



THE NEW
BUSINESS SCHOOL

IMPROVE THE LEARNING ABILITY IN YOUR TEAM



A LEADER'S GUIDE

'Once, knowledge was power. Now, it's the ability to learn.' - **Tim Coburn**



TIM COBURN

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Tim Coburn is a leadership and learning specialist with 30 years experience at world class companies including the BBC, Motorola and Rolls-Royce where he was Global Head of Talent and Global Head of Learning and Development. As an interim specialist, he was Head of Leadership at Kenya Airways, Head of Talent at Syngenta and Director of Leadership Development at Serco Group plc.

His interest in corporate learning was enriched by his role as a Research Fellow in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Bristol, England. In addition to working with the research team who discovered learning power, he led its development for leaders and learning specialists in the world of work.

Tim is the author of, 'Improve the Learning Ability in Your Team: A Leader's Guide' and co- author, with the research team, of the paper, 'Learning Power in the Workplace', International Journal of Human Resource Management, 2013.

Today, he is a Consultant in Leadership and Learning and Chief Executive of The New Business School. www.thenewbusinesschool.com

Acknowledgements

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Further independent research by Professor Ruth Deakin-Crick led to the improved understanding and refined definition of the model used in this guide.



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WELCOME

This guide will help you to improve the learning ability in your team

It gives you a clear explanation of learning ability and practical methods for improving it.

This is why it matters:

Suddenly, Learning is Critical

The speed of digital transformation, the complexity of work people do and online access to massive knowledge resources have made the ability to learn a critical part of everyone's job.

But learning ability is invisible. We assume everyone can do it, whereas research shows our ability to learn varies widely.

Implication for Leaders

Fast and effective learning underpins the productivity of your team. The ability to learn is well-respected as the strongest indicator of the potential to succeed.

'If you want to improve performance or lead change, you won't succeed unless you learn quickly and effectively. It's as simple - and as important - as that.' - **Tim Coburn**

Improving the Ability to Learn

So, what is learning ability? How do you define it? And how do you improve it?

This guide answers these questions and equips you to improve the learning ability in your team.

THE LEADER'S ROLE

How well does your team learn, innovate and adapt to change? How do you know? And how would you improve it?

To answer these questions, you need to know what learning is so you can role model it, observe it in others and coach your team to be better at it.

Increase Productivity and Potential

Performance objectives and development plans cannot be achieved without the ability to learn.

Improving learning can increase your team's productivity and their potential to succeed. It can increase their ability to perform well and help them achieve their career aspirations.

As a leader, your role is to highlight the importance of learning, explain what it looks like in action and help your team improve it.

The Leader's Guide

This guide gives you a definition of learning and a clear understanding of the behaviours required to learn effectively.

It gives you guidance on how to coach the improvement of learning for individuals in your team, and for your team as a whole.



LEARNING AT WORK

When we think about learning, we easily recall learning in a classroom, with its focus on knowledge and understanding.

In contrast, learning at work is focused on skills and abilities, values, personal qualities and emotional intelligence, as well as knowledge and understanding.

Learning at work is different to learning in a classroom. It is broader and more holistic. It needs a definition that includes development of the whole person, not just their knowledge and skills.

LEARNING AT WORK

Definition

Learning at work is the way we adapt, develop, improve or transform ourselves, in order to perform successfully.

It is also the way we perform in order to adapt, develop, improve or transform ourselves, effectively.

Self-Directed

In contrast to 'teacher-led' learning, learning at work requires personal initiative. At work, effective learning is self-motivated and self-directed in response to the work challenges we face.

As with performance, the your is to coach the improvement of self-directed learning in your team.

To do that, you need to know what self-directed learning is so you know what to ask for, what to encourage and what to expect

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Learning is often serendipitous, informal and unplanned. But when it is deliberate, self-directed learning has four steps.

Self-directed learning begins when we need to answer a question, solve a problem, find out something new or do something differently. This need becomes the purpose that drives our search for an answer, solution or insight. Using our learning ability, we acquire knowledge and make sense of it. If it shows potential, we test it out, apply it and put it into practice.

We incorporate it with knowledge and skills we already have and use it to perform successfully.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING



Reflection

The activities in each step have a circular quality. Reflection sheds light on the step that went before as well as the next step to be taken. Progressively, self-directed learning works because it helps us inquire, discover, create and apply the knowledge we need to perform successfully.

Leader as Coach

Self-directed learning allows the learner time and space to 'work things out for themselves'.

Leaders support self-directed learning by asking questions and offering suggestions that help the learner take each step effectively.

LEARNING EFFECTIVELY

Effective learning depends on our ability to use a set of skills and attitudes in the learning situations we encounter.

