

Briefing

Learning has much in common with innovation. We're interested in how organisations stimulate learning through experimentation. We're also interested in how learning spreads through an organisation so that procedures and strategies improve with feedback and awareness grows and deepens.

Why is this important? Nobody yet knows how practically to stop climate change – or exactly what needs to be done to adapt to it well enough and quickly enough. There is a huge learning need. Action can run into the sand unless people involved are constantly reviewing progress and asking “how to” questions such as: How do we draw up a carbon inventory; how do we assess our exposure to climate risk? How do we accelerate a shift to low carbon technology across our operations/supply chain? A strong learning ethos based on action AND review is needed if an organisation is to find ways of responding to these and other such challenges that will arise.

What we can learn. If an organisation's capacity to adapt is to grow, it will need strong learning processes that involve more than a few core agents of change or champions. By noticing and describing different learning processes we hope to identify the difference that can make a difference.

Examples from you. Do you have any experience of a project or company initiative which stimulated your own learning process around climate change or taking action on climate change? What enabled that learning to happen? What enabled it to become more widespread? How might it be even better in the future?

Some distinguishing characteristics of different learning levels

Is learning about knowledge/information transmission rather than transformation so that you get facts and figures but nothing that changes you or how you do things?

Is learning only about delivery from someone expert or is “learning by doing” and experience recognised, valued and shared?

Is learning about doing better and better rather than doing differently?

Are there opportunities to learn through an ongoing cycle of plan/act/review or is it all do and no review?

Are learning needs systematically assessed and addressed or is it left to chance?

Are learning programmes the minimum needed to take on board new legislation or are they pitched to develop your capacity to engage with a complex issue.

Answers to these questions need to be backed up with concrete examples. And even materials. E.g. Kent County Council show their “green guardians” the AI Gore film, “An Inconvenient Truth.”

NB Is the learning talked about to do with climate change or some other organisational initiative? It is common to have good organisational development programmes in place but for these not to be activated for climate change.