

The Learning NGO



Reference: *The Learning NGO (1998) by Bruce Britton: INTRAC Occasional Papers Series No: 17.*

Not true of my organisation	Rarely true of my organisation	Sometimes true of my organisation	Often true of my organisation	Very true of my organisation
0	1	2	3	4

Learning dimension	Question	0	1	2	3	4
1. Creating a supportive culture	1.1 Sharing experience and knowledge in the organisation is given high priority even when time and other resources are limited.					
	1.2 Senior managers create a climate which encourages experimentation and acknowledges that mistakes are an inevitable part of this.					
	1.3 People feel free to enquire about, and challenge, each other regardless of position.					
	1.4 I feel I am rewarded for the contribution I make to the organisation's learning.					
2. Gathering internal experience	2.1 People at all levels of the organisation are encouraged to learn regularly and rigorously from their work and feed such learning to other parts of the organisation					
	2.2 My organisation uses systematic procedures for the regular monitoring, review and evaluation of all its project, programme and advocacy activity.					
	2.3 Individuals, teams and departments view each other as working partners and constantly strive to find out and meet each others' expectations and needs.					
3. Accessing external learning	3.1 My manager takes an active interest in 'debriefing' me about what information they have gathered external to the organisation.					
	3.2 In my dealings with the 'outside world' I am expected to de-brief others with information gathered.					
	3.3 The organisation is linked to a wide range of networks and uses its contacts with other agencies to gather useful knowledge and skills.					
	3.4 The organisation co-operates with other organisations in order to share and encourage mutual learning from each other's experience.					
	3.5 Staff are encouraged to visit other organisations and are expected to write up and share what they learned from their visit.					
4. Communication	4.1 The organisation's staff are skilled at making their personal knowledge and wisdom available to					

The Learning NGO



Learning dimension	Question	0	1	2	3	4
systems	others.					
	4.2 The organisation has a wide range of mechanisms for sharing experience between staff in different teams, section, departments and locations.					
	4.3 Information flows freely throughout the organisation, crossing departmental, sectional and locational boundaries without hindrance.					
	4.4 I find it easy to access information on the lessons learned from other parts of the organisation.					
5. Developing an organisational memory	5.1 The organisation is not vulnerable to losing its experience when individuals leave. For example, staff who leave the organisation go through a systematically recorded de-briefing to ensure that the organisation retains their knowledge.					
	5.2 The organisation has mechanisms for 'remembering' the experience of its current and previous work through the active use of highly accessible databases, resource and information centres and shared storage					
	5.3 The organisation has a systematic database of all its project and programme work which can enable staff and 'outsider' to identify where expertise resides.					
	5.4 Information and communication systems are given sufficient prominence and resourced adequately to enable the organisation to keep its records up to date.					
	5.5 All written reports and key documents are made easily accessible to all staff.					
6. Mechanisms for drawing conclusions	6.1 The organisation uses a continuous improvement approach when analysing the knowledge and experience gained from its practice. Staff are encouraged to constantly ask themselves "How could we do this better?"					
	6.2 The organisation regularly identifies a theme of work and draws conclusions based on an analysis of all its practice experience and an understanding of the current 'state of the art'.					
	6.3 The organisation is skilled at converting raw information from evaluations into useable wisdom.					
	6.4 Monitoring and evaluation reports and filed reports are routinely analysed to identify what has been learned from the work and what lessons could be applied in the future.					
7. Applying the learning	7.1 The organisation systematically uses its learning to improve its own practice and influence the policy and practice of other organisations or agencies.					
	7.2 The organisation is constantly building its capacity and innovating based on what it has learned.					

The Learning NGO



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	7.3 The organisation has a strategy for scaling up its impact which reflects the learning it has developed on 'what works'.					
	7.4 The organisation changes its practice and priorities to reflect new knowledge and insights in its efforts to constantly improve its effectiveness.					
8. Integrating learning into strategy and policy	8.1 The system of planning, accounting, budgeting, financial reporting and other management processes are organised to assist learning.					
	8.2 The learning gained by one part of the organisation is quickly made available to others even if at first it appears of little immediate relevance.					
	8.3 The development of strategy is deliberately organised as a learning process. Feedback loops are incorporated to enable continuous improvement in the light of experience.					
	8.4 Learning is built into the organisation through the development of systems, operational procedures and other ways of sharing the lessons gained from individuals' experience.					
	8.5 Learning from experience is seen as 'everyone's business' and not left to specialist units or senior managers.					