

The Organizational Learning Cycle

Reviewer: [Bill Godfrey](#) (Mt Stuart, TAS Australia) - [See all my reviews](#)

A new edition of this 1994 classic on organisational learning. Based round use of a variant of the Kolb cycle, it is a valuable practical and theoretical guide to enhanced organisational learning. It is extensively revised, with valuable new material.

When it was first published in 1994, it immediately became a definitive text on organisational learning. The second edition builds on the first, with five new or revised chapters and incorporation of useful case study material of successful organisational learning [I judge that the new material and additional insights fully justify buying a new copy even if you have the old.]. The last five years have seen many useful additions to the literature, but Nancy Dixon's book remains my first choice for straightforward, helpful and thorough coverage of the issues and practice.

The book is practical, illuminating and wide ranging, and with quite enough examples to give it life for those who are seeking practical solutions to practical problems. I highly recommend it to everyone directly concerned with enhancing learning in their organisation (is there anyone who is not or should not be?). Even if you have no time for reading, you should at least read the Preface and Introduction.

It is worth quoting the four main themes listed in the Preface in full:

"Learning is part of work and work involves learning; these are not separate functions but intertwined; the separation we have made of them is artificial and often does not serve us well.

Learning is not only or even primarily about obtaining correct information or answers from knowledgeable others; it is fundamentally about making meaning out of the experience we and others have in the world.

Organizational learning results from intentional and planned efforts to learn. Although it can and does occur accidentally, organizations cannot afford to rely on learning through chance.

As a collective we are capable of learning our way to the answers we need to address our difficult problems. It is ourselves we must rely on for these answers rather than experts, who can, at best, only provide us with answers that have worked in the past."

For a great many organisations these principles call for a major shift from current practice and the author shows how to achieve this.

The book is well organised, well summarised, and well referenced, which makes it very accessible.