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*In Leaders Ready Now (#17) we framed the requirement for “an ecosystem for growth.” Building on this discussion, we will continue our next few LRN postings with a “big idea” focused on the **mastery of building learning infrastructures**.*

“The principles of classical management theory have become so deeply ingrained in the ways managers think about organizations that for most of them the design of formal structures, linked by clear lines of communication, coordination, and control, has become almost second nature. This largely unconscious embrace of the mechanistic approach to management has now become one of the main obstacles to organizational change.” (Fritjof Capra, The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision)

At NLEC, we are very optimistic – down right excited – about our learning future! We feel we are on a precipice of true organizational transformation. In order to meet the demands of the future, learning must be faster...learning must be communal.

The Big Idea

Imagine an organization where leaders at all levels are inclusive, engaged and able to create aligned authentic, learning and knowledge creating communities – able to push beyond best practices. An organization that is made stronger by leveraging its diversity as it seeks to operate from collective intelligence rather than rigid conformity. In this organization, there is an exceptional ability to interconnect observations and ideas from different disciplines which lies at the very heart of our approach to learning.

Current Reality

In an ever accelerating world where digitization is a primary disruptor, we must ensure leaders are creative, adaptive, problem solvers. Currently, we are the best technical problem solvers, but we often find our attention focused on projects and programs, results and outcomes. However, in a world of artificial intelligence where the speed and scope of digital transformation is a game changer, filling technical skill gaps will fall short, mandating decision makers shift their mindset...

Learning Future

Top leaders inspire the units they lead...and treat every community member as an equal and valued leader of the group and draws from them capacities that transcend limits of rank, role or identity. Our best leaders value leadership and followership equally...and...they instill in each and every member of their communities equal responsibility for the performance of the whole. Our task is to face the enemy as one Navy with unity of thought, spirit and unified action at every level of scale. Our top leaders fight and win as one community.

The genesis of learning starts with a fundamental virtue of **humility**. Here we gain a shared mental model that shifts the focus from oneself (it's not all about me) toward a wider, more open-minded viewpoint that enables us to embrace the world view as it “is” in pursuit of human excellence.

And...we choose to look at this quest for excellence as a practice – an activity – not a goal.

Practicing excellence is synonymous with practicing development. This is why development through daily work – on the deckplate in the heat of the moment – is so central to not only our learning, but a better understanding of how our learning works (meta-learning).

Dr. Edward Hess and Kaz Gozdz brilliantly capture this essence and frame future learning in their article, [“Becoming a Hyper-Learning Community: The Future of Business”](#). We need to develop faster and on a larger scale than is possible through individual development – development must be communal.

Our creative side must leverage our humanity while creating and framing our problems.

As we better understand ourselves and those we lead, self-awareness itself takes on new meaning and is no longer “self-insight”, but true awareness in the moment that is actually used to help us make better decisions. A clearer understanding of the true intrinsic motivations that drive us in our daily being and ultimately shapes our behavior. Vivienne Ming captures expand this view of indigenous motivation in her fascinating TEDMED Talk, [“The Paradox of Incentive Insensitivity”](#).

The creativity and adaptability of life expresses itself through the spontaneous emergence of novelty at critical points of instability. Every human organization contains both designed and emergent structures. The challenge is to find the right balance between the creativity of emergence and the stability of design. (Fritjof Capra)

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