a sympathetic portrait of a CEO who is in the process of transforming that company. During his brief tenure, Nadella has already added \$250 billion to the value of the company. This is a remarkable achievement in its own right, particularly as most of that revenue has come from new products and services, but this is not the focus of the article on Nadella; it concentrates not on his business strategy, but on cultural change inside the company.

The article recounts how, before he had his first executive meeting, he asked his senior management team to read one book: Marshall Rosenberg's *Nonviolent Communication* (2015). It is a book about the power of empathy and indicates how an individual can develop sensitivity towards others. With chapter headings such as 'Communication that blocks compassion', 'Observing without evaluating', and 'Expressing appreciation in non-violent communication', it espouses a four-part communication model that involves: 'what I observe' and 'what you observe'; 'how I feel' and 'how you feel'; 'what I need or value' and 'what you need or value', and finally 'the concrete actions I would like taken' and 'the concrete actions you would like taken'. These are expressed in terms such as 'would you be willing to...?' (Rosenberg, 2015: 266), rather than handing out instructions. It would have been the clearest signal possible, to Nadella's top executives, that things were going to be different, and the new culture in Microsoft would be far less abrasive and much more empathetic. The interviewer sums this up as:

Nadella's approach is gentler. He believes human beings are wired to have empathy, and that's essential not only for creating harmony at work but also for making products that will resonate. 'You have to be able to say, "Where is this person coming from?"' he says. "'What makes them tick? Why are they excited or frustrated by something that is happening, whether it's about computing or beyond computing?'" (McCracken, 2017)

In Nadella's time as CEO a whole raft of new products have appeared, both hardware and software, and the company has shifted its focus to the cloud and cloud-based services. Alongside the new approach inside the organization has been a new alignment outside. Nadella is

as interested in how a Kenyan internet café is leveraging Microsoft products and services, as he is in domestic corporate use. He is as proud of a book-reading software application, developed by a team in the Microsoft Research Centre in Istanbul, as he is in Redmond-developed software. His vision is holistic, and he appears to care about making the world a better place. And this new focus seems to be paying off handsomely. It is also hard, talking to Microsoft staff, to find anyone who has a harsh word to say about Nadella. He is widely respected and, just as Schein indicated, the culture has changed from the top and is now resonating through the whole company. This makes very good business sense and has created a sense of purpose and mission for the company, once again.

Nadella is a serial learner. His office is full of books; he reads constantly and expects his staff to as well. And his interests range far more broadly than the technology sector to which he belongs. This is clear from his choice of Marshall Rosenberg's book for his senior staff. So, at the heart of Microsoft now, is engagement with the world, attempting to learn from others and stay in touch with changes in Africa as much as in Washington State, together with a strong remit to learn faster and to share. At the heart of the organization that Nadella is building is a fundamental learning culture, from top to bottom, that will enable the company to react far faster to changes in its external environment than it was able to in the past.

Organizational culture and learning culture

We need to be able to differentiate between organizational culture and learning culture. They are clearly related, but they are, equally clearly, not the same thing. In this respect, it is useful to begin by discussing the work of the celebrated University of Pennsylvania Professor of Anthropology Greg Urban. He muses in an article that he wrote in 2007 about the continuities and differences between car models as they evolve over time (Urban, Baskin and Kyung-Koh, 2007). His focus is the 2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee. Car manufacturers always tout a revised model as 'new', but invariably it has the look and feel of the manufacturer, as well as the previous evolutions

of the brand in past model years. Urban notes this seeming contradiction, and then explains it in cultural terms by redefining the concept of a 'shared cultural model'. Ironically, when corporations are shown those evident 'cultural continuities' they are disappointed! They prefer the image that constant reinvention suggests: 'Even when continuity is patent... they tout newness and innovation, seemingly denying the powerful role of the past as a force shaping the present.'

This perception encouraged the author to reject the enduring concept of organizational culture developed and refined over the last 50 years. The 'shared culture model', similar to the definition given by Edgar Schein above, is replaced by a more complex and uneven idea of culture. Urban sees culture almost as a virus. It is contagious and passes from person to person but unevenly. Some get completely contaminated, while others are not touched at all. It can also leap from one community or geography to another very fast, and the patterns of contagion are varied and complex. He calls this 'a circulatory model' because the transmission of culture is uneven. Permeation is not consistent as people absorb myths in varying degrees, and as cultural elements are absorbed they are reshaped in the same way that stories are reshaped in the telling and their movement is complex, straying often beyond their defined grouping into new areas. In Urban's words: 'The myth told by b to c is not precisely the same as the myth told by a to b... This is also a premise of much of the research on globalization of culture' (Urban, Baskin and Kyung-Koh, 2007).

For Urban, we can surmise that a learning culture is a natural cross-check inside an organization; it maintains, but also holds to account, the overall organizational culture. It does this by reference to the outside world. A learning culture seeks meaning and reference from outside and ensures that knowledge and insight gained is rapidly transmitted around the organization. A strong learning culture is the antidote and the enabler of Urban's 'circulatory model'. It holds the culture to account, while also acting as the transmission medium for new ideas and new realities and the agent for change. So, a learning culture feeds off organizational culture, but also ensures its evolution and longevity. And in a fast-changing world, it may be the only way that alignment can be maintained inside an organization, and between an organization and the outside world.

That is the reason I developed the idea of an organizational gyroscope. It stands as a metaphor for the way that an organization stays aligned, both internally and with the external environment. Gyroscopes are stunning pieces of equipment that allow you to hold one side without the device falling over. It keeps everything steady and balanced and seems to defy gravity. Without gyroscopes planes could not fly.

A gyroscope, like a modern organization, is in the process of constant adjustment. And a learning culture stops an organization collapsing because, when turbulence occurs, it helps the organization regain its own equilibrium. That process of holding a culture to account avoids atrophy and ultimately, therefore, avoids oblivion. And as the world outside changes faster, the gyroscope becomes more and more necessary as a tool to maintain a balance, while adjusting to those external changes. It is, critically, about moving forward without too many shocks and without too much turbulence. It is, after all, always better to know which way is up!

