

# Career IQ



## Kick-start Your Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is the concept that “it’s never too soon or too late for learning,” a philosophy that has taken root in numerous organizations, and especially here at McMaster University. Lifelong learning is attitudinal – one can and should be open to new ideas, decisions, skills or behaviours. Throw out the axiom, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks” and acknowledge the learning opportunities that are available not only through formal channels such as higher education, but for all ages at work, at home and through leisure activities.

As we focus on learning at work we can agree that it needs to be embraced by the individual employee and valued and practiced within the organization. **So what is a learning organization?** It is an organization full of learners at all levels. A learning organization includes leaders who focus on excellence, flexibility and responsiveness to the changing needs of the organization and its people; as well, it includes employees who value and

embrace learning opportunities. A true learning organization supports:

- Collaborative & Experiential Learning
- Participative Policy Making
- Information Technology
- Formative Accounting & Control
- Internal Information Exchange
- Employee Recognition & Rewards
- Innovation
- Environmental Scanning
- Knowledge Exchange
- Internal / External Partnerships
- Continuous Improvement
- Self-development Opportunities for All

Heads of the world’s most successful companies agree--the only organizations that will truly excel in the future are those that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization (Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline Handbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*). **So what makes a learning organization?** An organization that consists of cohesive teams that exhibit the following strengths: function together as one in extraordinary ways; trust one another; compliment one another’s strengths and

gladly compensate for each others’ limitations; commit to goals larger than individual aspirations; and produce extraordinary results. At the core of a learning organization are five lifelong learning disciplines says Senge:

- **Personal Mastery**--learning to expand our personal capacity to create the results we most desire
- **Mental Models**--recognizing how our internal images of the world shape our actions and decisions
- **Shared Vision**--building a sense of group commitment to shared visions of the future and the principles and procedures for getting there
- **Team Learning**--developing conversational and group thinking skills so that teams of people can develop intelligence and abilities greater than the sum of individual members’ talents
- **Systems Thinking**--recognizing and understanding the forces and interrelationships that shape the behaviour of systems, and learning how to change systems more effectively.

Some may challenge this by asking “Why bother?; How will this help my organization be successful?” Only learning organizations will survive the 21st Century and beyond, because **people** are the only long-term competitive advantage.

***Lifelong learning is the only way to fully develop that advantage!***



# 10 Reasons to be a Lifelong Learner

Everyone says lifelong learning is good for you. That's about as inspiring as being told to take your vitamins. Need a bit more motivation? MonsterLearning has an amazing top 10 immediate and practical reasons for you to expand your knowledge and keep learning.

**Your Livelihood Depends on It.** There are not many career fields whose practices have stayed static. Information technology gains have changed the way the majority of us do our jobs.

**You Need to Keep Your Certification Up-to-Date.** Many employees with professional certifications must keep learning to stay current and retain their certification. Lawyers, teachers, medical practitioners and a number of other professionals must take courses to fulfill professional development requirements.

**You Want to Be Satisfied with Your Position.** Surveys suggest that as education increases, so does confidence in one's next career step. It makes sense; the more educated you are about your field, the more you will know about your prospects and potential.

**You Want to Earn More.** Bachelor's degree holders earned an average of \$25,000 more than those with a high school diploma only. While those with master's, professional or doctoral degrees earned approx. \$25,000 more than those with a Bachelor's degree.

**You Have a Powerful New Tool for Learning: the Internet.** E-learning provides access to thousands of learning opportunities no matter where you live. The learning industry is exploding, driven by global competition, a shortage of skilled workers, the growth of the Internet and the rapid pace of change in what we need to know.

**You No Longer Need to Complete Your Education by 22.** Students are no longer confined to a certain age group. According to the National Center for Education.

Statistics, "participation in adult education has grown steadily over the past three decades, increasing to 46 percent in 2000," or more than 90 million people.

**Colleges and Universities Are Reaching Out to You.** Nearly all learning institutions actively seek lifelong learners and offer alternatives to traditional daytime classroom learning. There are night classes, working semester programs, weekend learning opportunities and other special programs to accommodate people who cannot be full-time learners.

**Employers Support Continued Learning.** Many employers support ongoing education, including benefits such as financial aid for employee education. Employers are also beginning to explore the mass education of employees through in-house seminars, specialized software and online courses.

**There is an Explosion of Learning Opportunities.** With the proliferation of new ways to learn, you don't have to follow traditional pathways. You can build your own learning program by taking an accredited course or professional development seminar, attending a conference, joining a professional organization, subscribing to a trade journal or reading a book.

**You've Got Competition.** In the current workforce climate, you have to stay on top of the career you have and do more to get ahead. The number of bachelor's degree holders is steadily increasing. But not to worry. The educational world has never been more accommodating to lifelong learners.

Get inspired, and then begin your search to find learning opportunities that can keep your career moving.

## Where to Begin:

Employee Career Services  
MonsterLearning  
McMaster University's Centre for Continuing Education

# Lifelong Learning Fast Facts

*More than two-thirds of jobs will soon require some form of post-secondary training or education.*

*It is never too late to learn — approximately 50 percent of individuals age 25 to 75 are engaged in some form of lifelong learning.*

*Hamilton offers a wide range of year-round continuing education programs available through teacher-taught, distance education, and independent study formats.*

## Lifelong Learning Week 2008 September 15 - 21

### Your Career Edge: Lifelong Learning

Tuesday, September 16, 2008

5:30pm - 6:30pm

McMaster's Centre for Continuing Education  
50 Main Street East, Room 216

Register for this event at:  
[www.workingatmcmaster.ca/development](http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/development)

### Employee Career Services Website Orientation

Friday, September 19, 2008

12:00pm - 1:00pm • MUSC 220  
(max. 20)

Register at [employeecareerers.mcmaster.ca](http://employeecareerers.mcmaster.ca)

All Hamilton events can be found at:  
<http://www.abea.on.ca/llw/calendar.php>

## McMaster Leadership Effectiveness

### New Manager Orientation Program

This highly customized program incorporates McMaster's leadership competencies with practical knowledge of business, financial and human resources practices and procedures.

<http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/NMOP>

### Certificate in Advanced Leadership & Management

Designed to provide experienced managers with a unique cohort-based learning opportunity via a strategic and innovative group project.

<http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/CALM>

## Newest Resources Available

- *Encore: Finding Work that Matters in the Second Half of Life* by Marc Freedman
- *What Color is Your Parachute? 2009* by Richard Bolles
- *Make Meetings Matter: Ban Boredom, Co-Opt Confusion and Eliminate Time Wasting* by Charlie Hawkins

## To be Released in Late 2008

- *Best Jobs for the 21st Century* by Michael Farr
- *Mothers on the Fast Track: How a Generation Can Balance Family and Careers* by Mary Ann Mason
- *Plugged In: The Generation Y Guide to Thriving at Work* by Tamara J. Erickson