



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Multi-Skilling - An Essential Ingredient

Human development specialist Dr. Peter Shepherd, Director and senior consultant of People Potential, opines that in order to meet globalization challenges, employees must be multi-skilled. A learning organization, Shepherd explains, helps employees to learn something new everyday and also share this knowledge. The resulting collective intelligence and wisdom will benefit everyone. Thus, learning organizations can easily adapt to multi-skilling.

If an organization wants its employees to become capable of carrying out a multitude of tasks - and doing them well - HR will have to get down to specifics like:

- Identifying employees capable of multitasking
- Shifting from an over-emphasis on credentials and past experiences
- Ensuring that multitasking does not lead to increased stress in the workplace
- Demonstrating a willingness to help employees adapt to multitasking through training and education.

Organizations should have a system that recognizes the learning initiative of the employee. To develop a learning culture, managers must learn to reward shared learning. Understanding the dynamics of learning is essential to making the program a success. For example: An employee who has made a mistake may wonder how to own up to it without losing face. This starts with the boss. If he or she can admit when he or she goofs, he or she empowers his or her workers to learn from their mistakes. "Multi-skills can be measured through initial errors which lead to work improvement and competency," Shepherd asserts.

Multi-skilling can be done through coaching and mentoring. Job rotation is also a multi-skilling tool. Learning by doing is another option.

To build an organization that truly learns and expands, Shepherd opines that managers need personal mastery. They must ensure continuous personal growth as well as the continuous learning of individual employees in the organization.

Since mental models are important in any organization, managers should also master the skill to question deeply ingrained assumptions that influence actions, and develop alternative assumptions where necessary.

Managers should encourage employees to have their own personal visions for the organization and to share them. Teams should also master the practices of dialogue and discussion. For multi-skilling to be effective there must be a shared vision and team learning.