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The making of the learning organisation [\(View Comments\)](#)

1. **Bhumish Khudkhudia**
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"An organisation's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage." – Jack Welch

Once seemingly calm and tranquil, business environments are becoming increasingly uncertain and turbulent. Swirling gusts of technological, competitive, political and marketplace changes are sweeping across the global business landscape. Amid these uncertain conditions, many leading firms are constructing arks comprising their collective capacity to learn – not just as individuals, but as entire organisations. In other words, they are striving to become "Learning Organisations."

HR helps business organisations and its employees by making learning a way of life. "Learning is an integral part of an individual's life journey," says Shivakumar J S, Corporate Head HR, Ramco Systems. "HR department facilitates this by identifying performance gaps in the current role and prepare the individual for future roles by creating an appropriate learning infrastructure. HR department typically takes the ownership of learning and development initiatives in an organisation."

Rani Desai, Vice President and Global Head, Human Resources & Organisational Development, Geometric Ltd. describes the importance of learning as a continuous process and a well-learned person is believed to influence his /her surroundings positively. "The HR Department of any organisation should encourage the employees and give them platforms to learn and grow in their everyday life. This can be through focused learning programs as well as creating a culture of constant learning by giving employees challenges in their everyday tasks that forces them to look beyond their current capabilities and learn something new to deliver."

However, learning should be mapped to an individual's competency, and based on the person's interest to provide adequate tools for further enhancing them. HR managers heighten the strategic awareness, i.e., understanding the need for continuous learning by keeping themselves engaged in ambitious attempts to keep everyone aware of external environments and the strategic position of the organisation. In businesses, communication takes on a new sense of urgency and importance. HR Department can develop people's understanding of the entire

organisation as a dynamic and interrelated system.

According to Shivakumar, HR should listen to the voice of the customer, by understanding the levels of satisfaction on the product/service offered. The areas of dissatisfaction should be converted as opportunities for learning. HR plays a key role in understanding and implementing this.

Desai explains, "At Geometric, we ensure that each employee learns something new every six months. This is a goal to be achieved under self-development category. So, this way each employee learns two new things or gains expertise in at least two fields of his/her choice every year. In a knowledge intensive industry like ours, it also helps to inform employees about the trends in technology and educate them on how a deeper understanding of these trends can help them stay ahead of their peers and give them an edge for professional growth."

In order to stay ahead of its competitors, how can HR help business to accelerate learning?"By being an effective Business Partner, HR understands the strategic imperatives of the organization in a changing business context. Based on the plans and strategic capabilities of the organisation HR identifies capability gaps and implements a plan that these gaps are built in individual/teams across the organisation. This will ensure that the organisation stays ahead," adds Shivakumar.

Desai emphasises, "Any organisation that has intellectually evolving people is always better placed than its competitors. The organisation can facilitate high level technical training for the entire team, which otherwise the employees can not gain, due to time and cost constrains. This will help create a highly skilled and competent workforce."

Whatever the route, work and learning can be fully integrated if systems are created to promote continuous learning by individuals, by teams and by the organisation as a whole.