Building learning cultures: a conversation with Naomi Lockwood

I spoke to Naomi Lockwood, a learning and OD specialist with huge experience of corporate L&D in a career spanning roles in an NHS Foundation Trust, a pharmaceutical company, and an examination and testing body.

Her first point was to emphasize that the key to developing a learning culture was to work hard to shift traditional and often transactional training and development functions, into transformational learning and development (performance enhancing) teams. It is often the case, in the former model, that what is on offer, as learning, is a catalogue of courses that can be selected and taken. Staff are often given the option of choosing around one or two a year from the catalogue, making the choice sometimes on what looks interesting, rather than what is useful in terms of their job skills. In this instance, learning teams are on the fringes of the organization, a long way from strategy development and the corporate centre,

but nevertheless trying to do good work, without the traction or the connection necessary to make a real difference.

Naomi has a track record of putting learning centre stage, and she does this not by offering more of the same – a fatter catalogue – but by developing cultures of learning across the whole organization. This changes everything, fundamentally, in terms of the role of the learning team and requires a shift in perception from them, the corporate centre and the rest of the organization.

This transition for learning teams is about working in partnership with the organization, by helping to achieve its goals and aspirations, rather than operating as an independent group outside the dominant direction of travel of the organization as a whole. In other words, learning strategies have to be developed that not only support and enable organizations, and the people within them, to perform at their best and achieve their potential, but to extend that role into building cultures of learning. She believes that a learning culture is owned by everyone and built by everyone. It cannot be imposed.

In Naomi's experience, three critical elements are required to build a learning culture and they fit in to a convenient acronym: ART. A learning culture develops when the learning is in *Alignment*, has *Relevance* and is *Timely*.

Alignment

This is a baseline for learning strategy: whatever learning is offered, it has to be completely aligned and contribute to the achievement of the organizational strategy. The way that you ensure this is by really getting under the skin of the organization at multiple levels – by asking questions such as: what is the organization's fundamental purpose and what is it trying to achieve? What are the frameworks of expectation here (job descriptions, performance management frameworks, strategies, values frameworks, competency frameworks)? What do people need to know that will help them get things done? What is stopping them now? How is learning viewed by key stakeholders?

If learning professionals do not understand these expectations, it is unlikely that whatever they build will ultimately be fit for purpose. Naomi's approach, therefore, goes further than arguing for an 'on paper' alignment between the organizational strategy and that of the

learning team. Her model calls for an alignment of language, alignment to organizational culture and individual aspirations, and to the key performance indicators (KPIs) of the business.

Alignment is the key to shifting learning from its position on the periphery, in terms of perception and impact, to one of a core contributor of value. And shifting the output of learning from individual choice to a corporate and strategic imperative makes it a key player that can reinforce and enable the strategic direction of the company.

Relevance

Relevance is also a fundamental component. Learning has to directly help people execute their role, and it should enhance their performance. It is verging on self-indulgence if this is not the focus. In addition, any learning organization has to take account of and build on how people learn in practice, both inside and out of work. This means understanding where they go to solve problems, gain knowledge and skills, and use this direction of travel to help build capability. This is the point where greater integration occurs between the formal learning programme, informal and social learning, together with learning on the job (in essence, the 70:20:10 model).

As people's access to information and technology changes, both at work and at home, the modes of learning provided by the workplace should also evolve. In an app-centric, mobile and Google-search dominated world, our learning is immediate, delivered at the moment of need and is sufficient for our purpose. It should be no less impactful when learning at work.

It is also important to figure out who is doing the learning and for what purpose. There are many instances in classroom-based or virtual classroom learning where a participant says, 'I am not sure why I am here, but I was sent here by my manager'. These are the people who often do not see or understand the relevance of the learning for them, and it is of questionable value for them. They are hardly present.

When people undertake self-directed learning – from Googling something to watching a YouTube video – it is usually perceived as relevant because the purpose is clear: it is to solve an immediate problem, answer a pressing question, or gain an alternative, expert viewpoint.

An L&D team needs to build on these insights. Organizations that wish to develop cultures of learning need to adapt to the needs and the current experience of their learners and this often means minimizing the times you send people away on training courses. The key role for an L&D team is to enhance relevant learning, not multiply the instances of irrelevant learning. The team can add most value by understanding and engaging with what the individual does outside the workplace. There is an apparently unstoppable trend towards self-directed learning and augmenting it in line with organizational strategy and individual development goals. Learning needs always exceed what it is possible for the organization to deliver, so the learners have to remain in the driving seat in order to work out their own priorities.

Timeliness

Timeliness is the third pillar and is a crucial element of the full process. It is possible to exploit the pace of technological development to prioritize ‘just in time’ learning. This is simply fulfilling expectations rather than doing anything radically new. L&D teams can add value to people and organizations by ensuring anything they curate, contextualize, develop or deliver happens at the right time for the right people. The focus should be on getting it to the right people at the right time, rather than imposing a fixed timetable of delivery or dishing out learning on a ‘the more the better’ principle.

One example of old and new thinking is how induction for new starters is handled. The focus should be on timely delivery of what is needed to ensure the individual gets up to speed as quickly as possible, thereby ensuring optimum performance in the shortest possible time. Booking someone on a face-to-face induction two months after they start work, because the programme needs a minimum number to be viable, and then delivering set content, regardless of need or concern, is largely ineffective and a waste of time and money. Induction should be timely, targeted and individualized in order to add real value and do what it is supposed to do, ie introduce staff to the organization that they have just joined and prepare them for a specific role within it. That is what the organization needs from induction. It is more useful than setting up a three-day face-to-face course regardless, and then running it once every three months, irrespective of how many people started work and when.

Using the ART model

How do you use the ART model? In other words, how do you work out what Aligned, Relevant and Timely means in your organization's terms? The key to this is to build strong links between the learning organization and the rest of the business and thoroughly engage. And the best way to do that, in multiple industries and different-sized organizations, is to take the time to engage at multiple levels, and then listen carefully to what you are being told.

