

2016

Organizational Learning: The Path to Growth

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Recommended Citation

Huang, Rachael M., "Organizational Learning: The Path to Growth" (2016). *Scripps Senior Theses*. Paper 851.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/851

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**ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING:
THE PATH TO GROWTH**

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS**

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APRIL 22, 2016

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Professor Jeff Lewis and Professor Hao Huang, who have supported and guided me along the way. Your belief in my capabilities and me drove me to have confidence in my work and do my best. I began my thesis with the hopes of discovering practical methods that can be applied to help organizations flourish, and found that writing this under your care has helped me grow as well. Your commitment to helping me excel means so much to me, and I could not have done this without your thoughtful feedback and time.

Also, thanks to my friends and family who supported me throughout this process. Your encouragement provided me with the strength and motivation to produce this work to the best of my ability.

Abstract

Organizational learning is a topic that has been widely studied under a number of different approaches. The common, essential themes that are present in any theory of organizational learning reflect the necessity of balancing explorative and exploitative tendencies within organizations. Organizational learning is the key to organizational effectiveness and development, and involves a collective action and mindset that allows for the reflection of current processes and the reevaluation of the efficiency of these processes within organizational structures. In this way, knowledge is embedded into organizational systems so that continuous learning can be implemented on an organizational scale. As a result, a culture of continually restructuring the organization will be established, resulting in the maximizing of organizational growth and efficiency. Although the topic has been proven to be heavily theory-based, there have been numerous cases in which organizational learning was successfully implemented, resulting in organizational flourishing. All organizations are capable of becoming learning organizations, and should seek to practice organizational learning for the purpose of growth in both individuals and organizations.

Search terms: organizational learning, exploration, exploitation, organizational culture, double-loop learning, knowledge management, repositories

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Literature Review	
Concepts That Underlie Organizational Learning	10
Frameworks to Examine Organizational Learning (Systemically)	14
Who Can Foster Organizational Learning	18
Ways to Implement Organizational Learning	19
Barriers to Organizational Learning	24
Case Studies	
Case Study 1: Balancing Exploration and Exploitation	29
Case Study 2: Developing a Learning Organization	32
Case Study 3: Creating a Learning Environment	34
Discussion and Analysis	36
Conclusion	38
Bibliography	41

Introduction

During my internships and times in organizations, I found myself evaluating the organizations in terms of what was lacking and what improvements could be made. To find a topic to prepare for my thesis, I prepared some questions to ask the vice-president of the company I was interning at that summer. When considering the inquiries I had about how to successfully run and improve an organization, I realized that I had specific interests in the area of learning within organizations - that is, how to pass information not only amongst employees, but also in a way that transcends the organization's current time and space. The organization that I was working in at the time seemed to have issues with retaining employees and sharing information between old and new employees, and the company seemed to have little growth overall during its twenty years of being established. It was from this reflection of my experience that I came to ponder the elements that allow organizations to develop and grow, (which intrinsically implies change as well), and how in order for these entities to have a life beyond the individual members, they need to adapt and gain from their experience just as individuals do. In an organizational environment, the key is to learn not only how to apply knowledge individually, but also to be able to produce the coherent shared production of ideas. Furthermore, it is imperative for organizations to do this in a way that considers these organizations' past mistakes and experiences in order to make well-informed decisions for the future. This is the concept of organizational learning.

My belief was that in order for organizations to find success, employees must be able to learn enough about their organization's history, including past successes and failures, and their roles within their organizations so that instead of remaining stagnant, the organization will be able to grow overall from its employees' knowledge. My hypothesis began on my premise that

adaptation and development are the most important things in organizations because they lead to growth. By “organizational learning,” I meant to explore how information in organizations gets passed among members of the organization through the company and through time, and have since discovered that doing this effectively will result in the systemization of learning within organizations and their cultures. Ultimately, I believe that organizations succeed or fail based on their ability to learn as an organization. I will explore learning in organizations for the purpose of promoting efficiency and growth within those organizations by delving into of core aspects of the topic. Topics will include definitions of organizational learning, frameworks with which to understand organizational learning, methods which lead to more effective learning within organizations, and barriers to effective organizational learning. Through this analysis, I will explicate the necessity for all organizations to strive for organizational learning, and ways in which to best promote this. Then, I will present case studies with which to illustrate my points, followed by an analysis of the cases and a discussion.

The following definitions of organizational learning will lead to my own interpretation of the necessary components and results of good organizational learning. Mary Crossan and Henry Lane present some useful premises for their framework of organizational learning. First, organizational learning involves tension between assimilating learning and using what has been learned. These elements will be crucial in the following analysis of the concept of organizational learning. Second, organizational learning is multilevel and includes the individual, groups, and the organization. These levels are indicative that all members of an organization contribute greatly to implementing organizational learning. Third, all three levels are linked by social and psychological processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing. This showcases an example of the process of implementing organizational learning. Finally, cognition

affects action and vice versa (523). Learning is something which disrupts organizational norms, and organizations work to regularize systems to make everything normal and automatic (Weick 3). Thus, learning occurs when these norms are shifted. Additionally, organizational learning means “the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding” (Fiol 803). Knowledge is built within organizations as experience is gained, and this knowledge is somehow embedded, or not, in organizations which affects the future performance and decisions of the organizations (Argote and McGrath 53). Therein lies the value in understanding how knowledge is embedded within organizations. Finally, a learning organization will essentially recognize a problem, put in processes to fix it with regards to previous incidents, and effectively learn from the instance (Lewis 2016).

Based on these definitions, I conclude that organizational learning is *a collective action and mindset that involves the reflection of current processes and the reevaluation of the efficiency of these processes within organizational structures. This implies that knowledge can and should be embedded into organizational systems. This mindset of continuous learning on an organizational scale will result in the normalization of learning within an organization which will in turn foster a culture and norm of fluidly restructuring the organization. Doing this will not only maximize organizational growth and efficiency after changes or restructuring are implemented, but will also have an effect that will last far into the organization’s future. While doing this, it is imperative to balance what has been learned in the past with novel ideas for the future, a concept which has been referenced by several authors as managing the tension between exploration and exploitation.* At a later point, I will provide an extended presentation of the concept of organizational learning, and analysis of theories and literature on the topic.