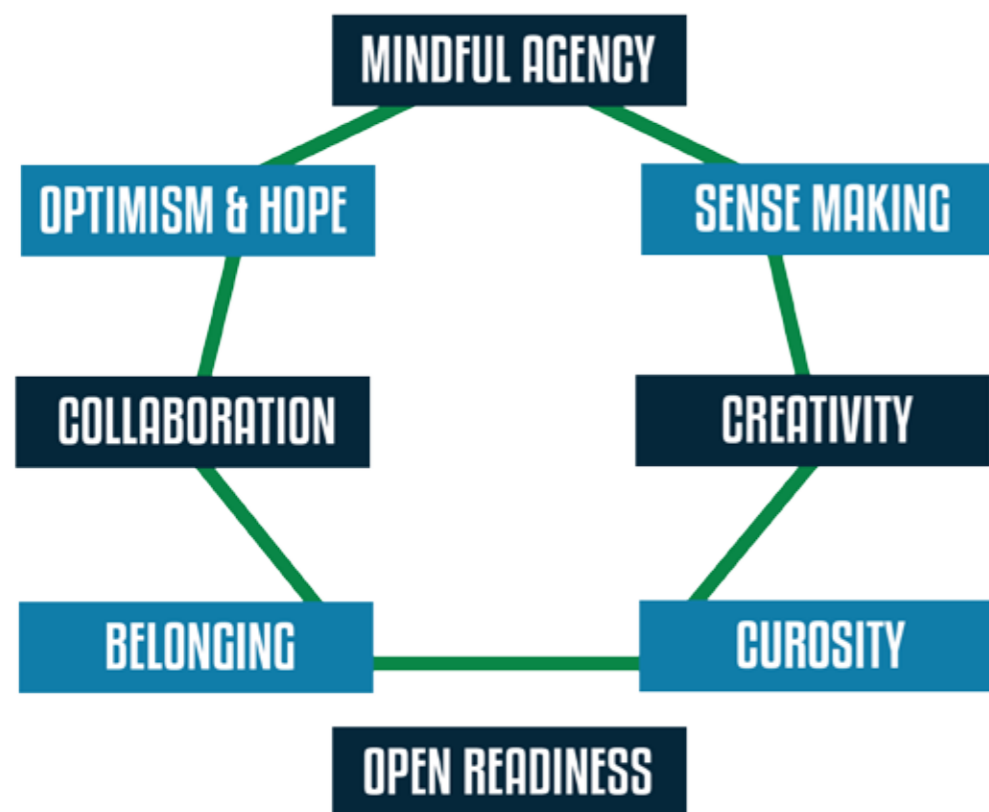
Research at the University of Bristol, England, found our ability to learn has eight interdependent dimensions, collectively called Learning Power. The eight dimensions are present in all of us, though some may be stronger, or better developed, than others.

The relative strength of each dimension is shaped by experience, habit and practice. Open Readiness acts like a pre-condition. It describes our resistance and willingness to learn in different situations.

Far from being fixed, learning ability is fluid and flexible. It changes with our interest and engagement. Importantly, research found that, with practice, all the dimensions can be improved.

LEARNING POWER

Effective learning happens when we use the dimensions of our learning power in all the stages of self-directed learning.



THE EIGHT DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING POWER

The eight dimensions of learning power exist in us all, though some may be more developed or natural to use than others

They are interdependent and how well we use them depends on our ability and motivation in relation to the situations we face.

Definitions

Here are the definitions. They are written in the first person to assist self-reflection and self-evaluation.

Open Readiness

I am open, willing and ready to learn – not rigid, dependent or resistant to learning and change. I am flexible in my self-belief, willing to persist when necessary and ready to manage any self-doubt. The opposite is being too rigid, resistant or fragile.

Mindful Agency

I take responsibility for my need to learn. I plan learning carefully & use all dimensions of learning effectively. When I need to learn, I create a clear learning purpose aligned to the outcome I want and adapt it as I make progress. The opposite is learning robotically, without really thinking about it.

Hope and Optimism

I am optimistic, hopeful and confident that I will learn and succeed over time. I have a growth mindset; I believe I can create the knowledge I need and adapt to achieve the improvement I want. The opposite is feeling stuck and static.

Sense-making

I make sense of new information and make connections with what I already know from different sources. I connect what I am learning with my purpose and the performance I want to improve. The opposite is simply accumulating data, without piecing it together.

Creativity

When I am learning, I use my intuition and imagination to generate new ideas and understanding. I take risks and try different ways of learning to arrive at the answer, solution or outcome I need. The opposite is learning bound by following the rules.