She found that surveying every member of staff to understand what would make the most difference to them was hugely profitable. The focus was always on what would enhance people's performance and help them realize their potential – not asking them what training they would like, or worse, attempting to sell programmes that had been pre-agreed by the learning team into the organization. Instead of creating a long wish list to add to the training catalogue, it is imperative to try to understand where the blockers to performance lie and deal with them first.

She also spent time engaging senior leaders, including the board, through a process of inquiry and conversation, trying to understand their vision for learning and development and beginning to articulate that on their behalf. She used the frame of learning to understand and reflect back the organization to key influencers.

In large organizations, Naomi has used the World Café approach invented by Juanita Brown. This enabled groups ranging from 10 to over 500 participants to have coherent and focused discussions on specific topics. World Café is a defined process that encourages groups to build on each other's insights rather than work separately. The process has multiple benefits, including getting quickly to a shared vision, and creating an organizational buzz about the power and potential of organizational learning, while also generating lots of data. If the focus is on learning it can reveal what a learning culture needs to look like in the context of a specific organization. And that provides a simple agenda for action. Once agree, it is then possible to create a comprehensive plan for the development and the activity of the learning team.

This collection of data, together with trying to understand the evolving organizational context, is a continuing rather than a one-off process. In addition, it is important to identify people in the rest

of the business who simply 'get it'. They are the trendsetters and the influencers, and they usually have an acute sense of what needs to be done. These are the ones who should be recruited as champions and spokespeople to sell the ideas and the benefits of learning to the rest of the organization and act as role models. This coalition can go a long way to ensuring that learning and the learning team remain aligned, relevant and timely.

In addition to this process of securing an agenda and building relevance into the L&D offering, and core to the underpinning philosophy discussed above, are three critical enablers of any successful learning culture. The first of these is to secure the backing and active support of leaders and managers. Secondly, the organization needs to develop reflective practitioners alongside the third enabler, which is an engaged and proactive L&D team.

On more than one occasion in this chapter, it has been acknowledged that leaders and managers are crucial to the development and future success of any learning culture. If they do not take it seriously or flagrantly disregard the behaviours, success going forward is almost impossible. As an example, quoted by Naomi, when you hear staff in organizations arguing that they do not have time for learning it often masks a conflict with their line manager. When you explore a little more deeply, it is the line manager who has no time for learning rather than his or her staff. In this instance, individuals feel they dare not engage in formal learning as it is a career-limiting activity. It is, after all, managers who dedicate resources and investment within their teams, and often decide on promotion or reward.

Where leaders and managers are on board, they often create a positive climate for the learning and development of their staff. This does not mean merely signing off training request forms via an LMS, but rather understanding what kind of learning will enhance performance, meet individual motivation and unleash potential. And the best leaders and managers approach this holistically and understand that all solutions should include both formal and informal learning as part of a balanced mix, and couple learning with other kinds of challenges to help individuals move forward in their career.

These managers and leaders are the ones who encourage and support continuing development throughout the organization, partly by offering sponsorship, and partly by what they say and what they

do. The opposite is also true: their negative behaviour can wreck any initiatives. If they are not brought on board, and if they see little value in what L&D is offering, or its positive impact on the team's performance, their opposition is almost impossible to overcome.

The second enabler is the need to develop reflective practitioners. If any learning culture is to flourish, there is a real need to reflect on what has been learned. This is partly about quietly trying to work out how the new skills or insights might be used to overcome some of the current work challenges, but also to think about how learning can challenge current assumptions. At a time when organizations need to become more adaptable and agile to survive, building reflective practitioners should be core to this process. We also know that the brain needs quiet time to process and build strong connections as it tries to make sense of the world (Royal Society, 2011). And it is also clear that reflective practitioners should not just emerge from the senior leadership. Organizations need reflective practitioners spread throughout the business.

An essential element of any learning organization is an established belief that learning is important and should happen all over the place, all the time, and not be focused on courses. The concept of the reflective practitioner implies that any insights gathered, and learning nuggets collected, can be captured, discussed and disseminated and find their way quickly into work. The aim is to encourage better and better performance, essentially owned and driven by everyone in the organization. The CEO of the UK's Learning and Performance Institute, Edmund Monk (2017), described it simply as 'learning is everywhere'.

Creating an environment where people are true citizens of a learning culture means that for them, each interaction, conversation, meeting and exchange is seen as a learning opportunity. There is a role for L&D teams in supporting and disseminating this. For example, they can offer practical guidance on how to encourage reflective practice. Reflection time can be encouraged at the end of a meeting, before everyone leaves the room, maybe only for five minutes, to discuss and consider what is agreed has been learned. L&D can encourage staff to keep journals, video logs or simply write down insights on sticky notes before they are forgotten. Allocating time at the beginning or end of a day (or both) just to think about what

you have learned, or what you need to accomplish, can be performance enhancing and developmental. These things are small nudges in themselves, but contribute hugely to developing and reinforcing that culture, as they evolve into corporate habits and become the way the organization does things and defines part of the organization's values.

The third aspect is the evolution of the learning team. In order to keep up with changing technology, increasing complexity, globalization and the nature of work itself, learning teams must change. Every element of what they do has to be reviewed and modified. Their focus shifts to concentrate on how the organization can be helped to perform better, not how many courses can be run in a given time span.

In Naomi's experience, she has often found that traditional L&D teams are made up of trainers delivering courses, often without any alignment to organizational strategy. Even more limiting are those teams consisting of (often very enthusiastic) L&D professionals who simply commission other (often external) L&D professionals and act only as form processors and administrators. They are at two stages removed from the direction of travel of their organization.

The growth of L&D as a profession, and the enabling of the role of L&D professionals should be predicated on their ability to facilitate organizational learning, and encourage, sustain and enhance cultures of learning. It is important to build both the capacity and the capability of internal teams wherever possible, so that they can get alongside their organizations to ensure that learning is aligned, relevant and timely. It is almost impossible to outsource that process.