Organizations often fail to learn effectively over long periods of time for various reasons. Organizational learning has hence become an important topic as we seek to understand the nature of organizations and how they function. With proper knowledge of the correct functioning of organizational learning, including the understanding of how to achieve continuous learning and knowledge management within an organization, organizations can foster a culture of learning that will maximize the development of their employees and the overall organization. As Jerry Wellman states, “the capacity to learn and apply learning is rapidly becoming one of the few truly sustainable competitive advantages,” and “learning and knowledge management are assets” that lead to prosperity. Learning effectiveness breeds “a sense of organizational optimism about the future, the ability to deal with adversity, and a healthy willingness to take advantage of calculated risks,” and organizations that do this reap rewards in productivity and profitability (6). Furthermore, leaders that work to promote organizational learning should also work to promote the success and ownership of their employees with methods that emphasize performance excellence in the pursuit of organizational success. It is the responsibility of leaders and managers to foster a culture that promotes organizational learning.

Organizational learning is crucial in reaching and maintaining organizational success, and a culture of learning and change should be part of organizations’ cultures. Marlene Fiol and Marjorie Lyles say that change does not necessarily signal learning because change does not even necessarily mean development (803, 806). However, organizational learning cannot occur without some form of change. Authors like Peter A.C. Smith and Peter Senge believe that management’s mindsets are the key to ensuring organizational change and learning (Smith 217). The difficulty of this topic seems to lie in the implementation – authors like Wellman and Smith concur that while the principle of cultivating organizational learning should serve organizations

immensely, organizational learning falls short especially when dealing with sharing and learning from tacit knowledge (Wellman 37).

The purpose of studying this topic is to learn how to promote growth and flourishing, because without those two, businesses are likely to fail. After all, the ultimate criterion of organizational performance is long term survival and growth (Fiol 804). I believe that the idea that good organizational learning leads to organizational success is applicable to all organizations which is why organizations should be cognizant of the concept and actively try to learn. My own framework of the topic will fulfill Mary Crossan's components of a good framework: my phenomenon of interest is organizational learning; I will share my key premises and assumptions underlying this framework based on the literature I have reviewed; and I will argue the relationships between the elements of my framework (522). In order to illustrate this, I will study the instances of change within organizations and their ability to learn and improve over time through case studies. I will analyze cases of organizations that have attempted to implement organizational learning and will evaluate their success.

So, now we can delve into exploring good practices for organizational learning, starting with a culmination of knowledge from several experts in the field. First we will go over some important concepts in the area of organizational learning, including single-loop vs. double-loop learning, an exploration of the term organizational learning, and the tension between exploration and exploitation. These concepts will be applicable to theories of organizational learning presented by the leading theorists in the field. From this section, I hope to support my definition of organizational learning in a way that highlights the key aspects of organizational learning. This review will serve as the theoretical foundation that will form the basis or grounding for the case illustrations presented in the section that follows.

Literature Review

First, I will present key concepts that underlie organizational learning, followed by a discussion of methods and frameworks with which to examine organizational learning systemically. Then, I will explore some methods of implementing organizational learning and discuss some barriers to organizational learning.

Concepts that underlie organizational learning:

Chris Argyris and Donald Schön describe two different types of learning: single-loop and double-loop learning. Single-loop learning involves an error-and-correction process, and “permits the organization to carry on its present policies or achieve its present objectives” (2). This means that the practices of the organization will not change based on this type of learning; only the processes involved will change. On the other hand, double-loop learning occurs when an error is “detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization’s underlying norms, policies and objectives;” essentially, the organization’s entire norms and practices will be shifted due to double-loop learning (2). Argyris and Schön argue that double-loop learning is necessary in order to make informed decisions in an ever-changing environment (M. Smith).

Mark K. Smith reviews this concept, conceding that single-loop learning focuses on making goals and strategies more effective, and is beneficial in that it allows for greater control and is less risky for individuals and the organization. He says that in contrast, double-loop learning questions the frameworks that underlie these strategies, resulting in a more creative and reflexive approach that strives to maintain good methods of doing things (M. Smith). The contrasts between these types of learning will be important to keep in mind as different theorists believe in the different values presented by both types of learning when discussing their views on

organizational learning. At this point, it seems that in order to promote large-scale organizational change, double-loop learning is necessary. As will be explicated in the following sections, effective organizational learning will require a shift in organizations' structures and systems - or, double-loop learning.

Joachim Hasebrook and Hermann Maurer examine the paradoxical nature of the term "organizational learning" in *Learning Support Systems for Organizational Learning*. The contradiction lies in the two words: learning means exploring new things, which intrinsically suggests leaving routines; organizing, on the other hand implies that these standards and routines are systemically set to restrict behavior (for the purpose of efficiency) (Hasebrook 42). In order to ensure that an organization continues to improve through time, it will be essential for the organization to form new standards and routines that are based on what it has learned and how it has adapted. The difficulty in this lies in maintaining a balance between the two so that the organization does not become stagnant. By doing this, organizations will be able to move forward by continually reassessing and improving their current routines, systems, and processes in a way that will also maximize their effectiveness. This theme of continuity will be essential in my interpretation of organizational learning as continuous learning is something that can and should be practiced by both individuals and organizations.

The contrast between the terms "learning" and "organizing" is profoundly exemplified within an important concept of organizational learning - the idea of exploration vs. exploitation. Mikael Holmqvist summarizes the differences between the two: exploration "creates a variety of experience through search, discovery, novelty, innovation, and experimentation," whereas exploitation "creates reliability in experience through refinement, routinization, production, and implementation of knowledge" (71). Organizations that practice exploration are often focused on

the future, which can help propel the organization to new horizons. The organizational restructuring involved in this process could include adding systems and structures to the organizations, which is highly representative of the concept of double-loop learning presented by Argyris and Schön. Organizations that practice exploitation are adept at perfecting existing systems, which could help improve efficiency. This is similar to Argyris and Schön's single-loop learning. The benefits of both are apparent from this depiction, but this concept is most valuable in understanding organizational learning when considering the relationship between the two.

Michael Cohen and Lee Sproull explore the relationship between exploration and exploitation in *Organizational Learning*. They say that new possibilities are explored, which is similar to learning, and old certainties and structures are exploited (made full use of), which is similar to organizing (2). They argue that adaptive processes refine exploitation more rapidly than exploration and are thus self-destructive long term even though they may be effective short term (4). An organization that solely practices exploration will succeed in discovering new methods to complete projects, but will lack in retaining these methods as it moves forward. An organization that solely practices exploitation will be successful in maintaining old practices, but will be lacking in moving forward by finding creative solutions for organizational mistakes and practices. In both cases, the organization will fail to grow because either its failure to move forward or inability to build on and learn from past experiences will stagnate its growth and decrease possibilities for the future. Thus, it is essential for organizations to balance both explorative and exploitative processes, for focusing on only one or neither can be harmful to the organization. By building on past experiences and creating new ones, organizations will be able to move forward fluidly and with great care and intention, leading to organizational growth and success.