Curiosity

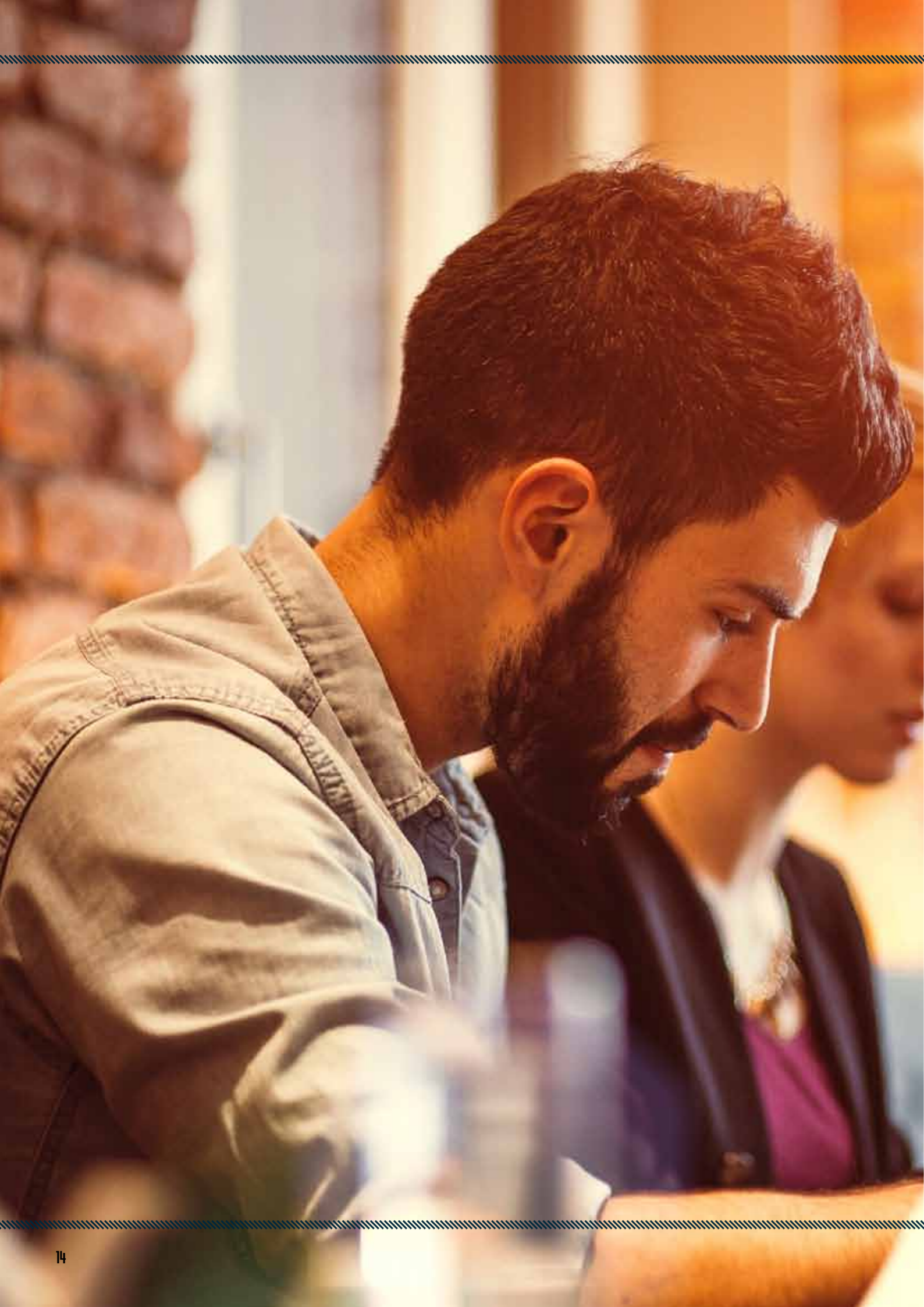
I am naturally curious and inquisitive. I like to get beneath the surface of things and find out more. I am always wondering and asking questions like, 'why?', 'how come?', 'what if?' and 'who says so?' The opposite is being passive.

Collaboration

I learn well with and from others, as well as by myself. I collaborate to create new insights, ideas and knowledge I can use. I listen and contribute productively when learning with others and as a team. The opposite is being isolated or over-dependent.

Belonging

I belong to a group or community to whom I can turn when I have questions to ask or problems to solve. I have social networks and friendships to draw on when I need them, and I provide the same in return. The opposite is feeling alone and without support.



IMPROVING INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

The ability to learn is the strongest indicator of your potential to succeed.

That's how important it is. As a leader, you can improve the learning ability of individual team members, as well as your own.

Here are the steps for improving individual learning ability:

Step One

Use this guide to introduce Self-Directed Learning and Learning Ability. Discuss the eight dimensions and exchange examples of each dimension in action and in relation to current work activities.

Step Two

Using the Individual Self-Assessment, invite your team member to rate their effectiveness and identify improvement needs in relation to the current challenges they face.

Step Three

Look at the 'Improvement Hints and Tips' section of this guide and agree improvement activities for each learning dimension they want to improve.

Step Four

Practice, practice, practice. As a leader and coach, give constructive feedback, especially when you see individuals practicing and improving the dimensions they are working on.

Step Five

Review their learning journey with them, asking them to link improvements in their performance to the way they learn.

INDIVIDUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

Read each dimension and rate how well you learn with reference to work activities in general or a specific project or work-related challenge in which you want to do well.

Open Readiness

I am open, willing and ready to learn – not rigid, dependent or resistant to learning and change. I am flexible in my self-belief, willing to persist when necessary, and ready to manage any self-doubt.

NOT AT ALL LIKE ME	NOT VERY MUCH LIKE ME	A LITTLE LIKE ME	QUITE LIKE ME	QUITE A LOT LIKE ME	VERY MUCH LIKE ME
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Mindful Agency

I take responsibility for my need to learn. I plan learning carefully and use all dimensions of my learning ability, effectively. When I need to learn, I create a clear learning purpose aligned to performance and adapt it as I make progress.