The skills of the new L&D professional are different to those of traditional trainers, and include: facilitation skills, research skills, marketing skills, influencing skills, digital content development, curation skills and creative skills. However, that skill set should go further to include process skills, such as working in partnership or stakeholder management, together with coaching and performance optimization, as well as programme management, user design, user data analysis, and even selling or negotiation skills. Finally, all learning professionals now need a deep understanding of how to encourage, sustain and promote the power of learning through experience.

If, ultimately, L&D teams are there to optimize performance (individual, team and organization) they have to understand how to work

with leaders and managers to help them improve the performance of their teams. Ultimately, the ability to work with leaders and managers to shift the needle will encourage lots of small conversations to take place all over the organization that focus on performance. The implication is that these discussions will occur at regular intervals and should replace large, unwieldy appraisal conversations that happen once a year. The generation of a learning culture has the L&D team at its heart but they do not own it. This is a fundamental element of the new L&D function.

Summary

By developing a culture that encourages asking questions, reflection on practice and asking for feedback, most employees are more prepared to openly admit what they do not know and ask for help. This in turn helps build trust and encourages widespread curiosity and rapid innovation. This process does not need much in the way of formal structure, or people with specific roles, to manage it. It emerges naturally out of the day-to-day interactions among staff, in their teams, and with their managers and leaders.

In the light of this, the role of the learning team becomes much more about the contextualization of learning and making resources available at the right time and for the right duration. These teams no longer post 'playlists' of courses but create personalized and focused learning. This shifts L&D from the periphery to the centre of the organization. It encourages staff to act differently and do their work more effectively. Therefore, the process enables the organization as a whole to respond to change and manage it better. In an increasingly volatile external environment this process becomes an essential element rather than a luxury.

Learning and innovation

Depending on the context, it is sometimes necessary to practice L&D by stealth. Learning must sometimes be aligned with the risky edge of innovation. It should be encouraging experimentation within a

safe space and helping those staff who have traditionally focused on always getting it right, to find the right place and the right opportunity to take small risks and mount small experiments and accept getting some things wrong. The aim is not to jeopardize the core business but to enhance it in a systematic way – by creating patterns of inquiry, learning and reflection that occur around the core, with minimum disruption, until the core itself is changed.

The creation of a learning culture is, in practice, a fundamental shift that emerges from and also changes the overall culture of the organization. Building cultures of learning increases the switch towards recognizing the power of learning that is more social, informal, aligned, relevant and timely. It is embedded in the way people behave and helps shape how people react in that culture. In this way it becomes part of the fabric of the organization.

‘Building a culture of learning’ does develop agile staff who have a collaborative mindset and a willingness to share. These are the by-products of the process. Staff focus more on what needs to be done and admit what they do not know and seek help to get things right. This in turn helps build trust and encourages the widespread asking of questions. This does not need much in the way of formal structures, or people with specific roles to manage this process; it emerges naturally out of the day-to-day interactions of staff in their teams and with their managers and leaders. Learning, therefore, becomes unconscious behaviour for the vast majority of staff. Learning is increasingly informal, shared and supported throughout the organization. The end result is increasing resilience and agility in the face of change, as well as a more stable and committed staff base right across the world. In many ways, these are the elements that become the strongest indicators of learning culture in action.

Developing a learning culture using Marcia’s Conner’s inventory of a learning organization

Marcia Conner is a US-based writer, consultant and blogger. She focuses on organizational and social change and describes her

work as ‘ensuring organizational cultures don’t suck, where people can work together and tap into how they learn so they can attain personal and professional success. I refer to this as “being human at work”’ (www.marciacconner.com/about). She has written widely on collaborative work and learning, including a 2004 book on learning culture (Conner, 2004). In that book, as part of her work on learning cultures, she developed a simple inventory for a learning culture self-audit. It comprises a series of questions that indicate whether an organization is pro- or anti-learning culture and to what degree.

She lists 13 pro-learning culture statements and 13 oppositional (anti-learning culture) statements, which the individual is asked to rank on a 1 to 5 scale where 1 is no, and 5 is a firm yes (<http://marciacconner.com/assess/learning-culture-audit>). The instrument will do two things. Firstly, it creates a framework that defines the parameters of a learning culture. For example, a learning culture has an environment for extended conversations, reflection and shared learnings and where personal and organizational learning is considered important. Essentially a non-learning culture is the opposite. Conversation is about blaming and scapegoating; energy is attributed to profit and corporate success, and information is shared on a need-to-know basis only. The scores from both columns are tallied and they indicate the propensity for a pro-learning culture or an anti-learning culture, and the strength of that preference. The questionnaire will also allow an organization to track its progress over time by answering the questions again after, for example, a process has been instituted in the organization.

Conner also suggests that any contentious area or areas should be highlighted for further discussion and debate. So, the inventory is not just a static instrument but a development platform to encourage organizations to build a learning culture and establish a simple benchmark to judge progress. There is much to commend in its simplicity. But this is a complex area and it may not add up to a learning culture if all the boxes are ticked.

Marcia Conner’s parameters

The model of learning culture that Conner implies in her series of questions essentially comprises four key critical elements. The first is

about challenge and questions. A learning culture is embodied in a propensity to ask questions and tell positive stories inside the workplace; secondly, that culture allows for reflexion and experimentation. Thirdly, learning is not just valued but encouraged and supported; and, finally, a learning culture exists when managers debate and challenge each other and set themselves rigorous self-development targets. These four elements offer a useful counter-balance to Naomi Lockwood's ART model, where learning is aligned, relevant and timely. But we still do not have all the answers.

Looking wider: Kofman, Bersin and Towards Maturity

Three new perspectives will help pull together the strands of learning culture and enable us to come much closer to defining not only what a learning culture is but how it is possible to build and sustain that culture.

We can dramatically broaden our perspective by examining a seminal 1993 paper by Fred Kofman and Peter Senge, published by the American Management Association. The article is called 'Communities of Commitment: The heart of learning organizations'. It helps us think more deeply about the nature of a learning culture. Both Conner and Lockwood are programmatic in their definitions. Do these things and a learning culture will emerge. In the same, but more complicated way, Senge (1990) defined a learning organization in terms of five disciplines to follow, 10 learning disabilities to overcome and 11 rules to acknowledge in *The Fifth Discipline* (see Chapter 2).

