

86. Competence Guilds

How can I build a learning organization?

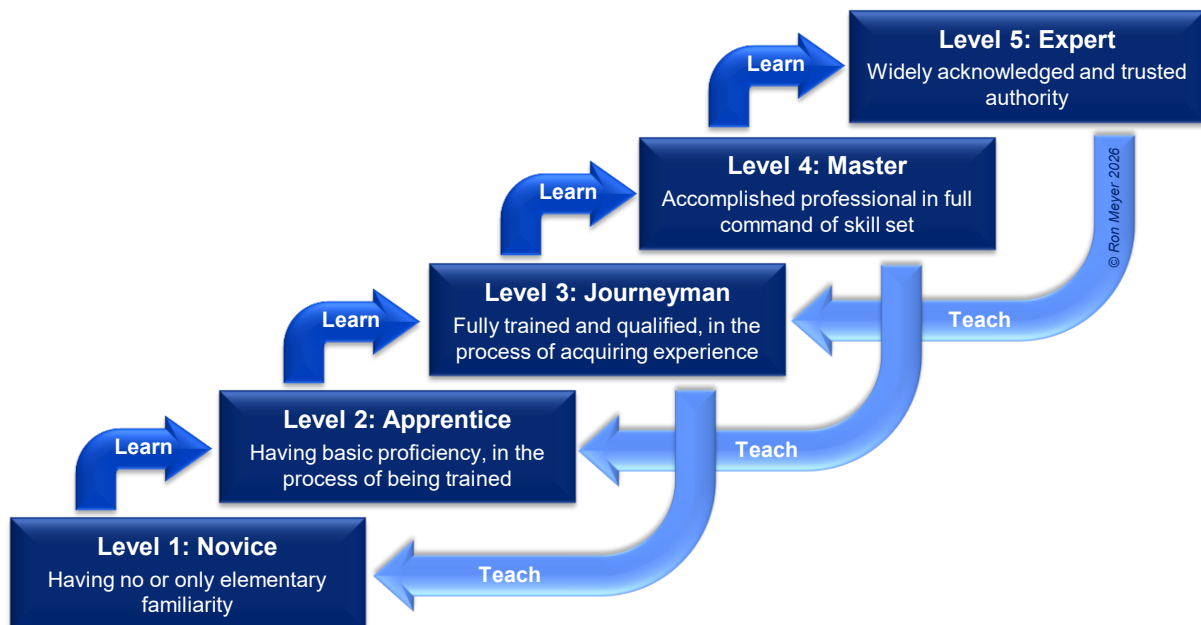
Key Definitions

Learning is the process of acquiring new *knowledge* (information and insights), *capabilities* (routines and skills) and *attitudes* (values and mindset). *Competence development* is learning directed at making people more effective at achieving results in a particular area.

Learning can be done by individuals, but knowledge, capabilities and attitudes can also be built up in teams and organizations. Where organizations are adept at continuously learning, from their own experience and external sources, they are called *learning organizations* – they have learnt how to learn and can constantly upgrade and renew their competencies.

Conceptual Model

The *Competence Guilds* framework is a model for building a learning organization. It suggests dividing all organizational members into five levels of ability for each strategically important type of competence. Each individual can then progress through each level by learning (arrows on the left). The key to faster organizational learning is that people at a higher level of competence take the responsibility for teaching people at lower levels (arrows on the right), similar to how guilds used to function. Teaching is not made abstract and outsourced to external schools but kept practical and embraced as a crucial leadership task. The experts and masters in each competence area run their guild together and drive organizational learning. As competence levels don't necessarily coincide with hierarchical levels, anyone can be involved in leading a guild and everyone can be involved in teaching somewhere.



Key Elements

The five competence levels and their roles are the following:

1. **Level 1: Novice.** As newcomers to a competence area, novices need to build up rudimentary familiarity with the topic. Much of this basic learning can be generic, making use of external written materials or training programs. However, some of the introductory teaching can be made more organization-specific and provided by journeymen under supervision of a master. By teaching, journeymen learn just as much as the novices.
2. **Level 2: Apprentice.** As trainees, apprentices are insufficiently skilled to operate entirely independently, so they are guided on-the-job by masters and journeymen. By watching their skilled colleagues in action, and receiving coaching by them, apprentices learn-by-doing in the practical context of the organization. This hands-on learning can be complemented by more formalized classroom training by the masters.
3. **Level 3: Journeyman.** As fully qualified professionals in a competence area, journeymen are capable of operating independently and typically become increasingly proficient the more they practice. Given their completed training, they are well-positioned to pass on this training to novices, gaining extra experience themselves by doing so. At the same time, they also still learn from the mentoring provided by masters and experts.
4. **Level 4: Master.** As accomplished professionals in their competence area, masters set and maintain the internal quality standards of the organization. Given their mastery, they are well-placed to train apprentices, both by example on the job and by formal means in class. Yet, at the same time, they keep learning themselves, from external experts and from other internal masters and experts, who share their insights and best practices.
5. **Level 5: Expert.** As authorities in their field, experts are widely cited and consulted by people inside and outside the organization. Given their acknowledged abilities, they lend external credibility to their organizations, while acting as internal role models for masters and journeymen. Practically, they mentor journeymen and spar with masters, which helps them to keep learning, and shows others that learning is never finished.

