



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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The Fifth Discipline

In "The Fifth Discipline," author Peter Senge defines a learning organization as one where "people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together".

The essentials of a learning organization, according to him, can be encapsulated into four basic disciplines:

- **Team learning.** This enhances the collective IQ of an organization through dialogue, talking and thinking together. Through team learning, whole teams learn, and this spreads throughout the organization.
- **Shared vision.** This leads employees to do things beyond the call of their duty, simply because they want to.
- **Mental models.** These comprise theories that are deeply entrenched in the minds of employees. They influence employees to think and act in a particular way.
- **Personal mastery.** Through this, employees regularly clarify and strengthen their vision, redouble their energies, develop positive qualities and see life in an unbiased manner.

To further help employees, systems-thinking has evolved, which helps employees see events as interrelated rather than isolated. Therefore, in a corporate context, this helps simplify attitudes and prevents people from making lame excuses like, "I can do nothing about it, it's not me, it's the system."

Systems-thinking is considered a crucial link in a learning organization. The roots of a difficult discipline can be traced all the way back to system dynamics, which begins with a simple concept and then goes on to interrelationships, finally culminating in feedback that shows how one's actions can either reinforce or balance each other.