

QUALITIES OF A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*,
(New York: Doubleday Currency, 1990)

A learning organization is a body of aligned individuals whose members at all levels learn and innovate in ways that promote the well being and mission of the organization.

PERSONAL MASTERY

This is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening one's personal vision, of focusing energies, developing patience, and seeing reality objectively. It is the "spiritual foundation" of the learning organization.

MENTAL MODELS

These are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand our world and how we take action. Often, we may not be aware of them or the effects they have on our behavior.

SHARED VISION

This is the skill of uncovering shared "pictures of the future" that foster genuine commitment rather than expected compliance. "Where there is genuine vision (as opposed to the all-too-familiar vision statement), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to." It is the translation of individual vision into organizational or group vision.

TEAM LEARNING

Teams, not individuals, are the learning unit in the modern organization. Central to team learning is the capacity of members to "dialogue" or have a free flow of meaning as opposed to discussion, thus allowing the group to discover insights not attainable by an individual, to look beyond individual perspective to the larger picture.

SYSTEMS THINKING

This fifth discipline provides for the integration of the other four into a system rather than a series of organizational fads and it also serves as a reminder that the whole can exceed the sum of its parts.