

## Creating a learning organization - best practices

*Dr. Amir Moghadam  
President/CEO  
MaxKnowledge, Inc.*

---

How do you maintain an environment that gets the best from your employees, whether they are analytical thinkers, team decision makers, lone rangers, risk-takers, or bottom-line seekers? You can support each type of employee with a flexible environment. You will reap the benefits of innovation and maximize performance when your employees operate in a climate that builds their success. In a “learning organization,” employees are encouraged to tackle stretch assignments, challenge ineffective processes, and offer innovative solutions with confidence.

Below is a list of best practices to create an effective learning organization.

- Provide freedom to try new methods
- Balance the pressure of deadlines with opportunities for innovation
- Provide realistic, but challenging goals
- Encourage participation in decision making and goal setting
- Encourage the use of creative problem solving for unstructured problems
- Encourage open expression and innovative ideas
- Encourage risk taking and buffer negative forces
- Provide help in developing ideas
- Provide time for individual efforts
- Listen effectively and watch for nonverbal signals
- Minimize direct supervision as much as possible
- Provide resources and support priority work to completion
- Foster interaction and cooperation with other work groups
- Encourage lifelong learning and professional growth
- Provide continuous training and development opportunities for your employees
- Tell your employees frequently that you have confidence in their abilities
- Provide timely performance feedback

Stay alert for new ideas and information that can enhance your organizational performance. Make it a practice to ask questions of subject matter experts when you require more information to evaluate ideas, issues or trends. Effective learners also learn from mistakes, and help employees develop strategies to avoid making the same error. Freely share information with your employees and encourage them to share knowledge that keeps others in the organization out of pitfalls.

Through questioning, guidance, coaching, and training, you can help your employees develop good habits to solve problems, make better decisions, and develop new ideas. There's no place for "I told you so." Structure your work environment so your employees learn the best practices for innovation within the resources and schedule available. Ensure that they know they can ask for advice when they need help and keep communication lines open.

Below is a list of practices to avoid.

- Requiring the same approach by each employee
- Setting rigid rules and deadlines
- Discouraging questions
- Discounting ideas that lack documentation or cost estimates
- Not delegating stretch assignments
- Failing to reinforce good practices
- Stealing employees' credit
- Reducing initiative by micro-managing
- Requiring a perfect success rate

Research conducted by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) shows that "placing an emphasis on employee learning is significantly correlated with better market performance." Don't underestimate the power of a learning organization.

---

*Dr. Moghadam is the founder and CEO of MaxKnowledge, the leading employee training company for the career college sector of higher education. He has over 20 years of experience in career education, serving in many capacities including professor, director of education, academic dean, director of student affairs, campus director, college president and owner. Moghadam earned his PhD in Engineering from the University of Cambridge at the age of 22. He is a recognized leader in career education and has been selected as a Top Innovator by the Career College Central magazine. Moghadam can be reached at [amirm@maxknowledge.com](mailto:amirm@maxknowledge.com).*