Kofman (Kofman and Senge, 1993) shares a very different perspective and argues for a much more holistic view. It is from this broader perspective that a learning culture emerges. He believes that organizations are held captive by increasing fragmentation and competition that is deeply built into our culture and our companies. His starting point is the very nature of work. Only when work has been redesigned as a learning process, and a learning experience, so that, in the words of Harold Jarche, 'learning is work and work is learning', will the

rudiments of a learning culture emerge (<https://jarche.com>). People at work, in his view, should always be exploring, experimenting and debating what they do, and there needs to be safe spaces to share the outcomes of those conversations, fuelled by what Kofman refers to as ‘generative conversations’: conversations that question fundamental assumptions about practice. It is a narrative that constantly creates new opportunities to learn and new opportunities to improve work process.

Building learning organizations, we are discovering, requires basic shifts in how we think and interact. The changes go beyond individual corporate cultures, or even the culture of Western management; they penetrate the bedrock assumptions and habits of our culture as a whole. We are also discovering that moving forward is an exercise in personal commitment and community building. (Kofman and Senge, 1993)

We are a long way from a list of things to do; we even move outside the sphere and scope of business, and into the heart of Western culture! The problem with this perspective is where do we start? It would appear that learning culture emerges from a radical shift in organizational culture, which in turn emerges from a radical shift in societal beliefs. At what point can we break into that closed circle?

Bersin by Deloitte produced an important report in 2010, ‘High-Impact Learning Culture’, written by the principal analyst David Mallon (2010). It is based on interviews and a survey that reached out to 40,000 training, HR and business leaders. The conclusions are the outcome of detailed statistical analysis. The main conclusion, which is clearly demonstrated by the evidence presented, is that creating a strong culture of learning increases business performance. Finally, the report case studies a number of companies where this is evident.

The report outlines 40 practices of high-impact learning cultures and claims that organizations can intentionally strengthen their learning culture by implementing those practices that are identified. Furthermore, the change has to be driven by the leadership and the culture needs to be constantly reinforced. Of his 40 practices, 25 must be owned by line management, eight by top management and

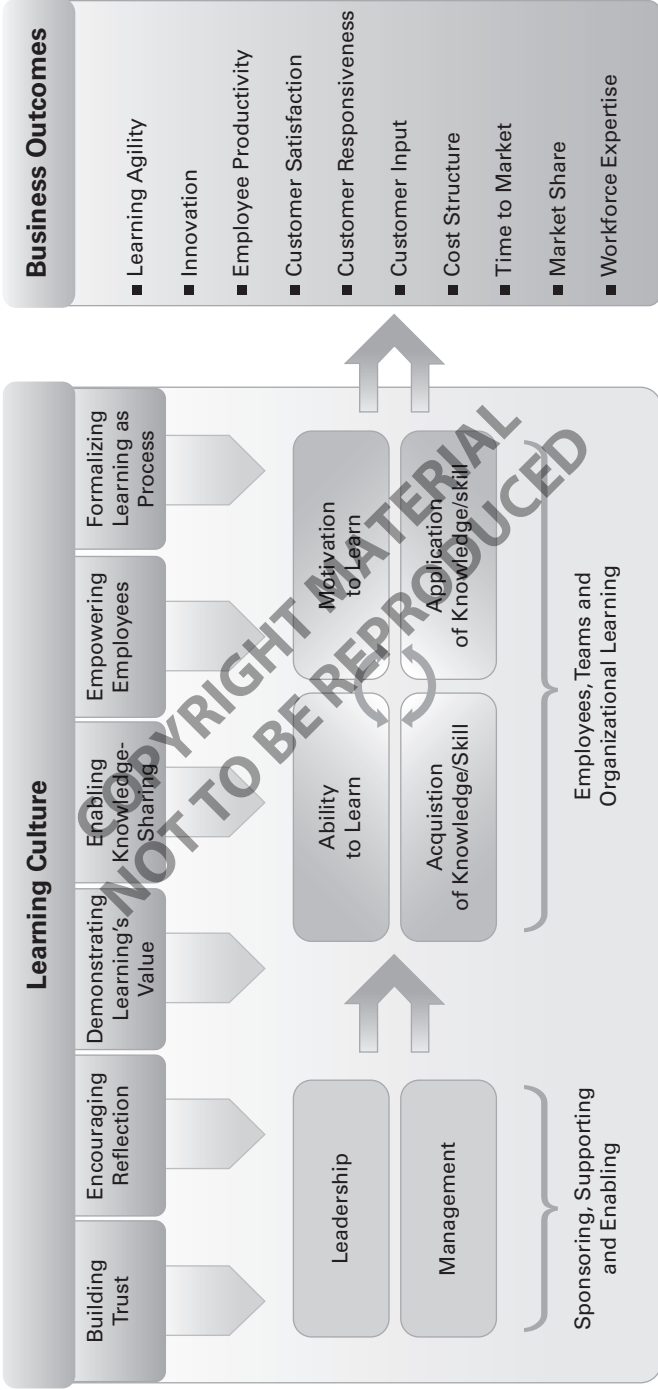
seven can be implemented by HR or L&D. This business focus is a constant throughout the report.

His fourth conclusion is that the nature of the business strategy will change the nature of the learning culture. In other words, there is no such thing as a specific and identifiable learning culture that holds good for all organizations. Finally, the report concludes that a strong learning culture improves business efficiency, which he encapsulates into 10 critical business practices, such as learning agility, innovation, customer responsiveness, etc.

Out of all this complexity, Bersin identifies six core traits that can be observed as manifestations of a high-impact learning culture. And all of these have been mentioned elsewhere in this book and emerge directly from the case studies. The report describes an environment that: builds trust; encourages reflection; demonstrates the value of learning; enables knowledge sharing; empowers employees and formalizes learning as a process. Employees need to have an ability to learn together with the motivation to learn and the ability to acquire new skills and, critically, apply those skills or that knowledge into improved business outcomes. It is a relatively simple model that has more business-centric thrust than others, but is less daunting than Senge or Kofman.