Karl Weick and Frances Westley also divulge the necessity of addressing the juxtapositions and oxymoron present in organizational learning, namely the tension held between order and disorder, and exploitation and exploration. It seems that while such a juxtaposition is dangerous and difficult to amend, beneficial outcomes can arise when organizations find a healthy balance between the two. Additionally, by understanding all these facets of organizations, one can examine, understand, and even create “learning moments” within organizations. However, failure to reach a balance can result in a “paralyzed organization,” one that is unable to learn or act (445). In essence, by balancing these facets of an organization, growth and learning can occur. This balance gives structure for the organization and for organizational learning.

When considering the necessity of balancing exploration and exploitation, it would seem that Argyris and Schön are more preoccupied with enhancing exploration in order to promote organizational growth. Although they do not condemn single-loop learning, it is important to consider that the exploitation aspect of learning is equally as important in order to ensure organizational efficiency and growth. In fact, Jerry Wellman states that successful innovation depends more on the “application of existing knowledge than on the creation of new knowledge” (5). Thus, while double-loop learning may be closer to the overall definition of organizational learning as successful long-term and organizational change, single-loop learning is a necessary factor in reaching that goal as it is necessary to refine existing processes through exploitation.

The concepts of single-loop vs. double-loop learning, and balancing learning and organizing, exploring and exploiting, will set the foundation for my definition of organizational learning, supporting the idea that in order to promote organizational learning, it is crucial to foster a culture of continuous learning in a way that allows organizations to both explore new

ways of doing things and exploit that which they have already learned. While refining the systems and routines that have been successful within the organization, organizations should also strive for double-loop learning so that the organization can ensure overall effective change and growth. The cases that will be presented later will serve to illustrate these basic concepts that underlie organizational learning, showing that double-loop learning, and balancing exploration and exploitation are fundamentally necessary in adjusting organizational structures to promote organizational learning.

Frameworks to examine organizational learning (systemically):

When formed, organizations begin with the knowledge shared with their members. As policies and decisions are implemented and recorded, organizations attempt to retain this knowledge for use by others at a later time. Thus, it is important to be cognizant of how these norms change or remain the same as the organization changes and grows, for some of the cultural practices may not always be conducive to creating an effective organizational environment. This is another reason why organizational learning is so important to maintaining organizational success.

In the field of knowledge acquisition, George Huber provides several areas of interest. There is value in drawing on knowledge on the organization's birth, learning both from experience and from observing other organizations, and noticing and searching for information about the organization's environment and performance that might prove useful to improving the organization, something that would be done by learning (89). Here, Huber provides some initial methods for gathering and retaining knowledge on an organizational level. These also provide standards to which organizations can compare their performance, which would serve to motivate organizations to continue improving and promote the need for organizational learning.

Huber suggests exploring information distribution – essentially, how can units with information and units that need that information find each other quickly and efficiently? Such a question will no doubt lead to further research on fluidity and connectedness in the workplace.

Cohen and Sproull explore how to learn from organizational history – by discovering more aspects of, interpretations of, and preferences by which to evaluate experiences (2). They maintain that one can enhance the “richness of history” by focusing on critical incidents, and that by acting, reflecting, and interpreting events, organizations learn what they are and learn new implications for alternative actions (4, 5). Critical events are those that hold an important place in history and in the development of belief within the organization, and have metaphorical power in regards to meaning, interest, and attention (4). These experiences and interpretations should be made public so that a shared common understanding of the organization can be developed, allowing for a reliable learning process (5). A valid learning process involves an organization’s ability to understand, predict, and control its environment, and arises from “the discovery of contrary experience” (8). Furthermore, organizational learning involves balancing reliable and valid learning. Finally, Cohen and Sproull discuss the people involved in workplace learning - the process of learning should not be understood in terms of designated groups such as “task forces” or “teams,” but should rather be considered in terms of the communities that emerge (71). These communities will be a better indicator of the true learning nature of the organization, whereas understanding learning in the workplace will be concealed by considering set learning teams.

A key takeaway from Karl Weick and Frances Westley’s chapter “Organizational Learning: Affirming an Oxymoron” in the *Handbook of Organizational Studies* is the idea of organizations as cultures, at least for the purpose of examining what goes on in the practices of

groups (as opposed to individuals) to gain a better perspective on organizational learning (442). Weick and Westley cite Argote and McGrath (1993: 53)'s observation that organizational learning "focuses on how organizations acquire knowledge as they gain experience, how this knowledge is embedded in organizations, and what the effect of such changes in knowledge is on later performance" (442). The value in focusing on how knowledge is embedded in structures rather than people lies in the constructed ability to grasp and examine such specific and tangible aspects of organizations. In this light, culture is important because it acts "as a symbol and storage of past learning," and works as an instrument to communicate this learning throughout the organization (445). When considering all this, Weick and Westley conclude to define organizational learning as "the acquiring, sustaining, and changing, through collective actions, of the meanings embedded in the organization's cultural artifacts" (445). Such a definition highlights the most important aspects of organizational learning, covering how knowledge acquisition, knowledge management, and change all occur within an organization's cultural artifacts on a group level. Furthermore, Weick and Westley conclude that those cultural artifacts are both the means to produce and share this knowledge and behavior, and the resource from which to create new cultural artifacts (446).

In order to further explore organizations through this lens and affirm the conditions under which moments of learning occur in organizations, Weick and Westley delve into three subsystems of culture: language, artifacts, and action routines. These subsystems are specific, visible, and tangible products of social systems that are embodied in culture and allow one to examine organizational learning (442). From this, Weick and Westley have provided a framework with which to examine organizational learning capabilities. Weick and Westley also describe images of organizations as repositories of cumulative knowledge that can be extended

and restructured, and self-designing systems that include self-diagnostic capabilities that allow them to reassess their relationship to changing environments, thus allowing them to restructure (443). These images are conducive to learning and show that learning appears to be about “repunctuating the continuous experience of the organization” (444). These systems and structures will prove to be the primary means of allowing organizations and people to learn. Thus, as will be explained later, the key to developing learning organizations lies in adjusting organizational structures.

