

CHAPTER TWELVE

Conclusion: A Mindful Way-of Being

Once a person says, "This is who I really am, what I am all about, what I was really meant to do," it is easier to decide how to spend one's time.
David Viscott

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Recapitulation: A Learnership Mental Model

Our description of learnership early in Chapter One proposed that it consisted of philosophical perspectives, architectural structures, and practical behaviors that together establish a distinctive human preference for action that we said was a recognizable “way-of-being.” A short review of these aspects of learnership will serve to focus our attention and assist in summarizing what has been presented and learned in this book.

Learnership. Learning is a complex human activity with the object of knowledge creation and use in virtually all human affairs. And, learners are people with an ability to learn although the development of this ability and willingness to use it varies widely across the general population. It follows, then, that there should be a term to describe people who are exceptional and influential learners, the breadth of their capabilities, and the extent of their influence on others. Learnership is the suggested term, and it is derived from: (1) *learner* – one who seeks to learn or to gain knowledge through experience or study, and (2) *-ship (suffix)* – to show or possess a quality, state, or condition. Additionally, learnership captures the essence and skill of leadership in which people are skillful in influencing others. Some distinctive features of learnership are:

1. Learnership is an activity in the service of knowledge, its creation, and its application. Highly developed skill in learnership virtually assures highly developed and comprehensive use of knowledge across multiple interdisciplinary social systems. In today’s terminology it could be said that learnership makes the concept of “Total Knowledge Management” (TKM) a distinct possibility.
2. Learnership is about learning, and about being a *learner*. More importantly, it’s about the journey that begins when we *learn to become a skilled and purposeful learner* and make a lifelong commitment to create and realize our individual potential.
3. Learnership is about knowing and how lifelong learning leads to the acquisition and storage of information and knowledge that may be employed in a multifaceted manner to become an “intelligent and competent person.” The more knowledge we can acquire, store, access, and apply in a timely and rational manner the more efficient and effective we become in all aspects of our lives.
4. Learnership is about leading, and about influencing action. Learning leads to knowledge but knowledge without action denies the learner and others the growth and development they may value. The ability of leaders to create a sense of urgency or opportunity focused on new levels of personal or organizational development is a significant attribute.
5. Learnership is a whole-person competence. The objective of learnership is to be a significant catalyst in the pursuit of personal self-fulfillment, organizational high performance, the community common good and societal human enlightenment. From an introspective and feeling perspective learnership is the lifelong crafting of our potential *to become*; to establish a presence that transcends our own existence, and to influence the development of future generations.

6. Learnership can be practiced by just about anyone. Many people throughout history have had the understanding and courage to become lifelong learners, doers, and contributors. They have charted their unique course, realized their own purpose, and enriched the lives of countless others as they pursued their particular journeys.

From an epistemological viewpoint, learnership contributes to the learner's ability to construct and evolve his or her own knowledge of social reality and to operate within that structure. The concept of Learnership: Total Learning, Knowing, and Leading as a Mindful Way-of Being is intended to inspire the same generative perspective towards personal development, higher performance and social contribution expressed in such seminal works as Carl Rodgers' A Way of Being (1980) and Peter Vaill's Learning as a Way of Being (1996).

Learnership Philosophy. Learnership, as a component of one's life philosophy, is focused on what is worth knowing and doing, and on how human needs are accomplished. Viewed from a broad perspective, learnership practitioners maintain an integrative worldview that frames their thinking, learning, knowing, leading, and goal-seeking behavior. Their inclination to determine the: who, what, when, where, why, how, and for whom on a wide range of societal issues and human activity signifies a *sense of personal responsibility for contributing to the welfare of themselves, their organizations, and their communities*. Maintaining a broad, open-minded perspective on life's patterns and meanings; and having a strong desire to understand *how everything may be integrated into a compelling mental framework* for life management and human progress are distinctive characteristics of the learnership practitioner's philosophy of life.