Key Insights

- **Competence development is of strategic importance.** In an ever-changing world, remaining relevant means constantly upgrading existing organizational competencies and developing new ones. This requires ongoing *organizational learning*.
- **Competence development can be done at five levels.** For each specific type of competence, five ability levels can be distinguished. *Novices* are literally new to the field, while *apprentices* have taken on the challenge of trying to master a competence. *Journeymen* have reached the threshold of being able to work competently on their own but still need to fine-tune their art to become true *masters*. The fifth level of *expert* is achieved when someone is externally recognized as an authority on the competence.
- **Competence development shouldn't be outsourced.** Organizations can send individuals or even whole teams to external trainers for a one-off update, yet this seldom leads to a jump in competence and doesn't help the organization to continuously develop its competences itself. Organizations need to organize their own organizational learning.
- **Competence development can be driven by competence guilds.** A powerful way of structuring organizational learning is to organize competence-specific guilds, in which the experts and masters take responsibility for driving competence development, by determining what needs to be upgraded in future, while mentoring and teaching others.
- **Competence guilds need to be organized.** As competence levels and management levels don't necessarily coincide, competence guilds need to be organized as separate learning communities, with their own leaders, objectives, ways of working and budget.

Meyer's Management Models

Insightful Tools to Kickstart Your Thinking

Publication Schedule

<i>July 2019</i>	<i>Mind the Gap Model</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2019</i>	<i>Digital Platform Map</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>September 2019</i>	<i>Interaction Pressure Gauge</i>	<i>Interpersonal Interaction</i>
<i>October 2019</i>	<i>Revenue Model Framework</i>	<i>Revenue Model Typology</i>
<i>November 2019</i>	<i>House of Engagement</i>	<i>Organizational Engagement</i>
<i>December 2019</i>	<i>Confidence Quotient</i>	<i>Trust Building</i>
<i>January 2020</i>	<i>Competition Tornado</i>	<i>Competitive Strategy</i>
<i>February 2020</i>	<i>11C Synergy Model</i>	<i>Corporate Synergy Management</i>
<i>March 2020</i>	<i>Leadership Fairness Model</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>April 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Agility Model</i>	<i>Strategy Process Approach</i>
<i>May 2020</i>	<i>Control Panel</i>	<i>Corporate Control Dimensions</i>
<i>June 2020</i>	<i>Rising Star Framework</i>	<i>Talent Management</i>
<i>July 2020</i>	<i>Strategy Development Cycle</i>	<i>Strategy Process Steps</i>
<i>August 2020</i>	<i>7I Corporate Center Model</i>	<i>Corporate Organization</i>
<i>September 2020</i>	<i>Storytelling Scripts</i>	<i>Leadership Communication</i>
<i>October 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Bets Framework</i>	<i>Strategic Decision-Making</i>
<i>November 2020</i>	<i>Rebound Model of Resilience</i>	<i>Organizational Resilience</i>
<i>December 2020</i>	<i>4C Leadership Capabilities</i>	<i>Leadership Competences</i>
<i>January 2021</i>	<i>Digital Product Model Dial</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>February 2021</i>	<i>Digital Distribution Model Dial</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>March 2021</i>	<i>Empowerment Cycle</i>	<i>Employee Empowerment</i>
<i>April 2021</i>	<i>Innovation Box</i>	<i>Innovation Approaches</i>
<i>May 2021</i>	<i>Knowledge Sharing Bridges</i>	<i>Best Practice Sharing</i>
<i>June 2021</i>	<i>Followership Cycle</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>July 2021</i>	<i>Everest Model of Change</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2021</i>	<i>Fruits & Nuts Matrix</i>	<i>Priority-Setting</i>
<i>September 2021</i>	<i>Powerhouse Framework</i>	<i>People & Organization Strategy</i>
<i>October 2021</i>	<i>Strategy Hourglass</i>	<i>Strategy-Making Steps</i>
<i>November 2021</i>	<i>Disciplined Dialogue Model</i>	<i>Interpersonal Communication</i>
<i>December 2021</i>	<i>Team Building Cycle</i>	<i>Team Building Process</i>
<i>January 2022</i>	<i>Market System Map</i>	<i>External Analysis Framework</i>
<i>February 2022</i>	<i>Strategic Alignment Model</i>	<i>Business Level Strategy</i>
<i>March 2022</i>	<i>Creativity X-Factor</i>	<i>Creativity Enhancement</i>
<i>April 2022</i>	<i>Organizational System Map</i>	<i>Organizational Analysis</i>
<i>May 2022</i>	<i>Corporate Value Creation Model</i>	<i>Corporate Level Strategy</i>
<i>June 2022</i>	<i>Change Manager's Toolbox</i>	<i>Change Methodologies</i>