Barbara Levitt and James March examine the function of routines in organizational learning in “Organizational Learning: The Contributing Processes and the Literatures.” They define organizational learning as “routine-based, history-dependent, and target-oriented,” and state that organizations learn by encoding inferences from history into routines that guide the behavior in organizations (319). They maintain that organizations gradually adopt routines, procedures, and strategies that lead to success and advancement (322). From this standpoint, it would appear that focusing on routines can make organizational learning more efficient. As Levitt and March say, organizations learn to discriminate among routines and to refine those routines simultaneously (322). This seems to reflect an exploitative process. However, a competency trap emerges when an organization keeps gaining experience with an inferior procedure just because it brings favorable performance; thus, people do not gain the experience they need with a superior procedure, and maladaptive specialization occurs. So, organizations must continuously reassess their practices to ensure their continued productivity in an ever-changing environment, which would function as double-loop learning.

Jerry Wellman describes two paths that have been researched on the topic of organizational memory: the IT path and the OD path. The IT path has been easily studied and

implemented because it deals with hard data storage and acquisition. The Organizational Development (OD) path, which involves tacit knowledge, coaching, social interactions, and encouraging ad hoc knowledge exchange, has been less studied and applied because it is less clearly defined and has less specific and certain benefits (37). Nevertheless, discovering effective methods of improving organizational development for the purpose of retaining and recalling knowledge is extremely relevant because the OD path encompasses the human side of organizations. Humans are after all the most important repositories for knowledge within an organization and are the ones who will recognize how their organization needs to improve. Furthermore, they can best do this if they are well-informed on how to establish effective organizational learning within organizational culture and structures.

Who can foster organizational learning:

On another note, Wellman defines four repositories for organizational knowledge: culture, old pros, archives, and process, thus sharing his perspective on avenues through which to collect and share knowledge (44). These are avenues through which organizations can remember what they know. Drawing from these sources should be ingrained within organizations' cultures, for they allow organizational members to learn from the past and gain insight into the future. Wellman also says that knowledge may lie in the "mind of an individual, in the collective minds of a group of individuals, in the cultural norms of a group, or embedded in the processes and methods used to accomplish a task" (18). These repositories are highly reflective of Mary Crossan's 4I's, which recount how organizational learning should be implemented throughout all levels of an organization, as discussed in the next section.

Argyris suggests another source to guide organizational learning in *On Organizational Learning*. He says that each member of an organization constructs his or her own representation

or image of the organization, and that these images are always incomplete so people must continually work to add pieces to get a view of the whole (17). However, it is the leader's job to guide the organization's members as to the "correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to problems" (5). A learning leader must "assess the adequacy of his organization's culture, detect its dysfunctionality, and promote its transformation, first by making his own basic assumptions into 'learning assumptions' and then by fostering such assumptions in the culture of his organization" (5). According to Argyris, among the most important learning assumptions is that people want to contribute and can be trusted to do so; members of the organization should be learning oriented and should try to get others to be likewise, thereby diffusing responsibility for learning. Essentially, learning should be a part of the organization's culture. He says that leaders can foster learning culture by: envisioning it and communicating the vision, rewarding those pockets in an organization that represent the desired assumptions, and fostering their creation through cultural diversity (5).

Ways to implement organizational learning:

In the area of information flow, Wellman suggests that structure, geography, and culture are influential. Structure may inhibit free flow of information in other areas that the structure doesn't follow; geography leaves less time for beneficial interactions to occur and distorts knowledge; and culture has to leave room for learning and growth for knowledge to be shared well (41-2). These factors are important to keep in mind when evaluating an organization's ability to ensure organizational learning. Structure and culture are particularly relevant within my definition of organizational learning as I believe that creating a culture that is conducive to organizational learning will have an effect on structure, and vice versa. Wellman outlines steps for knowledge sharing: acknowledge, capture, share, accept, and apply knowledge. These

methods for sharing knowledge can be applied to the aforementioned knowledge repositories so that learning can take place on an organizational level. Following these structures will ensure that the culture of learning gets promoted throughout the entire organization.

Mary Crossan, Henry W. Lane, and Roderick E White aim to show that the strategic renewal of organizations comes from organizational learning in “An Organizational Learning Framework: From Intuition to Institution.” They suggest that that organizational learning starts with the individual and has a way of spreading throughout the organization through what they call the 4 I’s: intuition, interpretation, integration, and institutionalization. These four sub processes start at the individual level, move to the group level, and finally end up at the organizational level where routines are set in place; also, all of the levels are linked by social and psychological processes (524). They maintain that some of what individuals and groups have learned is embedded in the systems, structures, strategy, routines, and more (529). Crossan and Lane’s framework implicates that the foundation of organizational learning lies with the members of the organization. These members are the ones who can successfully fulfill organizational learning through the 4I’s. Most importantly, the end process of institutionalization results in embedding learned behaviors that have worked in the past into the routines and norms of the organization, and this provides a context through which subsequent events and experiences can be interpreted, allowing the organization to reinterpret its current environment (531). This provides a new perspective to Weick and Westley’s concept of exploration vs. exploitation - effective exploration cannot occur without proper exploitation. In other words, exploration *can* occur at any point, but it is potentially unhelpful to the organization if new systems and procedures are implemented without careful consideration of the organization’s past mistakes and experiences.

That being said, well-implemented institutionalization is perhaps one of the most crucial aspects for organizations to learn efficiently. As Crossan and Lane say, as organizations grow larger and involve more people, informal interactions will not suffice; instead, the planning for the future of the organization must include formal planning of interactive systems (531). These formalized systems and structures lead to the institutionalization presented by Crossan and Lane, which would serve to enhance systemic exploitation. In the instance when an organization works to grow (which should be always), it is imperative that good practices of organizational learning be implemented so as to move the organization into the future with methods that become ingrained within the systems present in the organization. In the end, Crossan and Lane suggest that future research should look to understand the flow of learning between levels and how to reconcile the tension between exploitation and exploration; this will require linking human resource management, strategic management, and the management of IT systems as a means to facilitate the flow of learning (535). Crossan and Lane's model adds the interpretation aspect to the idea of knowledge acquisition presented by Wellman.

