



Foreword

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We have two expressions in our family: (1) It's never too cold for ice cream; and (2) You're never too old for the circus. It's on this latter point that I would like to relate my recent experiences to the launch of this new International Journal of Management, Knowledge, and Learning.

Last week, I went with my family to see Ringling Brothers/Barnum and Bailey Circus, billed as 'the greatest show on earth.' Even being middle-aged, I am still enthralled with the circus. It's not just the amazing international acts that form the show – but it is also the precision, logistics, teamwork, and knowledge sharing that creates the backbone and success of this circus.

I began to wonder how the adage 'life is a circus' was started. Certainly, we have multiple concurrent acts happening in our lives all the time. But, more than that, we as human beings and organizations should really emulate the circus for the following reasons. First, the pinpoint precision of catching an acrobat in your arms at the right time is analogous to an organization running on all cylinders, whereby it must be at the right place at the right time in order to outpace its competitors. Second, the logistics behind the circus whereby your eyes are averted to the new act, while the previous act is taken down in order to then create the next act, is a work of art. The music is timed perfectly to each act, and each act is orchestrated to last a set period in order for the show to move in a fluid manner. Organizations should also exemplify the circus' logistics in order to improve productivity. Third, the teamwork displayed in the circus, whether among circus performers or among the handling crew, has such a strong bond that they know if one act fails, the circus fails too. The success of the circus depends upon the synergy created among its performers, handlers, management, and staff. In the same way, an organization needs to develop a strong sense of belonging, community, and commitment in order to survive. Last, we notice that many of the circus acts are families, whereby their knowledge is passed down from generation to generation. Without this knowledge sharing, learning is difficult and could affect on-the-job performance.

Similarly, for organizations to be competitive in the future, knowledge sharing is vital for building a continuous learning culture, improving employee performance, and creating a strong succession planning and workforce development process.

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Now, you may think how does the circus as described relate to this new journal? The answer is: for all the reasons previously presented in the last paragraph! With the journal's focus on management, knowledge, and learning, this triad forms the key pillars in which organizations can survive. In much the same way, precision, logistics, teamwork, and knowledge sharing embrace many of the same values that are intertwined with management, knowledge, and learning. For example, knowledge must be gained in order to learn. Learning, if done well, can relate to on-the-job performance, whereby the development of a continuous learning culture is predicated partly on the management practices for building and nurturing that culture. In the circus world, precision, logistics, and teamwork contribute to management and cultural practices. Knowledge sharing contributes to knowledge transfer and creation, as well as to learning, unlearning, and re-learning. Thus, the journal's focus can translate into what every organization needs, whether a sole practitioner, small or medium-sized business, or a multinational enterprise – or even a circus.

So, you may now have a profound appreciation for the circus or you may be wondering if I am 'clowning around.' Certainly, by focusing on management, knowledge, and learning, this new journal is at the intersection of what organizations, even circuses, need to espouse. As the research is published in these areas in this journal, we will have sound evidence on what makes an organization tick. And as we do, we will further appreciate how management, knowledge, and learning form the valuable 'three rings' (in circus parlance) for organizational success.

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