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Hope and Optimism

I am optimistic, hopeful and confident that I will learn and succeed over time. I have a growth mindset; I believe I can create the knowledge I need, and adapt to achieve the improvement I want.

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Sense-making

I make sense of new information from different sources and make connections with what I already know. I connect what I am learning with my purpose and the performance I want to improve.

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Creativity

When I am learning, I use my intuition and imagination to generate new ideas and understanding. I take risks and try different ways of learning to arrive at the answer, solution or outcome I need.

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Collaboration

I learn well with and from others, as well as by myself. I collaborate to create new insights, ideas and knowledge I can use. I listen and contribute productively when learning with others and as a team.

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Belonging

I belong to a group or community to whom I can turn when I have questions to ask or problems to solve. I have social networks and friendships to draw on when I need them, and I provide the same in return.

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Self-Reflection

Which dimensions are stronger or more natural for you? Which do you use less often or less well? What examples illustrate this? And, in relation to your current goals or work challenges, which dimensions do you need or want to improve and be better at?



IMPROVING TEAM LEARNING

To perform together, you need to learn together.

By doing so, they develop shared understanding, collective intelligence and the ability to invent new ideas, learn from experience and adapt and change, together.

Here are the steps for improving learning ability in your team:

Step One

Use this guide to introduce your team to Self-Directed Learning and Learning Ability. As a team, discuss the eight dimensions and identify examples of each dimension in your work as a team.

Step Two

Using the Team Self-Assessment, discuss and agree a team consensus rating for each learning dimension. Identify the dimensions you need or want to improve as a team.

Step Three

Take the dimensions you want to improve and consult the 'Improvement Hints and Tips' section of this guide. For each dimension, discuss and decide improvement actions.

Step Four

When you work together, or in team meetings, set the tone with your own behaviour, remind the team of their improvement actions, encourage practice and mutual support for the new learning behaviours you want to see.

TEAM SELF-ASSESSMENT

Read each dimension and rate how well you learn with reference to work activities in general or a specific project or work-related challenge in which you want to do well.

Open Readiness

We are open, willing and ready to learn – not rigid, dependent or resistant to learning and change. We are flexible in our self-belief, willing to persist when necessary, and ready to manage any self-doubt as a team.

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Mindful Agency

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Hope and Optimism

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Sense-making

We make sense of new information from different sources and make connections with what we already know. We connect what we are learning with our purpose and the performance we want to improve.

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Curiosity

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Collaboration

We learn well with and from others, as well as by ourselves. We collaborate to create new insights, ideas and knowledge we can use. We listen and contribute productively when learning with each other and as a team.

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Team Discussion

As a team, which dimensions are stronger or more natural for you? Which do you use less often or less well? What examples illustrate this? And, in relation to current challenges, which dimensions do you need to improve and be better at?

COACHING FOR LEARNING

Leaders are familiar with coaching for improving skills. Coaching for learning is similar.

The main difference is that learning ability underpins improvement in everything! This makes coaching for learning much more relevant, important and useful. Here are some tips for doing it well:

Understand Learning

Before you start, make sure you understand Self-Directed Learning and Learning Ability. Learn the eight dimensions and use the self-assessment to discover which ones are most natural for you and those which are less developed or less natural to use.

Create the Climate

Whether you are coaching your team or coaching an individual, create a climate that encourages Openness Readiness in others.

Act with Humility

Your empathy, curiosity and humility are vital to the generation of self-motivated, authentic and inquiry-led learning in your team.

Focus on Success

Set high expectations, create hope and optimism and recognize examples of effective learning often, so that all team members know what is expected of them.

Ask Questions and Keep Your Answers to Yourself

Ask questions to help your team discover ideas and insights for themselves. Make suggestions to stimulate ideas and resist the temptation to provide too much guidance.

FOCUS LEARNING ON REAL WORK CHALLENGES

Improving learning should always be focused on a real work challenge, project or relationship for which you, your team or team members need to learn in order to succeed. This real work 'context' provides clarity of purpose

SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE

FOCUS LEARNING ON REAL WORK CHALLENGES





COACHING CONVERSATIONS

Use these steps as a guide for Coaching for Learning conversations with members of your team:

Before You Start

Introduce your team members to learning ability. Ask them to complete the self-assessment and bring it to your next team or one-to-one meeting.

When You Start

Your first priority is to create a coaching relationship that enables your team/team member's Open Readiness to learn with you as their coach. Explain why learning ability matters to you and say something about your own learning profile. Explain your goal is to help them develop the dimension of learning ability they want to improve.

Discuss their Learning Self-Assessment

Look at the self-assessment together. Discuss questions like these: Which dimensions are stronger or more natural for you? Which do you use more and less often? And more and less well? What examples illustrate this? In relation to your current work challenges or longer term goals, which dimensions do you need to improve and be better at?