Bersin's report operates from a diametrically opposite stance to the identifiable characteristics of a learning culture approach. He starts with looking at successful business strategies and defines 40 practices that emerge out of a successful business strategy. These are mapped to the development of a learning culture. So, on the one hand, Bersin plays down the checklist as being too simplistic, while simultaneously arguing for a conscious development of a 'culture of work' using his own simple model that is, essentially, a combination of inputs leading to identified business outcomes. These inputs are the core components of a learning culture, such as trust and reflection (listed above), driven by leadership and management through their employees who are motivated and able to learn, share and apply their knowledge. It is a model that has much to commend it and it is underpinned by both qualitative research and a number of detailed case studies.

Figure 1.1 The 40 practices of a high-impact learning culture model



SOURCE Bersin & Associates 2010

Towards Maturity and Laura Overton interview

The final piece of the jigsaw lies in a 2017 report by Towards Maturity, 'Driving the New Learning Organisation', which was sponsored by the Chartered Institute for Personnel Development. In the Foreword, Peter Cheese, the CEO of CIPD notes:

There are signs that the climate for the emergence of the genuine learning organisation has arrived. Principally, because learning itself has not just gone through an evolution, but a revolution. We have moved from an era when the course was the default learning approach, to one where skills and capabilities are developed through accessible and agile methods. Learning can now be delivered in the flow of work, not just in a classroom environment. Digital technologies facilitate learning anytime, anywhere and data enables learning to be targeted to need. (Daly and Overton, 2017: 4)

The research is based on the evidence from the annual State of Learning and Development survey that is now completed by close to 1,000 companies and has been gathering data since 2003. As a consequence, there are now longitudinal benchmarks available. Towards Maturity's conclusions are based on the input from over 5,500 senior people leaders from 55 countries (Daly and Overton, 2017: 15). This is a significant reservoir of data to draw from. From this research, Towards Maturity is able to isolate the 'top deck' performers who point the way for other companies in terms of their advanced practice and business performance. For Towards Maturity the clear distinction that emerges from the top deck organizations is their ability to remake themselves, and remain profitable and productive. A learning culture does appear to be an integral component of the business success demonstrated by these organizations.

I met with the CEO of Towards Maturity, Laura Overton, and she highlighted a number of critical factors that emerged from the report. It was clear from her research that a learning culture is not a facet of individual behaviour or organizational process, but a dynamic combination of both. There is no learning culture without identified

behaviours leading to clear individual actions and a sense of responsibility towards your colleagues. But that attitude to learning emerges from the workplace values and processes. It is all about the way that the organization functions, and that is a product of the behaviour of teams and individuals as well as the processes and procedures established by the company. For her, 'It is much more about the outputs rather than abstract definitions. We always begin with business measures of success, and then deconstruct that success back to behaviours, values and attitudes.'

This is a similar process to the one used by Bersin and Associates. What Towards Maturity discovered was that there is one fundamental core attribute of a learning organization with a strong learning culture. And that is clarity of purpose. That purpose is clear to staff, customers and stakeholders. There are, then, five defining characteristics that bring that clarity of purpose to life and, essentially, translate it into action, process and business success.

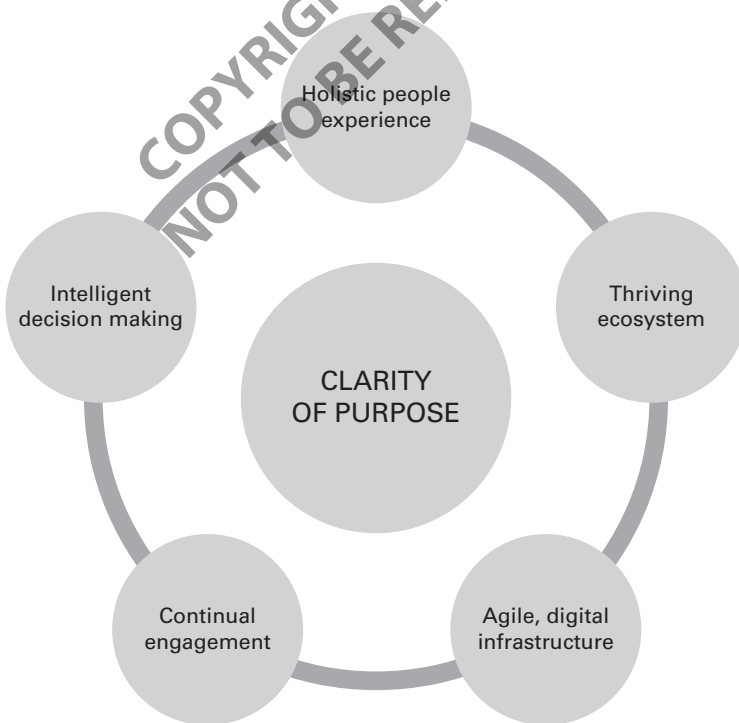
The first is having what Towards Maturity calls 'an agile, digital infrastructure'. This is defined as: 'a virtual environment that enables a fluid exchange of knowledge, ideas and the adaptation of competence' (Daly and Overton, 2017: 8). Staff get instant help with immediate work-based challenges and are encouraged to work effectively together. In fact, it is second nature for them to collaborate and share both success and failure. This digital infrastructure requires a holistic people experience to make it work. In other words staff are offered new opportunities to learn and grow and are encouraged to innovate to improve the outputs of the company. This people experience requires a fully developed ecosystem that encourages growth and development across the whole extended enterprise. This will include 'board level accountability for organisational learning' and the promotion 'of a culture of self-reliance' (Daly and Overton, 2017: 8).

There are two other characteristics that Towards Maturity notes. The first is what they call 'intelligent decision making'. This is based on three behaviours: performance analytics to drive performance and the customer experience; clear business metrics that the company wants to improve through learning, and a watchful eye on emerging and best practice outside the organization.