As mentioned earlier, Marlene C. Fiol and Marjorie A. Lyles state that organizational learning means "the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding" (803). Additionally, they maintain that organizational learning should serve to fulfill the ultimate criterion of organizational performance – long term survival and growth (804). Essentially, organizations should expect to succeed within their environment by way of organizational learning. Fiol and Lyles discuss how organizations develop learning systems that transmit information to present and future members by way of organizational histories and norms. Learning enables organizations to build a continuous understanding of their current success in the context of their environment (i.e. other organizations around them) (804). Most importantly,

organizations should strive to foster what Fiol and Lyles call “higher level learning” – that is, organizations should aim to adjust overall rules and norms rather than specific activities or behaviors in order to promote long term effects and impacts on their organizations (808). This is reflective of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön’s theory of single-loop and double-loop learning which focuses on the long term and permanent change in processes. They state that the process of learning involves the creation and manipulation of the tension between constancy and change, similar to the concept of exploration-exploitation mentioned earlier. In order to improve the probability of organizational learning, Fiol and Lyles suggest implementing some contextual factors: a corporate culture that is conducive to learning, a strategy that allows for flexibility, and an organizational structure that allows both innovativeness and new insights (805).

Charles O’Reilly and Michael Tushman present a method of managing the exploration-exploitation tension. O’Reilly and Tushman concede that in order to flourish in the long run, companies must maintain a variety of incremental, architectural, and discontinuous innovation efforts that are aimed towards different targets and areas of the organization. They note that companies have been successful in implementing innovative projects by separating their new, exploratory units from their traditional, exploitative ones, and consider these companies “ambidextrous” (1). These types of organizations are structurally independent units with their own processes, structures, and cultures were integrated into the existing senior management hierarchy (2). Doing this allows for the different units to establish their own processes while receiving support from a senior team. In their study, O’Reilly and Tushman discovered that ambidextrous organizations were significantly more successful in launching breakthrough products and services, and in achieving their goals compared to other structural initiatives made by companies attempting to launch innovate projects. They attributed this success to the structure

of ambidextrous organizations, which allows for integration of ideas across units without compromising the different cultures, and also to ambidextrous leaders who understand the necessity of a diversity of units and provide valuable resources to the exploratory unit (2). Such a structure allows both units to have their distinct processes while being unified under one senior management, which allows the integration a great amount of cohesiveness.

Ambidextrous organizations are allowed the freedom to innovate within their companies because there is room in the overall organization's structure for creativity and growth. These types of companies can be successful because these innovative structures or groups are allowed to coexist and integrate into the rest of the company in a way that does not compromise the overall company's culture or structure, but instead enhances what already exists. Furthermore, this divide allows both units to focus their attention on refining or *exploiting* their operations without the distraction of the other unit (O'Reilly 2). The success that O'Reilly and Tushman found in managing the exploration-exploitation tension shows that it is indeed possible to become an ambidextrous organization; organizations need only to structure these two units in a way that will serve their organizational culture best so that learning is not hindered, but allowed and will lead to organizational flourishing.

Peter A.C. Smith presents a practical approach to implementing and developing learning organizations in "The Learning Organization Ten Years On: A Case Study." He discusses a method of implementing organizational learning that challenges traditional approaches that emphasize techniques that initially and explicitly focus on learning. Smith asserts that in order to develop a learning organization, change must start with the business techniques, not the learning techniques, and with changing habits, not culture (219). By designing the systemic structure so that learning is essential in carrying out all the roles, more people will learn, and then a learning

culture will be fostered naturally. By doing this, the mindsets of all members of the organization will become fluid. Also, he states that the mindsets of the managers are perhaps the most crucial in carrying out this process (217). Smith wants to create a learning organization that balances the exploration-exploitation tension mentioned by Weick, Westley, Cohen, and Sproull so that there is a continuous exchange of explicit and tacit knowledge which would disallow minds from becoming frozen (218). He stresses the importance of keeping mindsets from hardening, and of changing activities and tools first in order to change habits of thinking and learning (217). This mindset of changing entire practices and norms of an organization in order to achieve organizational learning is reflective of Argyris and Schön's double-loop learning, which continues to prove an effective concept when trying to achieve organizational learning.

Barriers to Organizational Learning:

Wellman shares some factors that may cause resistance to learning on an individual and organizational level: "Our habits and routines sometimes inhibit our doing what we know we should. Organizations behave in this way much like individuals because they too know more than they put to use" (1). Essentially, people and organizations may simply do what is convenient or easy instead of what they should be doing because it seems too difficult or too troublesome. Furthermore, organizations struggle to deal with learning because they fail to effectively distribute what they have learned, or they do manage to distribute what they have learned but then fail to effectively apply that learning (2). It seems that organizations fail to recognize the vast amount of knowledge they hold and therefore cannot harness that power. They also find difficulty in applying what they have learned. Sometimes, organizations recognize that they have problems - and even document those problems and what measure to take in order to solve them - but then fail to remember what they have learned, fail to capture and share what

they have learned, and then fail to apply what they capture (5). I propose that organizations can attempt to ameliorate this issue by being cognizant of the numerous available repositories of knowledge as presented previously. This will require that employees be taught, possibly through socialization, that there are resources from which they can acquire a vast amount of knowledge (Bauer 151). A culture of retrieving information should be cultivated within the organization, which will in turn foster a culture of learning from the organization's past experiences - or, organizational learning.

Wellman also depicts the struggle of remembering and distributing what organizations have already learned. There are factors that inhibit organizational learning, such as allowing habits and routines to provide a convenient and easy way to do things instead of striving for growth. According to Wellman, organizations strive to establish an ideal response or process that can be applied to solve different types of situations (38). These organizations seek consistency of behavior. This is highly representative of Argyris and Schön's single-loop learning, for the organization seeks to adjust methods, but not the overall organization. Approaching organizational learning in this way will have the effect of diminishing efficiency in the long run, even though problems could be solved using that singular method for a brief period of time. When considering Cohen and Sproull's argument about adaptive processes, organizations like these will fail because they do not balance exploration and exploitation; instead, they only attempt to exploit current processes and systems. Thus, it is important to remember to reevaluate routines to discover how beneficial they are to the organization and its members, and to fulfill the "restructuring" mentioned by Weick and Westley.

Additionally, problems arise in organizations when organizations rely on manuals, training programs, job descriptions, etc. to understand and improve work practice as described by

John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid in *Organizational Learning and Communities-of-practice: Toward a Unified View of Working, Learning and Innovation*. There is a dissonance between the way people work and the way work practice is described in manuals, training programs, and job descriptions because many learned aspects of the workplace are learned informally. This is problematic because organizations tend to rely on manuals, training programs, job descriptions, etc. to understand and improve work practice. If the manuals that are given to new employees are not current or applicable to the reality of the organization, then there lies a huge gap in the knowledge acquisition for new employees. Furthermore, human capital resources are wasted when current employees need to spend time educating new employees about workplace routines and practices, and the organization is less efficient overall. Hence, it is difficult to promote growth and efficiency in an organization if leadership members only look to formal data without considering the reality of what is actually happening within their organization. Resolving the dissonance between the way people work and the way work practice is described in manuals, training programs, and job descriptions is another way in which to reassess and restructure the workplace so that there is an alignment with the organization's current needs and its past ways of solving problems and promote learning.