On the philosophical level, learnership may be understood and appreciated as enthusiasm to participate in life and contribute to human progress by engaging in a broad set of mutually supportive and symbiotic practices that enrich peoples' knowledge and understanding. *Learning to learn, and to use what is learned for the betterment of humankind is an essential characteristic of the learnership philosophy.* Specific emphasis is placed on:

1. Purpose and Meaning – A commitment to engage with others in answering life's basic questions:
 - a. What do I stand for? (A sense of purpose)
 - b. How do I fit in with what has come before? (A sense of history)
 - c. How am I related to other people/events/objectives? (A sense of order)
 - d. What can I hope for as I take action? (A sense of outcome)
2. Societal Development – A willingness to embark on humanity's journey toward an understanding of life's mysteries, definition of human purpose, and equalization of societal opportunities.
3. Higher-Level-of-Being – A desire to motivate oneself and others to pursue a unique purpose, confront personal challenges, develop enlightened perspective, and experience mindful accomplishment.

4. Goal Achievement – A synthesis of skills in lifelong learning and knowledge management that leads toward the accomplishment of the universal human goals of self- fulfillment, high performance, the common good, and human enlightenment.
5. Responsibility and Motivation – A focus on the what, why, and how of lifelong learning and knowledge management so individuals may (1) take responsibility for their own learning and development, and (2) be motivated to achieve extraordinary results by first discovering their unique skills and purpose.
6. Role Performance – A capacity to improve human performance by applying the skills of kinship, fellowship, leadership, followership, stewardship, citizenship, statesmanship, and philanthropy.
7. Use of Dialogue – An appreciation for interpersonal dialogue anchored in open inquiry, rapid learning, interpersonal understanding, reasoned decision-making, and constructive action that achieves consensual results.
8. Knowledge Management – A willingness to participate in knowledge development focused on issues and challenges in the political, economic, social, technological, ecological, and geological spheres of societal knowledge and endeavor.
9. Adult Life Cycle – A developmental perspective on one’s own lifetime that recognizes that individuals, organizations, and communities pass through phases of development, each with its own objectives, responsibilities, and rewards.
10. Self-Renewal – An understanding of life’s uncertainty, complexity, and temporality – and the value of transformative learning for occasional reinvigoration of one’s life and career.
11. Learning-to-Learn – A willingness to learn and apply contemporary skills and methods designed to increase the quality and speed of one’s learning.
12. Secular Reasoning – A commitment to participate in the public sphere using fact-based objectivity and authentic subjectivity as opposed to supernatural appeals and narrowly prescribed dogma.
13. Future Orientation – A desire to explore and discover new knowledge and innovations that can enhance the lives and careers of current and future individuals and societies.