The final characteristic is continual engagement, defined as: ‘a dynamic community that continually builds on business relationships resulting in energy, resilience and growth’ (Daly and Overton, 2017: 9). The model is shown in Figure 1.2 and illustrates the relationship between the core characteristic that binds everything else together – clarity of purpose – and the five others that emerge directly from it.

Essentially, Towards Maturity has identified an ambiance and a culture that has, at its core, engaged staff, encouraged them to push their own boundaries and, as a consequence, those of the organization as a whole. The only possible way to achieve this is by building learning into the heart of the employee experience, rather than as an adjunct to it. This is very much the philosophy of the WD-40 Company (see Chapter 5), where staff greet each other with a single question: ‘What did you learn today?’

Figure 1.2 Continual engagement model



At the end of the report, suggestions are made to help both business leaders and learning leaders promote those six characteristics of a learning culture. However, one quote from the head of Talent and Organizational Development at the British Heart Foundation, Julie Jones, encapsulates the spirit and thrust of the report. She argues that ‘Ensuring learning is within the DNA of the organisation and reinforcing the meaningful connection of learning to achieving organisational goals gives less of a “nice to do” and more of a “must do”. We want to become a “we just do”’ (Daly and Overton, 2017: 34).

The introduction to the report takes us back to Senge and his original vision, which is aligned to the new world of work. It claims that ‘To effect real behavioural change in this new world of work, a future-focused business needs to bring learning and business leaders together to cultivate a “New Learning Organisation”’ (Daly and Overton, 2017: 13).

I would argue that no learning organization – old or new – can exist without a clear and identifiable culture of learning. A learning culture describes the elements that make up a learning organization. You cannot fix the organization without defining and growing an appropriate culture of learning.

CASE STUDY Building a learning culture: the journey one organization took, and the contribution one learning leader made

Julia worked as the head of L&D for a large UK-based company. It is one of the largest providers of learning services in the world and employs over 2,500 staff, mostly in the UK but there are a small number running regional offices round the world.

When Julia joined the organization to lead a small learning team she found a very traditional operation. Essentially a portfolio of courses was served up in a catalogue of offers that staff selected and enrolled in. The target was each member of staff did two courses a year. This said nothing about needs being met or even what successful completion may have looked like. No attempt was made to measure impact beyond the normal ‘did you find this course useful?’. In an organization dedicated to learning services, there was a remarkable indifference to their own developmental needs among the staff. The learning team were at

the fringes of the organization doing good work, which was acknowledged to be useful, but was neither shaping nor driving the organization. The team were, essentially, order takers with no engagement inside the organization apart from ensuring delivery and uptake of courses.

Her agenda was to put learning centre stage, and she did this not by offering more of the same – a fatter catalogue – but by developing a culture of learning across the whole organization. Indeed, after six months of research, the strategy document for the organization as a whole about learning, and containing her aspirations for the role, was called ‘Developing a culture of learning’.

The aim of the paper was to increase the value, perception and contribution of learning. The status quo was neither fit for purpose, nor delivering decent behavioural return on the investment the organization made. The big aim and challenge was alignment; shifting the learning organization from its position on the periphery, in terms of perception, to one of a core contributor of value. She was backed strongly by a head of People who wanted transformation of its impact across the organization in a way that got noticed by the leadership.

‘Building a culture of learning’ involved a considerable amount of careful research. Every member of staff was surveyed, with a 30 per cent-plus return rate; every member of the corporate board was interviewed, and a series of World Cafés were run around the organization. The aim was to look at the frameworks of expectation and outline what would dramatically increase the impact that learning made on the organization. This paper delivered one massive plus, which was to secure board support for the changes to be made. The aim was to increase the impact of learning in order to increase the organization’s agility in the face of significant global challenges to its customer base and pre-eminent role.

The impact of the strategy was dramatic. The ‘training’ catalogue was replaced by six or seven key courses that were in demand, such as Prince 2 project management qualifications. This only formed 10 per cent of the total effort. Seventy per cent was spent on leadership and management development but much of this was outside the traditional face-to-face course format. The remaining 20 per cent was focused on developing core expertise within the organization. Individually oriented development, such as funding university qualifications, was deleted from the learning budget and pushed back to the various businesses to fund if they saw the need. At the same time, budgets for bespoke learning programmes were pushed back from the corporate centre to the various divisions of the company. This meant that specialist and technical development that was outside the learning organization’s remit was separately funded.

The underpinning philosophy that led to this change was based on three key learnings. The first was that any learning organization had to take account of how people learned in practice: Google was a significant competitor. If Google could discover the answer faster and more efficiently than the official learning routes in the company, then that is where staff would inevitably turn for information and the learning organization could endorse this and shift focus.

Secondly, there was a real need for developing reflective practitioners; staff who were capable of observing and interpreting some of the weak signals coming from inside or outside the organization and taking decisions about how to respond. At this time when organizations need to be increasingly agile, reflective practitioners appeared to be core to the future success of the organization, and not just at the senior leadership level but spread throughout.

The third insight was to recognize the importance of leaders and managers to the future success of the company and dedicate resources and investment accordingly.

Induction was another area that had to be tackled; induction that was not fast and responsive enough to meet the needs of people coming into the organization. It had to be delivered at the point that they came into the organization; it had to inspire as well as inform or it would be mostly ineffective. The traditional model of waiting for sufficient numbers to arrive before running a course meant some had to wait over seven months for their induction.

The big insight was that if the leaders and managers were on board, they would create this positive climate for learning and would integrate reflective practice into their day-to-day work so that it became an integrated part of the culture. They would be the ones who would encourage and support continuing development throughout the organization, partly by offering sponsorship and partly by what they said and what they did. The opposite was also true: they could be the ones to wreck any initiatives if they were not brought on board and if no one had helped them see the value of what L&D was attempting.

In addition, those people in the organization who simply 'got it' were recruited as champions and spokespeople to sell the ideas and the benefits to the rest of the staff. Three words became almost the motto of the learning organization: learning had to be relevant, timely and targeted. The truth was that the learning organization, before these changes, delivered the opposite: generic programmes, delivered when it suited the organization rather than the learner, which had limited relevance to day-to-day work or the larger needs of the organization as a whole.