Organizations need to reconceive and redesign the workplace in order to achieve a unified view of work, learning, and innovation, and it is necessary that organizational leaders foster a culture of continuous learning that incorporates the experiences and passing of information among their employees that transcends following by-the-book actions. Failure to adequately retrieve information from organizational history can lead to recurring problems or a decline in performance. Organizations sometimes have to solve the same problems repeatedly every few years because they don't take advantage of (or know how to access) what they learned

in the past (Lewis 2016). By understanding the benefits of good and consistent organizational learning, and how to achieve this, organizations will be able to flourish. There are a number of ways to achieve this, and the methods would be based on the type of and culture of the organization. Nevertheless, leaders should strive to have their organizations learn from breakthroughs from employees' work, whether that be through documentation of events, programming, meetings, and so forth, so that employees in the future of the organization can continue to build off of newfound knowledge.

To recapitulate, the frameworks found in these literatures include: Wellman's Organizational Development path: tacit knowledge ("know what" or "know how" embedded in work practices and the minds of individuals), coaching, social interactions; and Mary Crossan's 4 I's: intuition, interpretation, integration, and institutionalization. These illustrate a variety of methods and repositories from which to implement organizational learning. Also importantly, concepts of exploration vs. exploitation, Chris Argyris's single- vs. double-loop learning, and the term "organizational learning" help explain why organizations are lacking in areas that hinder them from growing. In terms of practicing this in the workplace, Peter Smith, Charles O'Reilly, and Michael Tushman provide some practical approaches which promote adjusting organizations structures to allow for fluid mindsets, and changing activities and tools to increase ownership and foster a culture of continuous learning that will affect the entire organization. Also, there are numerous memory retention facilities in which to manage knowledge including Wellman's culture, people, archives, and processes; and it is the role of all members of an organization to achieve the institutionalization of knowledge-sharing routines in the workplace.

By practicing double-loop learning and balancing exploration with exploitation, organizations can successfully restructure themselves in a way that is conducive to

organizational growth and success. Organizations and their members should learn from the past in order to plan for the future, and should work to maintain organizational structures and systems and are conducive to this. Also, it is imperative that employees not only maintain a continuous learning and development standard for themselves, but also share their knowledge with those around them. This can be introduced to new employees in a process of socialization that centers on promoting organizational learning within the organization's culture, and this culture can be transmitted when old workers train new hires. Doing this will only help in creating a unified organization that is committed to improving and growing. To do this, organizations and leaders can stress to their employees the impact that they will have on the future of the organization and its members, not just the current organization. After all, even though many employees enter and leave organizations, the organizations themselves will live on and will embody the representation of its past employees.

To put it simply, organizations should have the ability to learn, relearn, and grow (or as Fiol puts it: learn, relearn, or unlearn based on past behaviors) (804). This is similar to Kurt Lewin's change model that involves the steps of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing (Burnes 980). Another perspective with which to understand this is to experience, reflect, and react (Kozlowski 381). These all hold the same components regarding organizational learning - taking actions and changing aspects of an organization based on the organization's past experiences. Failure to learn from past mistakes would be a failure of organizational learning, resulting in the repetition of mistakes, the static state of the organization, or even the decline in performance. This type of learning that involves a change in the organization's system or structure is reflective of Argyris and Schön's double-loop learning, and the utilization of an organization's past experiences in order to implement change represents the balancing of exploration and

exploitation. Overall, proper organizational learning should be implemented for the purpose of improvement, success, and growth.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to put such a theory-based and perhaps ambiguous topic into effective practice. While the goal of organizational growth, success, and efficiency is something to heavily aspire, implementing such change and fostering a culture of learning will be different for every case and every organization. One must consider that organizational learning is more complex than individual learning as several individuals are required to learn cohesively within organizations. In addition, it could prove excruciatingly difficult to create a learning initiative, especially in large organizations where responsibility and ownership can be diffused, resulting in the decrease of individual motivation to learn. However, there are methods to implement organizational learning that have proven successful. In the following section, cases will be presented that will illustrate how to balance exploration and exploitation, how to embed learning into an organization's norms and culture, and how to create a learning environment. These cases will show that creating learning organizations results in organizational success and growth during changing times.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Balancing Exploration and Exploitation

USA Today, a national newspaper and division of the Gannett Corporation, was a thriving business in the late 1990s. It had just undergone a trial of uncertainty, losing more than half a billion dollars during its first decade, but finally began to expand successfully in 1992. It then became the most widely read newspaper in the United States, attracting business travelers and serving as a platform for national advertisers. However, demand for newspapers declined as the 1990s progressed as customers increasingly looked to television and Internet media outlets for

news. So, *USA Today*'s president and publisher Tom Curley realized that the company would have to "expand beyond its traditional print business to maintain growth and profits" in order to find ways to apply its news services to new media (O'Reilly 3).

In 1995, Curley chose Lorraine Chichowski, *USA Today*'s general manager of media projects, to launch an online news service called USAToday.com. He allowed her to operate independently from the print business, and she brought in people from outside of *USA Today* to fulfill the needs of this new arm of the company. Working on an entirely different floor, the team built a sector that had entirely different processes and culture that suited the instantaneously delivery of news. While it seems this would bring success, USAToday.com only made a small profit and had little impact on the overall company. Curley noticed that the new unit was so isolated from the print operation that it was failing to capitalize on the newspaper's vast resources. Additionally, although Chichowski was a member of Curley's executive team, she had little support for other members who saw her unit as a competitor with their print business. Because of this, they had little incentive to help her succeed, and as a result, USAToday.com began losing money and staff.

Realizing that the key would be greater integration, Curley decided in 1999 that needed to adopt a "network strategy" that would involve sharing news across three platforms: the newspaper, USAToday.com, and Gannett's 21 local television stations (O'Reilly 3). He described his vision as no longer being in the newspaper business, but in the news information space in which content would be delivered regardless of form. To execute this strategy, Curley replaced the leader of USAToday.com with another internal executive who was a strong supported or the network strategy. He demanded that although the three platforms should remain separate from each other, maintaining their own distinctive processes, cultures, and structures,

the senior management from all three sectors needed to be tightly integrated to maintain synergy throughout the company. Through the collaboration of the three units, employees realized the broadened opportunities they now possessed by having access to different areas of the organization.