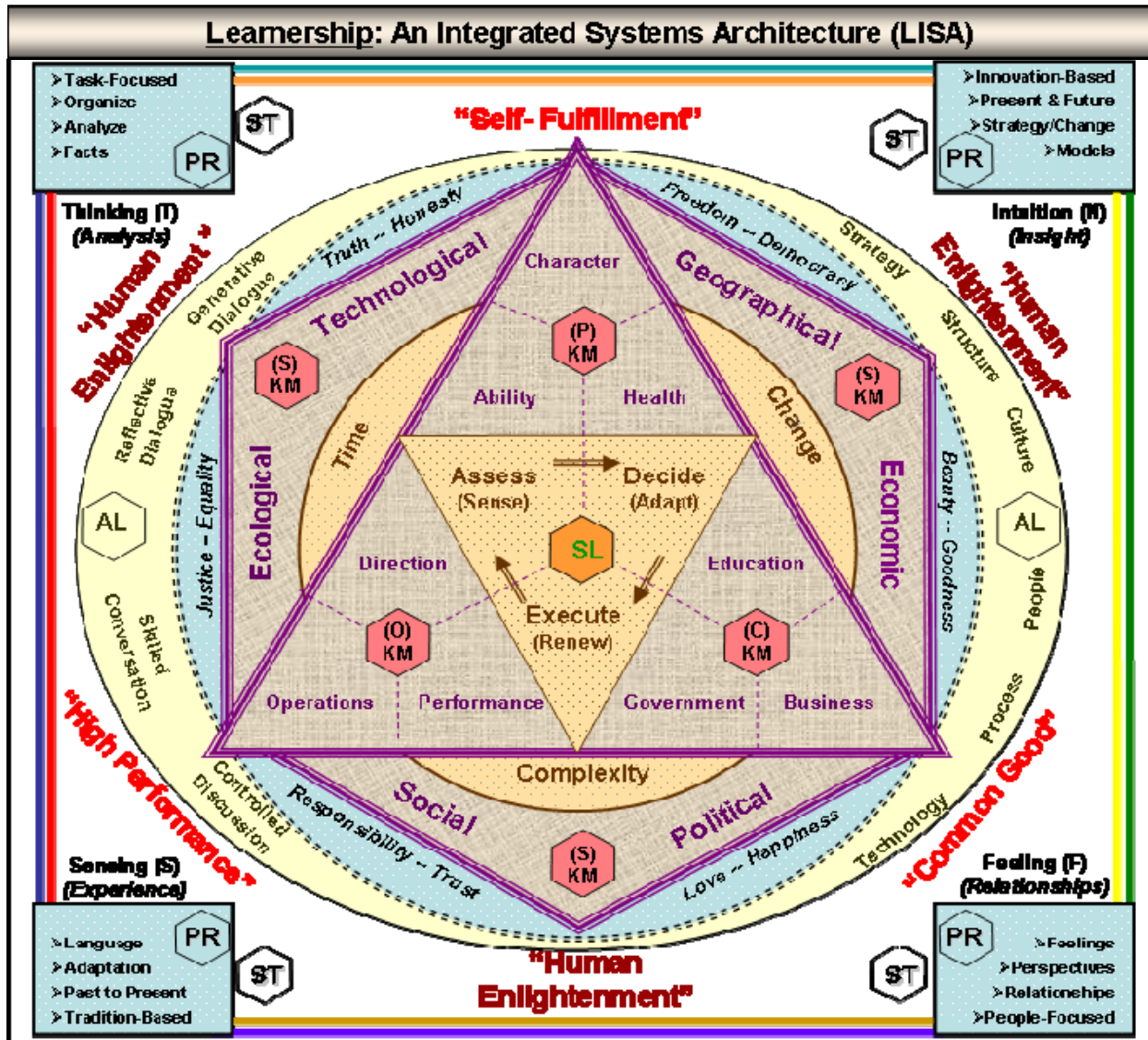


Figure 12-1

Learnership Architecture. An architecture is established to provide a generally accepted, overarching description of significant relationships and dependencies among physical or intellectual objects that are components in building or maintaining specific capabilities and/or entities. The learnership architecture organizes the intellectual and experiential topics, functions, and behaviors necessary to understand and implement the learnership philosophy. The theoretical construct through which this occurs has *two major propositions*:

1. That systems thinking, pattern recognition, situational learning, knowledge management and adaptive leadership are foundational reasoning competencies that serve as building blocks for managing what is worth thinking, learning, knowing, leading, and pursuing to select and achieve a holistic set of life goals: self-fulfillment, high performance, common good, and human enlightenment.

2. That to understand and accomplish these life goals, an architecture consisting of the five stated competencies and four interdependent social systems requires our thoughtful reflection. These four social systems consist of our personal social system, our organizational social system, our community social system, and the societal social system among nations and geopolitical networks.

The learnership architecture initially described in Chapter One was systematically developed in Chapters Two through Six to become the Learnership Integrated Systems Architecture (LISA) depicted in the Third Interlude. The conceptual development and visual illustration of the LISA is the core theme of this text. In it (Figure 12-1), the reader can see all five learnership competencies and four social systems for integrated development interacting in dynamic complexity. The LISA is a learnership practitioner tool for remembering critical elements and dependencies when gathering, organizing, analyzing, using, and sharing information and knowledge during problem-solving and decision-making activities.

Learnership Practitioner. Learnership practitioner is the term used in this book to give special distinction to a special class of artful learners – those who immerse themselves in a lifelong quest for relevant learning, meaningful knowledge, and personal achievement. These are people who systematically increase their understanding of life’s opportunities and challenges; develop their skills through questioning and learning; and produce products and services of value to others and themselves. These practitioners develop strong reasoning competencies, actively engage in social systems development, and strive to achieve synthesis in achieving their ultimate goals. The practitioner development process shown in Figure 12-2 serves as a pathway for individuals pursuing *learning, knowing and leading as a Mindful Way-of Being*, and the capabilities they develop and apply are listed below:

1. A desire to understand and appreciate the fundamental theories in their fields of interest and education.
2. A capacity for good cognitive and reflective skills. But unlike their more academic counterparts, those skills are valued to the degree they align with their need to turn knowledge into action in a timely manner.
3. A capacity for “learning-to-learn.” They get psychological rewards from the process of learning, and they do it all their lives.
4. A desire to operate as “free agent learners,” and to be distinguished from many others in that they are not bound by the limitations of the traditional educational curricula taught in formal school and classroom settings.
5. A capacity for curiosity concerning the world around them that enables them to achieve important career and life objectives through all phases of their adult lives.