The broader philosophy was that learning should happen all the time, and not just on courses. The concept of the reflective practitioner meant that any insights gathered and learning nuggets collected could be captured, discussed

and disseminated. The aim was to encourage better and better performance, essentially owned and driven by everyone in the company, and not just by a few people inside the learning organization.

As an example, it became common for space to be allocated at the end of a meeting, perhaps just 10 minutes, to discuss and reflect on what had been agreed has been learned. Staff were encouraged to keep journals or write down insights on sticky notes before they were forgotten. All of these actions were promoted, knowing that all leaders and managers offered encouragement and support.

In all of this change, the learning team, too, evolved. Digital content developers were brought in, and the trainers morphed into facilitators. A new role of performance optimizer was created, to work with leaders and managers to help them improve the performance of the teams they led. They shifted the needle so that lots of small conversations focusing on performance occurred, rather than large conversations at set times in the year. Then the learning team morphed into the talent team, as they absorbed both staff acquisition as well as induction.

The big goal was to increase, rapidly, the agility of the organization. Julia showed that building a learning culture does develop agile staff who have a collaborative mindset and a willingness to share. These staff focus more on what needs to be done and are prepared to admit what they do not know. This in turn helps build trust and encourages widespread curiosity and asking the right questions. It does not need much in the way of formal structures, or people with specific roles, to manage this process. It emerges naturally out of the day-to-day interactions of staff in their teams and with their managers and leaders.

In the light of this, the role of the learning team was more involved in the contextualization of learning and making resources available at the right time and for the right duration. They did not post playlists but personalized and targeted the learning. This shifted L&D from the periphery to the ideas centre of the organization. The learning team encouraged people to act; it focused on enabling them, trying always to emphasize how learning not only helped individuals, but helped the organization as a whole respond to change, and manage an increasingly volatile external environment.

This was L&D by stealth. The word training was banished, and trainers became facilitators. Learning operated at the risky edge of innovation, encouraging experimentation within a safe space and helping staff who had traditionally focused on always getting it right to find the right place and the right opportunity to take small risks and mount small experiments. The aim was not to jeopardize the core business but to enhance the core business in a systematic way.

The organization began to emphasize the contribution of each individual to delivering the overall vision. The mission switched from delivering learning services to changing people's lives by extending their life opportunities. And in doing that, the organization made a positive impact on economic development alongside individual achievement. Therefore, an administrator setting up, for example, local delivery facilities, felt that she was contributing to improving people's life chances. Everyone had a good story to tell and everyone could feel that they were making their own contribution.

There were symbols of the power of learning everywhere. The images that adorned the walls of their offices were testimonials from all over the world, from customers sharing life-changing opportunities. Each note told a story of hope and endeavour. They were a permanent reminder of what the company delivered. They were not so much notes, rather symbols telling the story of what the organization had achieved. Stories like these were collected and shared widely through the organization. Wherever possible, the organization got its customers to tell their own story rather than telling it on their behalf.

To sum up, the changes in the learning organization encouraged a fundamental shift in the culture of the company as a whole and helped make the staff more engaged in their work and equipped for the future. Learning became unconscious behaviour for the vast majority of staff. Learning was increasingly informal, shared and supported throughout the organization. The end result was increasing resilience and agility in the face of change, as well as a more stable and committed staff base right across the world. In many ways this is a learning culture in action.

What can you take from this chapter?

It is clearly quite complex to isolate the factors that lead to a sustainable learning culture that drives and improves business performance. But this process appears easier than trying to define and specify a learning organization. Senge tried and failed to do this. It is the elements of identifiable practice and behaviour within an organization that drive the culture and indicate progress. If you focus on the culture element, the organizational element sorts itself out. I have tried in Chapter 9 to pull both concepts together.

If you want to build a learning culture, there are 12 key messages to focus on:

- 1** The organizational culture will help or hinder a learning culture. Therefore, fix the elements that will prevent a learning culture taking root before doing anything else. These key culture elements inside the organization are: developing trust, offering constant feedback on performance, and allowing open and honest discussion of errors and mistakes without allocating blame. Acquiring these three habits, without exception, across the organization is a good place to start.
- 2** A learning culture manifests itself in many ways that are oblique to learning. The learning emerges from those processes.
- 3** Technology is critical but not the dominating factor. If there is no space to share ideas or debate issues across the entire business, it is impossible to build the component elements of a learning culture. Sharing and conversation are at the heart of learning both face to face and virtually. And insight and knowledge have to be stored so that they can be found easily. In addition, using technology to support learner choice and offer an overview of learning across the organization can be extremely catalytic.
- 4** Learning emerges from social interaction, informal discussion and working out loud. These have to be encouraged and supported.
- 5** A course mentality works against a learning culture. The learning organization needs to sustain other modes of learning. Learning cultures do not emerge from fatter course catalogues.
- 6** The learning team – in particular the learning leader – has a vital role as facilitator and enabler. The team does not own or control the learning culture, and should not wish to, but they should try to develop, sustain and maintain it.
- 7** A learning culture is driven by behaviours across the organization, and from its top to the bottom. It is not a manifestation of a small part of the workforce. That is why the buy-in at the top is critical.
- 8** There is no learning culture when there is no endorsement from the most senior executives, and no constant, active encouragement and support from middle managers.

- 9 Everyone should feel responsible for their own personal development and look for ways of enhancing their skills and experience.
- 10 A learning culture helps the business perform, and it drives business objectives.
- 11 A learning culture needs to be protected, it needs to evolve, and it should be kept under review constantly. When the alignment with business is broken, you no longer have a learning culture. A learning culture will keep the organization aligned internally, and aware of the external environment. At the same time, it will provide the tools and the confidence to react to that environment.
- 12 A learning culture is self-healing and reflects the organization back on to itself. It is, therefore, tuned into what makes an organization tick, and how the external environment is changing. It may just be the most critical component for survival in this volatile and complex age.

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