At the same time, Curley dismissed 40% of his executive team who did not share his commitment to the network strategy in order to present a united front and ensure that his vision would be carried out (O'Reilly 5). He also changed the incentive program for executives to one that promoted growth across the three media outlets, and changed human resource policies to encourage transferring of people and sharing of content between the units. As a part of this effort, a "Friends of the Network" recognition program was established to reward cross-unit accomplishments (O'Reilly 5). Most importantly, during this process of sharing and integrating, the organizational integrity of was carefully maintained. The units remained physically separate and each pursued their own models. By doing all of this, Curley had created an ambidextrous that could sustain the print business while also pursuing innovations in online news and broadcasting. As a result, *USA Today* has continued to be a profitable competitor in the news coverage world.

This case illustrates some important points in creating a learning organization. First, Curley made sure that the company was unified under a mission of ambidexterity that was implemented by ambidextrous leaders who understood the needs of different kinds of businesses. Second, it was imperative that there be room in the organizational structure for exploitation and exploration to occur simultaneously in order to allow for growth during changing times. By having an organizational structure that included separate units for exploitation and exploration, and organizational leaders to promote this, *USA Today* was able to find success and grow. This

case also shows that companies are able to create breakthrough products and processes while successfully retaining their traditional business. In fact, the explorative aspect of this case would not have been possible without the support and resources of the exploitative aspect. Finally, any company can become ambidextrous as long as there are executives committed to creating an organizational structure that combines organizational separation with senior team integration. Overall, this was a successful case of implementing organizational learning.

Case Study 2: Developing a Learning Organization

The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) is a large Canadian bank. In 1990, CIBC was trying to make the shift from being traditional, rules-driven, and hierarchical to being more customer-focused. CIBC believed that by realizing its vision of “individuals going the extra mile,” it would truly be a customer-based company, and they wanted to do this by ingraining the vision into the company’s structure and the minds of employees (P. Smith 221). CIBC was able to develop itself as a learning organization thanks to its management, who created a meaningful vision and strategy and emphasized that the business environment is manageable, and that control in the face of complex change is possible. CIBC realized that instead of emphasizing learning initially, the company’s culture would have to become one that was about “people learning to adapt and change as a result of intense competition” (221). This involved changing the traditional roles of employees, managers and the human resources function, and making the intentions of developing the company by leadership known.

To implement the change, CIBC first discontinued the traditional training program, which they had realized was costing significant resources but was ill-focused and ineffective. As it was clear that any attempt to redesign the training program would be outdated with respect to CIBC’s emerging needs, leadership instead replaced the training program with development

centers to develop the roles of employees, managers, and human resources. Specifically, the training-oriented staff was replaced with a central Leadership Centre, which would enhance the leadership qualities of CIBC's managers, and a distributed national network of Employee Development Centres, which would help employees develop new customer-based skills. These centers offer programs and workshops that would reinforce CIBC's business strategies while encouraging the career planning and development of CIBC's employees. Additionally, competency models were established and linked to identifying business outcomes and a new role for CIBC's managers that would help implement these outcomes. Once a consensus was reached on managers' roles, the Leadership Centre designed a curriculum for managers that would develop these managerial and leadership behaviors. Furthermore, Hubert Saint-Onge, the vice-president responsible for the Leadership Centre said, "The bank's Leadership Centre is not about competencies and skills. It's about mindsets. The Centre becomes a place of sharing; a forum for the exchange of information. A place where assumptions are constantly probed and pushed and tested; new ways designed; new strategies formulated" (P. Smith 222).

CIBC's approach of developing itself into a learning organization proved successful in helping it reach its goals. CIBC was able to successfully move away from its traditional, hierarchical environment to one that encouraged learning and development in the organization's members. The effect of these structural changes lead to increased motivation and ownership, which stemmed from the newfound fostered sense of self-driven learning and improvement amongst employees. Doing this emphasized reinforcing business strategies and capabilities and utilized management to lead the shift in self-development. Overall, this change was possible because the environment required for developing a learning organization was properly designed and established since the beginning. CIBC approached this by targeting middle-management

first, giving the responsibility to guide and develop their employees in a way that ensured a learning mindset. This case showcases that organizational learning involves changing actions and roles in order to change organizational culture. This case illustrates Peter Smith's methods for developing learning organizations, and shows that even a large and old organization like CIBC can successfully reinvent its future and operate in new ways by becoming a learning organization. By changing the employees' actions and roles and implementing a new structure that promoted learning, the CIBC's members' mindsets were kept fluid, and changing activities and tools first in order to change habits of thinking and learning.

Case Study 3: Creating a Learning Environment

This case involves a group of Organizational Development (OD) practitioners in a large high-tech organization. This organization sensed from their clients that their effectiveness and credibility was beginning to deteriorate. At this point, the OD professionals served to redesign jobs, reward systems, and new factories. Some of the traditional organizational dilemmas they had difficulty facing included: whether to allow autonomy or control, promote innovation or routines, encourage participation and ownership or stress meeting deadlines, and how to manage job security and excess employees through job design. The OD professionals did not deal with these areas even though they had been present since the early stages of the company because they prioritized handling things like authoritarian leadership and equal opportunities first (*On Organizational Learning* 240).

Overall, they were successful in producing involvement and ownership, but were uncertain as to how to deal with "conditions where involvement and ownership were counterproductive, where unilateral control over employees was necessary, or where frustrating the needs of employees appeared necessary, or what to do when programs were designed that

placed more demands on the employees than the employees expected” (*On Organizational Learning* 240). Essentially, they only knew how to make their employees happy, and failed at managing the more difficult tasks and nuances that burdened the employees. Initially, the OD team tried to bypass these dilemmas by suggesting workshops to solve this. However, this reduced transparency because they were trying to force the assumptions of employee ownership that worked in other cases. So, management returned to their old ways of exercising authority. Some OD practitioners reacted by calling management two-faced, and others tried to develop new concepts that could “organize people” and “energize efforts.” While these all seemed to be viable efforts, the OD professionals failed at providing the organization with a proper and effective solution. Eventually, the OD team’s vision of involvement and participation backfired (*On Organizational Learning* 240).

