

Organizational Learning (OL) and Learning Organization (LO) Project

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What is the Challenge we are facing?

After more than two decades of China's open market policy, most of Hong Kong's manufacturers have relocated their factories across the Lo Wu border into the Pearl River Delta region. Today, the sustained high rate of growth of China's economy has attracted investments from many developed countries bringing with it increasing competition.

The Project:

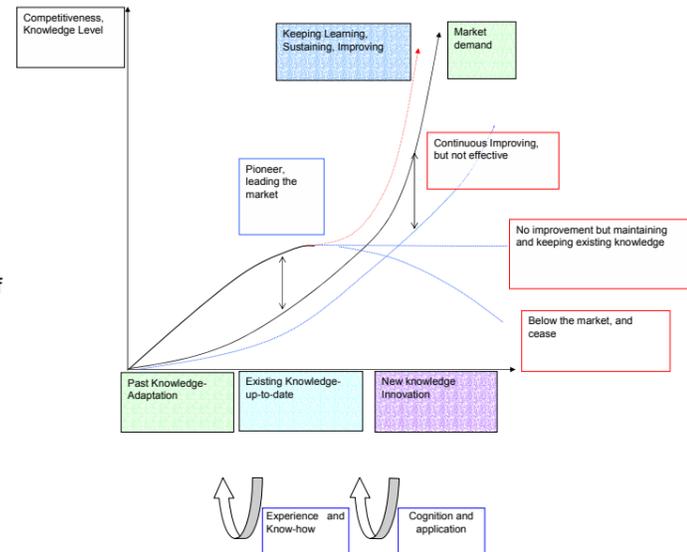
This is a collaborative project supported by SAE Magnetics (HK) Ltd. Which has a strategic vision of moving towards the goal of LO. The study aims to develop a structured OL framework that will help to initiate, promote and sustain a continuous OL process and culture in selected Business Unit within SAE Magnetics. The project was started in 2002 and will last four years. It is divided into four phases.

Objectives:

- Identify the existing learning environment in SAE and its staff's expectations of the LO and OL project;
- Study the positive factors for and the barriers or inhibiting factors against the implementation of OL in SAE and evaluate its readiness to becoming a Learning Organization;
- Develop and implement an OL framework for specific Business Unit of SAE;
- Devise a set of monitoring tool and measuring mechanism to evaluate the quantitative and qualitative impact of OL in this selected BU of SAE;
- Publicize the benefits of this LO and OL project and develop a long-term LO road-map for SAE to further propagate and sustain the OL culture.

Company Background and current situation

SAE Magnetics (HK) Ltd is one of the world's leading independent manufacturers of magnetic recording heads, head gimbals assemblies and head stack assemblies for computer hard disk drives. It is currently the supplier of more than 30% of the magnetic recording heads sold worldwide, with annual sales of over US\$1.3 billion. Organizational learning is being promoted and LO is one of SAE's strategic goals.



Preliminary Results – Motivation in Learning

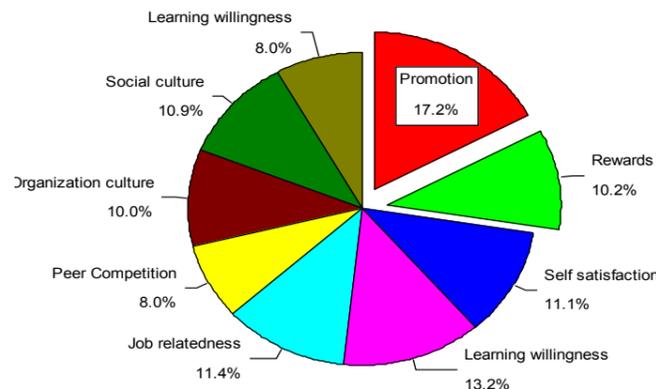
The study in Phase 1 is mainly about staff's motivation in the OL process of SAE.

Motivating factors from Employees' perception

TABLE 2- MOTIVATING FACTORS FROM EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION

Motivating factors as at Oct 2002			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pressure from superiors	29	12.0690	6.88129
Pressure from company	37	12.4324	5.84779
Organizational culture	57	17.8421	9.94052
Peer Competition	45	17.9778	9.57860
Rewards	56	18.5893	10.41987
Job relatedness	62	18.7097	8.68084
Social culture	58	19.0862	11.08228
Self satisfaction	54	20.8889	14.50526
Self willingness to learn	63	21.3492	15.08595
Promotion	77	22.7662	13.66892
Valid N (listwise)	8		

FIGURE 1- MOTIVATING FACTORS BY VOTING



Employees were invited to participate in the study. Respondents are from various functional units – Manufacturing, Production/Material, Quality, Engineering, etc. Altogether, 109 questionnaires were returned. Participants were asked to vote for their perceived motivating factors of learning, and rate the factors from 0-100 points, in order that the factors they voted would altogether score to maximum 100 points. The mean score, M is then tabulated by dividing the total points each factor obtained with N=109, the total respondents number.

Descriptive Results

According to the results obtained, majority of employees rated promotion (N=77), self willingness (N=63), job relatedness (N=62), cultural factors (N=58, 57) and rewards (N=56) accordingly as the key motivating factors. Whereas, pressures from superiors (N= 29) and company (N=37) and peer competition (N= 45) were viewed as less important in motivating their learning. The voting percentage distribution is shown in Figure1.

Job fulfilment, Promotion

Employees were found to be more concerned with the physical and environmental factors like promotion, job-relatedness and cultural factors. They paid more attention to resources, and promotion (N=77, M= 22.76). The key concerns as promotion is always associated with earnings, and living standards, hence most employees are always seeking better physical environment, by aiming for better job or position. Thus, the need for learning will be appreciated and accepted if it is job-related (N=62, M=18.7), since it is perceived to be directly beneficial to their performance evaluation or promotion opportunity.

Achievement motivation- Career development

Job promotion (N=77, M22.76) and career enhancement as perceived achievement values. Promotion is primarily associated with ability of earnings, it is also viewed as personal achievement. Self-regulating processes occur as the motivated cognitive processes, employees' cognitions are pre-programmed with different values.

Personal motivation

Self-willingness (N=63, M=21.3) and feeling of satisfaction (N=54, M=20.8) play important roles in motivation, it does mean that employees are not only concerned about their basic needs, they are also eager to satisfy themselves, their spiritual needs, on higher levels of Maslow's needs hierarchy. Feelings of self-esteem and actualisation exist, employees with motivated cognitions have the mentality to actualise their ideal-self, after their pragmatic-self has been satisfied.

Environmental determinants

Social culture (N=58, M=19.0), organization culture (N=57, M=17.8) and pressures from superiors (N=29, M=12.08). In this case, these factors are not as important as those personal factors. However, they still affect the learning motivation.

The above summarises the results of the preliminary study during the Phase 1 of the project.