



## The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization

Year of publication: 2006

Author: Peter Senge

445 pages

Link for purchase: <https://amzn.to/2IEOFTt>

The Fifth Discipline, originally released in 1990, written by Peter Senge, shows essential techniques for a successful business organization. It has eighteen chapters that are divided into five parts.

### Score

8

- 8 Aplicability
- 8 Inspiration
- 9 Innovation
- 8 Impact on results
- 7 Structure

### Main ideias of the book

- Internal restructuring of the company;
- Making use of the five disciplines a company will become successful;
- The learning organization will be prominent in the modern world. Forget the old ideas about leadership.

Peter Senge's book is filled with content and ideas on how to reorganize the company and the way its employees see the world. The following sections will focus on some parts of the book.

### For whom is this book suitable?

Senge's book shows people how the systemic view can change everything around us, involving personal and professional life.

The book is an essential tool to be used in reorganization of a business. Through it, employees will develop their vision of management, making it broader.

## Overview of the book

### *How Our Actions Create Our Reality ... and How We Can Modify It*

The author addresses the world and its relationships. He makes clear that the world is made up of interconnected forces. From the moment we are aware of this idea, we can begin to build the organizations that learn.

A learning organization is a company that is continually expanding its ability to create its future.

The company's employees constantly expand their ability to create the results they truly want. According to Senge, "organizations that learn are possible, because in the background we are all apprentices".

The five disciplines listed by the author are: personal domain, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and the fifth discipline, systemic thinking.

It is fundamental to develop the five disciplines together, and the fifth is the one that connects all of them.



*the bad leader is he who  
the people despise; the  
good leader is he who the  
people praise; the great  
leader is he who the  
people say, "We did it  
ourselves"*

Currently there are few organizations that manage to stay determined time in the market. What happens is that many problems are left aside, the solutions adopted are not feasible and in the end, which was a trivial problem, ends up becoming a huge loss. Sometimes worse, the break is the only way out.

Before the company goes bankrupt there are ways to fix the problems. The book lists 7 learning disabilities. If organizations struggle against these shortcomings, they will be closer to excellence. The 7 deficiencies are as follows:

**"I am my position"**: we tend to confuse our position with who we are, with our own personality. This makes people limited only in their activities.

**"The enemy is out there"**: it is when individuals try to blame an external agent for the mistake they make.

**"The illusion of taking control"**: People often confuse proactivity with reactivity. "True proactivity consists in realizing what our contribution to our own problems is." While being reactive is making decisions only after the situation is out of control.

**"Fixing in events"**: currently the main risks to the welfare of companies are gradual and not immediate events. In order to maintain the learning of the employees, in the long term, their mentality must also be long term.

**"The parable of the scalded frog"**: the author makes it clear that in order to perceive the gradual changes, we have to slow down our work pace and pay attention around. It is necessary to pay attention to both the drastic and the gradual.

**"The illusion of learning from experience"**: we usually learn from trial and error, that is from direct experience. However, what happens when we cannot analyze the results of our actions? And when these actions are beyond the reach of our vision? "We learn best from experience, yet we never directly experience the consequences of our most important decisions," according to Senger, this is the dilemma of learning from experience.

**"The Myth of the Management Team"**: Have you ever seen a fellow employee be awarded, not for solving pressing company problems, but for asking complex questions about the company's current policy? According to the author, companies reinforce the idea of rewarding the competent professionals who defend their points of view, instead of those who raise difficult questions. This leads teams to call "skillful incompetence" that is when people hinder their own learning.

From the identification of these problems, however small, countermeasures should already be adopted in order to eliminate the seven learning disabilities.

### *The fifth discipline: the cornerstone of the learning organization*

What is systemic thinking? Before clarifying this, there are some characteristics that hinder its application, such as: culture of immediacy, selfishness, lack of vision, fear, individualism, among others. Well, that's where the first four disciplines come in, they serve as support for the fifth discipline.

Remembering: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning are the first 4 disciplines. Let's talk a little about them, before tackling the fifth.

**Personal domain**: By increasing your personal capacity, towards the desired results, the greater the likelihood of the company's employees, and the company's own, to engage people so that they can achieve their chosen goals.

**Mental Models**: Question, modify, rethink, rearrange, reflect, and clarify how to continuously improve the way you view the world. That way you will also shape your decisions.



*Courage is simply doing whatever is needed in pursuit of the vision*

**Shared vision:** Creating a vision can be easy, but sharing it and engaging the team continuously in the future is certainly a challenge.

**Team learning:** The individual talents of each employee should be added when they are part of a team, not the other way around. This is a great challenge for a leader.

Now that we have an idea of the four disciplines, let's talk specifically about the fifth, systemic thinking.

According to the author, systemic thinking is the discipline that allows to change systems more effectively and act according to the processes of the natural and economic world, in other words.

It is the ability that an individual acquires to analyze the events and their possible consequences, in order to create a unique solution that meets the expectations of all the parties involved.

According to Peter, to build systemic thinking we need all four disciplines. "Building a shared vision encourages commitment to the long term. Mental models focus on the gap needed to reveal the limitations in our current ways of seeing the world.

Team learning develops the ability of groups to seek a picture of the whole picture that is beyond individual perspectives. And personal mastery encourages personal motivation to continually learn how our actions affect our world.

Finally, systemic thinking makes understandable the subtlest aspect of the learning organization - "the new way in which individuals perceive themselves and their world. "

One of the great things that hinders the formation and improvement of systemic thinking is when there is a high turnover rate in the company.

Thus, with loyalty in the compromised enterprise, the continuity necessary for the formation of systemic thinking is damaged. To solve this, it is fundamental to create a culture that encourages continuous learning.

When companies understand this, they will have understood the essence of systemic thinking.



*The most effective people are those who can "hold" their vision while remaining committed to seeing current reality clearly*

## Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

"Learning organizations," as the author calls them, are not born ready, the process of becoming one is gradual, while employees are understanding their roles within the company.

A leader who shares his victories makes his team feel fulfilled in being part of the company because this company is capable of producing the results that individuals are seeking.

Many companies have a limited view, people's opinions are not welcome, and yet, employees are meant only for the activities they do, where they often do not even understand the process within their workplace. This ends up being fatal to the company.

In this way, the only way out of organizations is to reformulate their structures, and this book is fundamental to this process.



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