Eventually, an Action Science Program that combined inquiry and reeducation was put in place to reestablish OD professionals according to the emerging demands of the organization. In this program, they were asked to elucidate cases in which they had to develop their own theories for solutions and write out what they would say and think in the situation. This allowed them to discover their defensive routines and culture. Then, these cases were used to reeducate OD professionals and their clients; the resulting discussions produced additional knowledge about the organizations and the OD professionals. New insights were generated as people discovered, invented, produced, and implemented their ideas. Finally, the OD team applied these new ideas and skills with their client cases and formed subgroups to help each other and compare experiences (*On Organizational Learning* 240-1).

This case is an example of an existing Organizational Development group within a company that had to learn to continue practicing improving their methods through a learning

perspective. Although the OD team proved initially to be an effective means to solve major organizational issues, they failed to ameliorate many of the deeper problems facing the internal culture of the organization which affected the organization's success with their clients. Specifically, they failed because they tried to use the same solutions that worked with the larger issues to solve the more difficult issues, and were faced with resistance because of this. The Action Science Program that was put into place to retrain the OD professionals to be able to fulfill the needs of their organization, similar to how overall organizational structures must be reevaluated and restructured in order to maintain organizational effectiveness. The program was centered on learning about the routines and cultures of the individuals and the overall organization in way that shed light on the necessary improvements that had to be made. From the new insights that were gained, the OD team was able to successfully adjust their approach to aiding the organization and its clients. This change initiative was successful because it provided an environment in which learning could take place. Furthermore, this learning was applied to organizational routines, showing that the reevaluation of methods can lead to successful implementation in the face of changing organizational needs.

Discussion and Analysis

From these cases, it is clear that implementing organizational learning can reap great rewards for organizations and their members. Also, organizational learning was put in place in order to move companies away from failure and stagnation. By implementing these change efforts, the organizations were able to solve their problems and reach their goals. Some key factors in developing learning organizations are illustrated by the case studies: the first case provides a method for balancing exploration and exploitation by creating an organizational structure that is ambidextrous and united under a senior management that is committed to

promoting the value of having separate but cohesive units to promote creativity and stability; the second case displays the benefits of changing actions and routines in order to promote a structure and culture of learning within organizations, resulting in the successful change of the overall organization; the third case showcases a means for creating a learning environment that will ensure that the correct actions will be taken in the face of an organization's constantly changing needs. All of these components are essential in maintaining an organization's success, and these methods provide a means for attaining organizational goals through effective organizational learning.

Organizations may find difficulty in discovering which method or path to take to achieve effective organizational learning. After all, implementing organizational learning can be done in a number of ways, whether that starts with leadership, individuals, routines, or structures. However, by considering the methods for embedding learning cultures into organizational structures presented in the literature review, organizations can discern which starting point will be most effective in developing organizational learning based on the existing company (note that in order for this explorative process to be implemented successfully, the organization's past and current exploitative tendencies must be considered). *USA Today's* problem lay in the lack of integration among the company's structure; to resolve this in a way that was conducive to promoting organizational learning, Curley created an initiative that presented a unified company *structure* that allowed separate cultures to exist. CIBC's goal was to change its company culture, and in order to do that, the mindsets and roles of the company *managers and employees* were adjusted so that learning became ingrained in the company's new culture. In the third case, the OD professionals were unable to find new ways to fix problems within the company; the Action Science Program provided an *environment for the OD team* in which learning could take place

and be applied, which led to promote learning throughout the company. When considering how these three organizations were able to successfully implement organizational learning, perhaps struggling organizations should first discover which area of their organization is hindering the potential for organizational learning, and then reassess that area's structure, leaders, or processes.

Conclusion

I initially thought that learning within organizations comprised of passing information between employees, and I was not entirely sure how this would be something that could translate through an entire organization and through time. I have since discovered that organizational learning requires the will and decision of employees to implement learning, and that in order to foster an environment in which this can take place, leaders and managers can create an environment within their organization that promotes this according to the current state and needs of their organizations. The methods that can be evoked to establish this climate will change relative to the current situation of their organizations, and will also require the careful consideration of their organization's past experiences. My belief now is that organizations must create an environment and cultivate a culture in which organizational learning can take place.

Mary Crossan and Henry Lane consider recognizing and managing the tension between exploration and exploitation to be a central requirement in any theory of organizational learning (522). I wholeheartedly agree with this sentiment, as it is clear from the case studies that innovation efforts would not be successful without understanding the value behind an organization's past experiences. Perhaps another aspect to add to this idea is that of *resolution*. That is to say, not only must organizations learn to manage the tension between organizing and learning, but also to always strive for ways to reconcile the two in a way that resolves the tension of the past and the present, if only for a moment. Of course, in an ever changing environment,

organizations will have to work towards the momentous stability that this would bring in an ever changing environment.

It is understandable that the topic of organizational learning has been so heavily studied, yet has reaped few benefits in terms of practicality and implementation within organizations. This is perhaps reflective of common disconnection between theory and practice. However, awareness is the first step to true and intentional change. With sufficient knowledge about organizational learning, leaders, managers, and employees can consciously work to foster a continuous learning culture - one that will permeate throughout the organization and will remain present in their organization's systems far into the future. From the literature, and based on the case studies, it seems that the key to a successful learning organization lies in embedding a culture of learning within the organizational system and creating ambidextrous organizations that are able to integrate separate explorative and exploitative units. Organizational leaders and members are essential in fulfilling this, as they are the ones who dictate their organization's culture. By practicing methods and routines in the workplace that encourage organizational learning, employees will aid in maintaining an organizational system - one that promotes the beneficial restructuring of the workplace - that will resonate within the organization for a long time.

In conclusion, a definition of organizational learning cannot be made without recognizing the natural tension between exploring and exploiting within an organization. The fact that organizations need to harness both in order to succeed and grow fundamentally shows that organizations need to consider their past experiences in order to successfully and effectively innovate. Although implementing this may be difficult in the face of complex change, there have been cases that display a few key requirements for successful organizational learning: first, it is

primarily up to leadership to create an environment in which managers and employees can develop changes and practice learning in the workplace; second, these changes should work to establish a culture of learning so that at any point in time, the organization has the tools and structures to implement good and lasting change, with a basis, of course, in the organization's members; third, the structure of the organization should serve to allow employees to carry out these learning goals, and also serve as a repository for information; finally, organizations can successfully innovate only if they first consider and build off of their past experiences, and cohesively integrate both the exploratory and exploitative aspects of the organizations.

Organizational learning is so instrumental in achieving organizational success and flourishing because it involves making well-informed decisions about the future of the organization on a continual basis. All organizations are capable of developing into learning organizations, and this is possible with leadership by learning-oriented teams and individuals that promote their vision of organizational learning in a unified and coherent way.

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