Check Understanding

Invite and respond to questions. Explain your role as a coach involves asking questions so they clarify answers of their own.

Consult Improvement 'Hints and Tips'

When you have identified a dimension to improve, turn to the relevant page in the next section and follow the guidance.



**IMPROVE THE LEARNING
ABILITY IN YOUR TEAM**

**HINTS AND TIPS
FOR IMPROVEMENT**

IMPROVE OPEN READINESS WITH TEAM MEMBERS

Individual Open Readiness should be like this...

I am open, willing and ready to learn – not rigid, dependent or resistant to learning and change. I am flexible in my self-belief, willing to persist when necessary and ready to manage any self-doubt. The opposite is when I am being too rigid, resistant or fragile.

Coaching Goal

To increase open, willing and independent learning. Reduce resistance and over reliance on others.

Coaching Questions

- > Is open readiness something you want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > Could we create a better climate of open readiness in this, our coaching and working relationship? How could we do that?
- > With regard to your current work challenges, how is your readiness to learn being reduced or obstructed?
- > What does your resistance or dependence do for you that you don't want to lose? Are there other ways of maintaining this?
- > If you could change one thing that would increase your readiness to learn, what would it be?

Suggestions

- > Ask three colleagues who do this well to explain how they manage their openness to learning, even when it is hard for them to do so.
- > Describe the advantages and disadvantages of being open to learning in relation to your most important work challenges
- > Turn up your resistant determination and use it to persist in the face of adversity.

IMPROVE OPEN READINESS WITH YOUR TEAM

Team Open Readiness should be like this...

We are open, willing and ready to learn – not rigid, dependent or resistant to learning and change. We are flexible in our self-belief, willing to persist when necessary, & ready to manage any self-doubt as a team. The opposite is when we are being too rigid, resistant or fragile.

Coaching Goal

To increase open, willing and inter-dependent learning. Reduce resistance and over reliance on others.

Coaching Questions

- > Is open readiness something we want to improve? Why? For what work challenges? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > How could we create a better climate of open readiness in our working relationship as a team?
- > With regard to our current work challenges, how is our readiness to learn being reduced or obstructed?
- > What does our resistance or dependence do for us that we don't want to lose? Are there other ways of maintaining this?
- > If we could change one thing that would increase our readiness to learn, what would it be?

Suggestions

- > Ask team members to meet colleagues outside your team and learn how other teams manage their openness to learning.
- > Ask your team to find articles that present good practice examples of learning organisations, share and discuss how your team compares.
- > Share the problems and challenges you face and ask your team to bring ideas and solutions and develop them, together.

IMPROVE MINDFUL AGENCY WITH TEAM MEMBERS

Individual Mindful Agency should be like this...

I take responsibility for my need to learn. I plan learning carefully and use all dimensions of learning effectively. When I need to learn, I create a clear learning purpose aligned to the outcome I want and adapt it as I make progress. The opposite is when I am being robotic.

Coaching Goal

To develop confident, self-directed and independent learning focused on improving individual performance.

Coaching Questions

- > Is mindful agency something you want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > With regard to a current work challenge, what is the performance outcome you want and what do you need to learn to achieve it?
- > Which learning dimensions are you using most effectively and which could you make better use of?
- > How is this work challenge relevant to you personally? And how will success assist the achievement of your career aspirations?
- > What is your plan for improving your ability to learn? And how are you encouraging the improvement of learning ability in others?

Suggestions

- > Take two recent work projects and ask, 'How did I use/not use my learning ability to get the outcome I achieved?' 'Could I do better?'
- > Look again at the Self-Directed Learning process and ask, 'How could I apply or improve the way I use each step?'
- > Ask respected colleagues to share the learning achievements of which they are most proud. Listen and learn from their experience.

IMPROVE MINDFUL AGENCY WITH YOUR TEAM

Team Mindful Agency should be like this...

We take responsibility for our need to learn. We plan learning carefully and use all dimensions of our learning ability effectively. When we need to learn, we create a clear learning purpose aligned to performance and adapt it as we make progress. The opposite is when we are being robotic.

Coaching Goal

To develop confident, self-directed and inter-dependent learning focused on improving team performance.

Coaching Questions

- > Is mindful agency something we want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > With regard to a current work challenge, what is the performance outcome we want and what do we need to learn to achieve it?
- > Which learning dimensions are we using most effectively and which could we make better use of?
- > How is this work challenge relevant to us, as a team? And how will success assist the achievement of our team aspirations?
- > What is our plan for improving our ability to learn? And how are we encouraging the improvement of learning ability in each other?

Suggestions

- > Review recent work projects and ask, 'How did we use/not use our learning ability to get the outcome we achieved?' 'Could we do better?'
- > Examine the Self-Directed Learning process and ask, 'How could we apply or improve the way we use each step in this team?'
- > Invite colleagues from other work teams to present their success stories to you with a focus on how they learned, together.

IMPROVE HOPE AND OPTIMISM WITH TEAM MEMBERS

Individual Hope and Optimism should be like this...

