

## What is learning? V3

### What is the purpose of this article?

- 1) This article enables a discussion about what is learning and the best ways to learn.
- 2) The audience for this article includes: board of directors, C-Suite, founders, and investors.
- 3) This article does not provide tax, legal or financial advice.
- 4) You must do your own research and fact-based analysis using current and relevant information.
- 5) AI did not write this article. 100% human written.

### What are the critical learnings in this article?

- 1) Learning is a biological process of changing your brain structure. The key changes to enable learning are new connections between neurons and strengthening the connections.
- 2) The best way for you to learn is to create your own conclusions and recommendations based on your own analysis of data you've collected.
- 3) The worst way for you to learn is to read reports and attend presentations.
- 4) Learning and unlearning is hard to do, especially if you've been a successful leader.

### What is learning?

- 1) Learning is the relatively permanent change in your talent.
- 2) The 10 components of your talent are: Self awareness; character, relationship skills, communications, crystallized intelligence, fluid intelligence, cognitive skills, ability to quickly learn and unlearn, creativity, and physical capabilities.
- 3) All talent is based on the biological structure of your brain i.e. your neurons and the synapses which connect your neurons.
- 4) Learning is a biological process of changing your brain structure. The key changes to enable learning are new connections between neurons and strengthening the connections.

### Why do you learn?

You learn for 3 reasons:

- 1) Curiosity
- 2) An external reward e.g. get a promotion or keep your job
- 3) Your own recognition that you have a gap between your current talent and the talent you need to solve a problem or reach a goal

### What is the best way for you to learn?

Active learning is the best way to learn. E.g.

- 1) The best way for you to learn is to create your own conclusions and recommendations based on your own analysis of data you've collected.
- 2) Coaching or teaching someone else is the second-best way to learn.
- 3) Other good ways to learn are: simulation & role playing, and case study analysis.

All the above approaches engage multiple parts of your brain and significantly change your neural connections.

### What are the worst ways for you to learn?

The following passive learning approaches don't result in any significant learning i.e. sustainable change in behaviour and knowledge.

- 1) Reading reports
- 2) Attending presentations, lectures

All the above have limited changes to limited parts of your brain. As a result, you gain little deep understanding, long term skills, and knowledge retention. BUT, if you take notes while listening to a presentation or reading documents, your learning is improved.

### Why is learning hard for you to do, especially if you've been a successful leader?

Learning also requires unlearning. The world is changing faster than ever before. Crisis and turmoil are never ending. The future is unpredictable.

What are the psychological barriers to your unlearning?

- 1) Unlearning is the conscious process of recognizing that your past skills, experience, and mental models are of limited or no value now.
- 2) You were an expert – able to successfully do things without deeply thinking about it. Unlearning takes you back to making mistakes, which can be very disturbing to you.

- 3) You have become emotionally attached to your mental models.
- 4) Your past expertise and experience are part of your identity. Information which contradicts your past, triggers defensive mechanisms to protect your ego.
- 5) Learning involves mistakes and uncertainty. This is very uncomfortable for leaders who like to project competence and confidence.
- 6) Past successes create the cognitive bias that overestimates your ability in new areas. This results in your believing that you don't need to learn.

What are the neurological barriers to your unlearning?

- 1) When those skills and knowledge that resulted in your success are challenged, your brain triggers the same defensive and emotional stress response as when you are in physical danger.
- 2) Your brain has developed many short cuts to enable fast decision making. But when the world that created those short cuts has changed, or when your brain is overloaded, you'll continue to make those same short cut decisions – which are no longer valid.
- 3) When you're under stress, the part of your brain that detects danger, reduces access to the planning and reasoning parts of your brain. When you are in high anxiety, you are incapable of learning new or complex information.
- 4) When you first learn something, you need your prefrontal cortex to go through intense conscious concentration and effort to create neural connections which connect external input to your behaviours and decision. Repetition over time results in your subconscious and automatic behaviours and decisions.
- 5) Unlearning is a painful process which requires your prefrontal cortex to consciously suppress your automatic behaviours and decisions AND to create new neural connections which will be stronger than your old neural connections. Your old neural connections are not deleted but become weaker over time.

**Can everyone learn?**

- 1) Many leaders can learn.
- 2) Many leaders are unable to learn. They cannot overcome their psychological and neurological barriers to learning. The lack of self awareness results in total conviction that they do not need to learn.
- 3) In today's hypercompetitive and turbulent world, the only way for leaders and their companies to succeed is to learn faster and better than competitors.

**What are your next steps?**

- 1) Define the words/concepts you're using, in a glossary. I've seen major confusion when the same words mean different things to different people.
- 2) Identify which situations requires learning and unlearning vs those situations where you can rely on your automatic behaviours and decisions, based on your historically successful mental models.
- 3) Identify those few critical business decisions which require you to maximise your learnings.

**What further reading should you do?**

What are the core components of talent? Koor and Associates

<https://koorandassociates.org/creating-business-value/core-components-of-talent/>

Is your company planning to fail? Koor and Associates

<https://koorandassociates.org/avoiding-business-failure/is-your-company-planning-to-fail/>

Note taking is key to value creation. Koor and Associates

<https://koorandassociates.org/creating-business-value/note-taking-is-key-to-value-creation/>