July 2022	Sustainable You Model	Personal Sustainability
August 2022	Value Proposition Dial	Business Level Strategy
September 2022	The Tree of Power	Organizational Power
October 2022	Psychological Safety Compass	Team Dynamics
November 2022	Strategic Action Modes	Strategy Process
December 2022	Corporate Management Styles	HQ Management
January 2023	Thinking Directions Framework	Reasoning Skills
February 2023	5I Innovation Pipeline	Innovation Process
March 2023	Resistance to Change Typology	Change Management
April 2023	Ambition Radar Screen	Motivation Analysis
May 2023	Corporate Strategy Framework	Corporate Strategy
June 2023	Cultural Fabric Model	Organizational Culture
July 2023	New Pyramid Principle	Presentation Approaches
August 2023	Activity System Dial	Value Creation Analysis
September 2023	Customer-Centricity Circle	Organizational Design
October 2023	Status Snakes & Ladders	Leadership Branding
November 2023	Stakeholder Stance Map	Stakeholder Management
December 2023	Best Practice Sharing Modes	Sharing Methods
January 2024	Duty of Care Feedback Model	Feedback Method
February 2024	BOLD Vision Framework	Organizational Vision
March 2024	MOVING Mission Framework	Organizational Mission
April 2024	Leadership Circle Map	Leadership Skills
May 2024	Digitalization Staircase	Digital Strategy
June 2024	Time Management Funnel	Personal Time Management
July 2024	Wicked Problem Scorecard	Organizational Decision-Making
August 2024	Hunting & Farming Typology	Sales Management
September 2024	Guiding STAR Matrix	Objective Setting Approach
October 2024	Corporate Synergy Typology	Corporate Level Strategy
November 2024	Self-Centered Thinking Traps	Thinking Styles
December 2024	Sustainability Maturity Ladder	Sustainability Management
January 2025	Top Line Growth Pie	Growth Strategy
February 2025	Innovation Sins & Virtues	Innovation Management
March 2025	Interaction Drivers	Communication Determinants
April 2025	Frictionless Flow Framework	Customer Journey
May 2025	Five Phases of Change	Change Management
June 2025	Courageous Core Model	Leadership Behaviors
July 2025	Integration Zippers	Corporate Strategy
August 2025	Innovation Arena	Innovation Management
September 2025	Conversation Elevator	Communication Approaches
October 2025	5T SMART Plan	Strategic Planning

<i>November 2025</i>	<i>Organizational Diamond</i>	<i>Organizational Design</i>
<i>December 2025</i>	<i>New Learning Curve</i>	<i>Personal Learning</i>
<i>January 2026</i>	<i>Strategic Assignment Matrix</i>	<i>Corporate Strategy</i>
<i>February 2026</i>	<i>Five Company-Centric Forces</i>	<i>Organizational Dynamics</i>
<i>March 2026</i>	<i>Personal System Map</i>	<i>Personal Development</i>
<i>April 2026</i>	<i>Resource Base Dial</i>	<i>Business Level Strategy</i>
<i>May 2026</i>	<i>Humanistic Organization</i>	<i>Organizational Paradigm</i>
<i>June 2026</i>	<i>Feedback Flavors Framework</i>	<i>Interpersonal Feedback</i>
<i>July 2026</i>	<i>Organizational Partnering Model</i>	<i>Interorganizational Relations</i>
<i>August 2026</i>	<i>Competence Guilds</i>	<i>Organizational Learning</i>
September 2026	Personal Quick Guide	Personal Effectiveness
October 2026	Stakeholder Typology	Strategic Leadership
November 2026	Triple Diamond Decision-Making	Team Decision-Making
December 2026	Followership Fellows	Followership Types
January 2027	Synergy Value Matrix	Corporate Level Strategy
February 2027	Knowledge Transfer Mechanisms	Organizational Learning
March 2027	Leadership Brand Model	Leadership Reputation
April 2027	Change Contracting Cube	Organizational Change