I am optimistic, hopeful and confident that I will learn and succeed over time. I have a growth mindset; I believe I can create the knowledge I need and adapt to achieve the improvement I want. The opposite is when I am stuck and static.

Coaching Goal

To encourage and enable an internally motivated hope, optimism and self-confidence required to learn, adapt and do well.

Coaching Questions

- > Is hope and optimism something you want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > How do you adapt and learn new things without even a small amount of hope and optimism?
- > How do you describe what you do have?
- > In which work settings is your hope and optimism higher/lower? How might the task or relationships be adjusted to increase your optimism?
- > How would you advise someone at work who felt a little hopeless or pessimistic about a job they were expected to do well?
- > If you knew you could not fail, what would you dare to do? And if you approached this, one step at a time, what would you next?

Suggestions

- > During the next week, keep a journal of your hope and optimism highs and lows at work. Discuss how the balance could be improved.
- > Identify which working relationships help you feel more hopeful and optimistic. Discuss how to increase that influence.
- > Identify the things in your work that you most enjoy and look forward to. Discuss ways of enriching your role to do more of it.

IMPROVE HOPE AND OPTIMISM WITH YOUR TEAM

Team Hope and Optimism should be like this...

We are optimistic, hopeful and confident that we will learn and succeed over time. We have a growth mindset; We believe we can create the knowledge we need, and adapt to achieve the improvement we want. The opposite is when we are stuck and static.

Coaching Goal

To encourage and enable a shared sense of hope, optimism and confidence required to learn, adapt and do well as a team.

Coaching Questions

- > Is hope and optimism something we want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > How do we adapt and learn new things without even a small amount of hope and optimism?
- > How do we describe what we do have?
- > In which work settings is our hope and optimism higher/lower? How might our task or relationships be adjusted to increase our optimism?
- > How would we advise a team at work who felt a little hopeless or pessimistic about a job they were expected to do well?
- > If we knew we could not fail, what would we dare to do? And if we approached this, one step at a time, what would we next?

Suggestions

- > Looking back, identify the hope and optimism highs and lows in work we've done as a team.
- > Discuss how the balance could be improved.
- > Identify which working relationships help us feel more hopeful and optimistic, collectively.
- > Discuss how to increase that influence.
- > Identify the things in our work as a team that we most enjoy and look forward to. Discuss ways of enriching our work to do more of it.

IMPROVE SENSE-MAKING WITH TEAM MEMBERS

Individual Sense-Making should be like this...

I make sense of new information and make connections with what I already know from different sources. I connect what I am learning with my purpose and the performance I want to improve. The opposite is when I simply accumulate data.

Coaching Goal

To improve your team member's ability to make sense of new information from diverse sources and apply it well.

Coaching Questions

- > Is sense-making something you want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > How do you currently make good sense of new information when you have to solve an unfamiliar problem or answer a new question?
- > Have you tried using a mind map, diagram or journal to help organise your thinking? How could you use tools like these more effectively?
- > How could you use conversations and meetings with colleagues to share and further stimulate the development of ideas and solutions?
- > When making sense of new information, how could questions like, 'What does this mean for my customers, my colleagues or the company?' help you make sense more quickly?

Suggestions

- > Many people think better when they think 'out loud'. Ask a colleague to be a sounding board or sense-making buddy.
- > When looking for new information, let your natural curiosity expand your search and let your judgement keep ideas relevant.
- > Practice making sense by browsing work-related articles and asking, 'How is this relevant to me? How is it linked to what I already know? How could I use it?'

IMPROVE SENSE-MAKING WITH YOUR TEAM

Team Sense-Making should be like this...

We make sense of new information from different sources and make connections with what we already know. We connect what we are learning with our purpose and the performance we want to improve. The opposite is when we simply accumulate data.

Coaching Goal

To improve your team member's ability to make sense of new information from diverse sources and apply it well.

Coaching Questions

- > Is sense-making something we want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > How do we currently make good sense of new information when we have to solve an unfamiliar problem or answer a new question?
- > Have we tried using mind maps, diagrams or wall charts to organise our thinking? How might we use tools like these more effectively?
- > How could we use conversations and team meetings to share and further stimulate the development of ideas and solutions?
- > When making sense of new information, how could questions like, 'What does this mean for our customers, our colleagues or the company?' help us make sense more quickly?

Suggestions

- > Many teams think better when they think 'out loud'. Let's use discussions with colleagues to develop and test our ideas.
- > When presenting in team meetings, encourage questions to expand our understanding and use our judgement keep ideas relevant.
- > Take turns to present work-related articles in team meetings, explaining, 'How is this relevant to us? How is it linked to what we already know? How could we use it?'

IMPROVE CREATIVITY WITH TEAM MEMBERS

Individual Creativity should be like this...

When I am learning, I use my intuition and imagination to generate new ideas & understanding. I take risks and try different ways of learning to arrive at the answer, solution or outcome I need. The opposite is when I am being rule-bound.

Coaching Goal

To improve your team member's ability to use their imagination and creativity when they are learning.