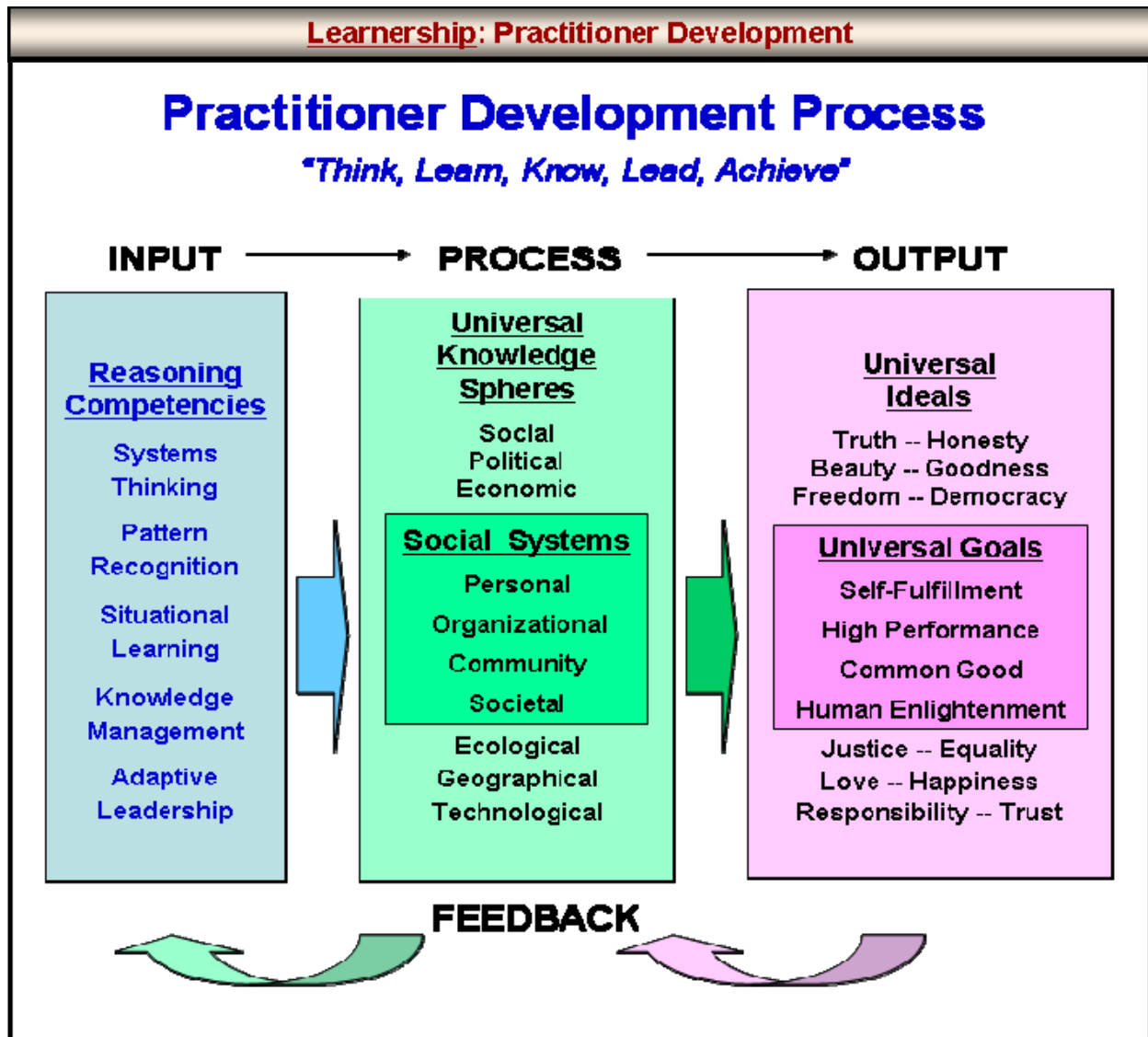


Figure 12-2

6. A willingness to fully absorb their experiences and to learn from them. They also become influential through their ability to put their knowledge into action.
7. A willingness to embark on humanity's journey toward mindful growth and an understanding of life's mysteries and human purpose.
8. A desire to motivate themselves and others to discover life's opportunities, pursue a unique purpose, confront personal challenges, develop enlightened perspective, and attain a higher, mindful level-of-being.
9. An appreciation for interpersonal dialogue based on open inquiry, rapid learning, interpersonal understanding, and reasoned decision making.

10. A capacity to improve human relations by exemplifying the principles of leadership, followership, stewardship, citizenship, fellowship, and statesmanship.
11. A willingness to participate in issue resolution in the political, economic, social, technological, geographical, and ecological domains of societal knowledge and endeavor.
12. A developmental perspective on how individuals, organizations and communities progress through their respective phases of development – each with its own objectives, challenges and rewards.
13. A systems perspective on societal learning and development that balances the human need for both stability and change to achieve higher levels of societal development and performance.
14. A focus on personal learning and knowledge management as key capabilities in the development of social systems: personal, organizational, community, and societal.
15. A personal commitment to learning reasoning competencies that improve systems thinking, pattern recognition, situational learning, knowledge management, and adaptive leadership.
16. An expectation that personal development depends primarily on being responsible and responsive to the ever-changing political, economic and social forces occurring locally or on a global scale.
17. A desire to replace differentiation with integration as a lifelong perspective – and the ultimate foundation for a mindful journey through life.
18. A commitment to use knowledge, science, and practical experience to overcome reliance on mysticism, superstition, and supernatural intervention.
19. An advocate of the means between the extremes – weighing personal rights with social responsibilities in order to negotiate adequate, inclusive outcomes.
20. An appreciation for balancing inquiry and advocacy in all one attempts to accomplish. No one knows all that could be known to reduce potential risk and to guarantee success.
