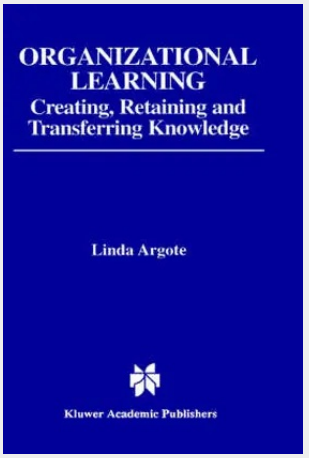
Argote

Organizational Learning

Creating, Retaining and Transferring Knowledge



Why do some organizations learn at faster rates than others? Why do organizations "forget"? Could productivity gains acquired in one part of an organization be transferred to another? Learning curves have been documented in many organizations, in both the manufacturing and service sectors. The classic learning curve model implies that organizational learning is cumulative and persists through time. However, recent work suggests that firms also demonstrate depreciation of knowledge, or "forgetting". Such understanding becomes more exciting as one looks at the link between learning and productivity. Organizational Learning: Creating, Retaining and Transferring Knowledge describes and integrates the results of research on factors explaining organizational learning curves and the persistence and transfer of productivity gains acquired through experience. Chapter One provides an overview of research on organizational learning curves. Chapter Two introduces the concept of organizational "forgetting" or knowledge depreciation. Chapter Three discusses the concept of organizational memory. Chapter Four argues that analyzing small groups provides understanding at a micro level of the social processes through which organizations create and combine knowledge. Chapter Five describes results on knowledge transfer. Chapter Six discusses various tensions and trade-offs in the organizational learning process.

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