Coaching Questions

- > Is creativity something you want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > How would using your imagination and creativity when you learn, improve your effectiveness in your job?
- > Who do you know with a reputation as an imaginative and creative learner? What do they do?
- > How could you do the same?
- > In which work activities does your imagination help you do a great job? How could you transfer that to your next work challenge?
- > If a miracle happened and you woke up with amazingly creative learning skills, what would we see you doing differently?

Suggestions

- > Take a current work challenge and describe five different ways of learning what you need to know in order to do a great job.
- > Take your work challenge to a colleague who learns and works more creatively than you, and ask them what their approach would be.
- > Make a new rule: give yourself permission to do things the way you always do and a requirement to come up with at least one alternative approach. Try both & notice the difference.

IMPROVE CREATIVITY WITH YOUR TEAM

Team Creativity should be like this...

When we are learning, we use our intuition and imagination to generate new ideas and understanding. We take risks and try different ways of learning to arrive at the answer, solution or outcome we need. The opposite is when we are being rule-bound.

Coaching Goal

To improve your team's ability to use their imagination and creativity when they are learning and working together, as a team.

Coaching Questions

- > Is creativity something we want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > How would using our imagination and creativity as we learn together, improve the effectiveness of our work as a team?
- > Who do we know with a reputation as an imaginative and creative learning team? What do they do? How could we do the same?
- > In which work activities does our imagination help us do a great job? How could we transfer that to our next work challenge?
- > If a miracle happened and we woke up with amazingly creative learning skills, what would we see ourselves doing differently?

Suggestions

- > Take a current work challenge and ask each team member to describe three different ways of learning that would help you do a great job, together.
- > Take your work challenge to a team that learns and works more creatively than yours, and ask them what their approach would be.
- > Make a new team rule: give yourselves permission to do things the way you always do and a

IMPROVE CURIOSITY WITH TEAM MEMBERS

Individual Curiosity should be like this...

I am naturally curious and inquisitive. I like to get beneath the surface of things and find out more. I am always wondering and asking questions like, 'why?', 'how come?', 'what if?' and 'who says so?' The opposite is when I am being passive.

Coaching Goal

To improve your team member's curiosity and ability to ask questions that get beneath the surface of things.

Coaching Questions

- > Is curiosity something you want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > How do others demonstrate their curiosity? What kind of questions do they ask? What advantage does this have?
- > At work, what are you genuinely curious about? If you had freedom to find out more, what questions would you ask?
- > How do you respond when someone asks questions about your work? How does this influence the way you ask questions of others?
- > Take a current work challenge. What questions might inquisitive people ask, beginning why? what? who? how? where? and when?

Suggestions

- > Listen to the type of questions that respected colleagues ask and prepare questions of your own that sound like theirs.
- > Take a work topic that fascinates you and develop the top ten questions you would ask to get beneath the surface of it.
- > Describe a project you are working on to a colleague and ask them to phrase the questions they would ask if they were your boss or your CEO for the day.

IMPROVE CURIOSITY WITH YOUR TEAM

Team Curiosity should be like this...

We are naturally curious. We like to get beneath the surface of things and find out more. We are always wondering and asking questions like, 'why?', 'how come?', 'what if?' and 'who says so?' The opposite is when we are being passive.

Coaching Goal

To improve your team's curiosity and ability to ask questions that get beneath the surface of things.

Coaching Questions

- > Is curiosity something we want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > How do other teams demonstrate curiosity? What kind of questions do they ask? What advantage does this give them as a team?
- > At work, what are we genuinely curious about? If we had freedom to find out more, what questions would we ask?
- > How do we respond when someone asks questions about our work? How does this influence the way we ask questions of each other?
- > Take a current work challenge facing the team. What questions might inquisitive people ask, beginning why? what? who? how? where? and when?

Suggestions

- > Listen to the type of questions that respected leaders ask and prepare questions of our own that sound like theirs.
- > Take a work topic that fascinates us and develop the top ten questions we would ask to get beneath the surface of it.
- > Describe a project we are working on to another team and ask them to phrase the questions they would ask if they were our boss or our CEO for the day.

IMPROVE COLLABORATION WITH TEAM MEMBERS

Individual Collaboration should be like this...

I learn well with and from others, as well as by myself. I collaborate to create new insights, ideas and knowledge I can use. I listen and contribute productively when learning with others and as a team. The opposite is when I feel isolated or over-dependent.

Coaching Goal

To improve your team member's ability to learn and perform collaboratively, as well as by themselves.

Coaching Questions

- > Is collaboration something you want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > When you have learned collaboratively in the past, what difference has it made to the outcomes you've achieved?
- > What assumptions interfere with or disrupt your inclination to learn collaboratively? In what situations do they make good sense?
- > In your current work challenges, how can you balance the advantage of learning alone with the advantage of learning with others?
- > How willing and open are you to let others learn with and from you? How might you encourage others to ask you for advice?

Suggestions

- > Observe the most collaborative learners and copy what they do to get more practice at learning collaboratively.
- > Let colleagues know that you want to learn collaboratively and set up meetings in which learning from each other is the main purpose.
- > Meet up with colleagues who also want to improve their ability to learn collaboratively. Share ideas and help each other make progress.