21. A capacity to perform multiple roles such as consultant, coach, facilitator, student, mentor, thought leader, and project manager as situations require.
22. A willingness to apply the Learnership Integrated Systems Architecture (LISA) model at all levels of personal and social systems development.

Learnership Mindful Way-of-Being. Learnership practitioners are people who systematically increase their understanding of life's opportunities and challenges; develop their skills through questioning and learning; and produce products and services of value to themselves and others. They are knowledge managers in that they continually identify, acquire, organize, use and share new found knowledge within their respective social systems. They learn and lead within their personal domains, they develop and apply knowledge practices and tools in their organizational roles, and they contribute as informed problem-solvers within their local communities. Using learnership, they seek to optimize the integration of their personal *self-fulfillment*, organizational *high performance*, community *common good*, and societal *human enlightenment*. They may even experience what Csikszentmihalyi (Flow, 1990), Senge et al (Presence, 2007), and Langer (Mindfulness, (1989) have eloquently described in their well regarded writings. This is the learnership practitioner's vibrant and rewarding *mindful way-of-being*.

Learnership Journal for Reflection and Renewal. Readers are reminded of the Learnership Journal included in this book's epilogue. The Journal has two uses: (1) for any reader that desires to conduct a self-assessment keyed to the end of chapter questions, and (2) for any reader that desires to obtain certification as a Learnership Practitioner for purpose of participating in The American Learnership Forum.org educational activities. More information will be available on the web-site.

Commencement

Learnership is a complex, integrated, and multidimensional conceptualization of human reasoning and behavior. Full appreciation of its breadth, depth, and interdependencies can only be obtained through the synthesis of multiple viewing points which include the construction of an intellectual philosophy, an architectural framework, a prioritized list of reasoning competencies, and the establishment of a mutually reinforcing set of social systems. This book provides the initial learnership hypothesis for further research and commentary by other members of the American Learnership Forum.org which is currently under development. Readers are encouraged to periodically check the internet to see when our web-site is operational (alforum.org).

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