IMPROVE COLLABORATION WITH YOUR TEAM

Team Collaboration should be like this...

We learn well with and from others, as well as by ourselves. We collaborate to create new insights, ideas and knowledge we can use. We listen and contribute productively when learning with each other and as a team. The opposite is when we feel isolated or over-dependent.

Coaching Goal

To improve your team's ability to learn and perform collaboratively, as well as by themselves.

Coaching Questions

- > Is collaboration something we want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > When we have learned collaboratively in the past, what difference has it made to the outcomes we've achieved?
- > What assumptions interfere with or disrupt our inclination to learn collaboratively? In what situations do they make good sense?
- > In our current work challenges, how can we balance the advantage of learning alone with the advantage of learning from other teams?
- > How willing and open are we to let other teams learn with and from us? How might we encourage other teams to ask for our advice?

Suggestions

- > Observe the most collaborative learning teams and copy what they do to get more practice at learning collaboratively.
- > Let other teams know that we want to learn collaboratively and set up meetings in which learning from each other is the main purpose.
- > Meet up with other teams who also want to improve their ability to learn collaboratively. Share ideas and help each other make progress.

IMPROVE BELONGING WITH TEAM MEMBERS

Individual Belonging should be like this...

I belong to a group or community to whom I can turn when I have questions to ask or problems to solve. I have social networks and friendships to draw on when I need them, and I provide the same in return. The opposite is when I feel alone.

Coaching Goal

To improve your team member's sense of belonging so they have others to turn to when they have difficult problems to resolve.

Coaching Questions

- > Is belonging something you want to improve? Why? For what work challenge? And if it improved, what difference would it make?
- > What's the greatest advantage in having at least one person to whom you can turn when work issues are particularly difficult to resolve by yourself?
- > What opportunities are there for you to provide that sense of belonging for others? How might you build it?
- > If belonging is a relationship where help is available, what areas of professional, technical or personal support would you most value?
- > If someone came to you asking for your support, how would you respond? How can you make your willingness to help, better known?

Suggestions

- > Recall the times when you have valued the availability of someone to talk to. Consider how you can provide the same support for others.
- > Tell those whose support you value, how much it matters to you. Offer them the same in return. Consider extending your network to others.
- > Develop your role as a coach or mentor to increase the sense of belonging to your organisation that others might need.

IMPROVE BELONGING WITH YOUR TEAM

Team Belonging should be like this...

We belong to a group or community to whom we can turn when we have questions to ask or problems to solve. We have social networks and friendships to draw on when we need them, and we provide the same in return. The opposite is when we feel alone.

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- > Develop our roles as a coaches or mentors to increase the sense of belonging to our organisation that others might need.

PRACTICE FOR INDIVIDUALS

As with any other skill, improving your ability to learn requires plenty of practice.

Make a Plan

Progress is easier when you focus on one thing at a time. Use coaching conversations to prioritise and decide improvement activities. Then, review progress in your regular one-to-one meetings.

Reviewing Progress with Individuals

This is critical, too. Ask team members to bring examples of their practice activity for you to discuss, together. Ask questions like these:

Review Questions

- > Which learning dimension have you been working on?
- > For which work challenge? And what was your goal?
- > What have you been doing to achieve that goal?
- > And what difference have you noticed? What results are you getting?
- > Is this dimension getting better and improving?
- > Have you asked for feedback? What do others say?
- > What further practice do you need or want to do?

Encouragement and Support

When coaching team members to improve their learning ability, you need to maintain a relationship that supports their openness and readiness to learn. Your encouragement, constructive feedback and positive support will help to do this.

PRACTICE FOR TEAMS

As in any field of human endeavour, teams that learn together out perform those that don't.

Make a Plan

Progress is easier when your team focuses on one thing at a time. Use team meetings to prioritise and decide your improvement activities. Then, review progress together, in your regular team meetings.

Reviewing Progress as a Team

It is important to involve everyone. Ask your team to bring examples of improvement activities for you to discuss, together. Ask questions like these:

Review Questions

- > Which learning dimensions have we been working on?
- > For which work challenge? And what was our goal?
- > What have we been doing to achieve that goal?
- > And what difference have we noticed? What results are we getting?
- > Is each dimension getting better and improving?
- > Have we asked for feedback? What have we noticed in each other?
- > What further practice do we need or want to do?

Encouragement and Support

When coaching your team to improve their learning ability, you need to maintain a relationship that supports their openness and readiness to learn. Your encouragement, constructive feedback and positive support will help to do this.

AND, FINALLY

Improving our ability to learn has life-long and life-wide advantages. Learning helps everyone to adapt, learn, grow and fulfill their potential in every aspect of life.

It's About Leadership and Performance

In the world of work, leaders are uniquely placed to encourage and support the improvement of learning in the teams and organisations they lead.

Helping others learn more effectively is a feature of generous leadership. But it is not just about learning.

Leaders who develop their teams achieve higher productivity than those who don't. Improving the learning ability in your team helps you, your team and your organisation succeed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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