

Subunit 5.5: Learning through experience

Learning goals

- Use any initiative for value creation as a learning opportunity.
- Learn with others, including peers and mentors.
- Reflect and learn from both success and failure (your own and other people's).

Definition

In the context of EntreComp and its relevance to circular economy competences, "Learning through experience" refers to the competency of acquiring entrepreneurial skills and knowledge by actively engaging in practical activities and real-life situations. This competency emphasizes the importance of experiential learning and the ability to leverage opportunities for value creation as valuable learning experiences. Here's a breakdown of how this concept relates to EntreComp and can be applied to circular economy competences.

EntreComp's guidelines

EntreComp gives the following hint:

"Learn by doing."

How?

Use any initiative for value creation as a learning opportunity: In the context of circular economy, this means that individuals or businesses involved in green initiatives should view their projects not only as opportunities to create environmental and economic value but also as opportunities for personal and professional growth. For example, someone launching a sustainable product line can learn about circular economy principles through the process of designing, manufacturing, and marketing these products.

Learn with others, including peers and mentors: Collaboration and learning from others are essential aspects of both entrepreneurship and the circular economy. Entrepreneurs and individuals in circular economy businesses can benefit from collaborating with peers, mentors, or experts who can provide insights and guidance. Learning from others can help in understanding how circular economy principles are practically applied and can enhance one's entrepreneurial skills.

Reflect and learn from both success and failure (your own and other people's): In the context of circular economy competences, reflecting on both successful and unsuccessful initiatives is crucial for continuous improvement. Entrepreneurs and individuals working in circular economy businesses should analyze the impact of their initiatives on sustainability and identify areas for improvement. Learning from others' successes and failures in circular economy ventures can also provide valuable insights and inform decision-making.

The competence of learning through experience is a skill set that emphasizes the importance of engaging with real-world situations, reflecting on these experiences, and deriving valuable lessons from them. This approach to learning fosters personal and professional growth by enabling individuals to adapt to new challenges, understand their learning processes, and apply knowledge in practical contexts. The threads of this competence include reflecting, learning to learn, and learning from experience, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding and application of experiential learning.

Competence step by step

- Reflect
- Learn to Learn
- Learn from Experience.

Methodologies and tools

To effectively achieve and enhance the competence of learning through experience, incorporating specific methodologies and tools across its developmental stages (from foundation to expert levels) is essential. These methodologies and tools are designed to facilitate reflection, foster the ability to learn how to learn, and maximize learning from direct experiences.

Experiential Learning Cycles (Kolb's Learning Cycle): A four-stage cycle that includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Reflective Practice: A method of assessing one's own thoughts and actions for continuous learning. It can be structured (using specific frameworks or models) or unstructured.

Tool: Learning Management Systems (LMS) with Reflective and Collaborative Features. It is about online platforms that support learning activities, including discussion forums, blogs, and assignment submission, with features that promote collaboration and reflection.

Circular Economy application

The competence of learning through experience, with its threads of reflection, learning to learn, and learning from experience, is highly applicable and beneficial to the application of Circular Economy (CE) principles. The transition towards a CE requires innovative thinking, adaptive learning, and continuous improvement, all of which are fostered by experiential learning.

1. Reflect

In the context of the Circular Economy, reflection allows individuals and organizations to critically assess their current practices, understand the impacts of their actions on the environment, and identify areas for improvement. Reflecting on the lifecycle of products, the efficiency of resource use, and the outcomes of implemented CE strategies can reveal insights into how to better design systems that minimize waste and maximize resource efficiency.

Application: Encourage teams to regularly review and reflect on CE projects, assessing the effectiveness of strategies like recycling, remanufacturing, or product-as-a-service models. Use reflective practices to understand the challenges faced and lessons learned from each initiative, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

2. Learn to Learn

Learning to learn is crucial for staying adaptive and innovative in the rapidly evolving field of the Circular Economy. It involves being open to new information, methodologies, and technologies that can enhance CE practices. Developing the ability to quickly assimilate new knowledge and apply it effectively is key to driving forward CE initiatives.

Application: Facilitate workshops and training sessions that teach individuals and teams how to effectively research and integrate new CE practices. Encourage a mindset of curiosity and openness to experimentation, enabling the organization to stay at the forefront of CE innovations.

3. Learn from Experience

Direct experience with implementing CE principles offers invaluable lessons that can inform future strategies and initiatives. Learning from both successes and failures in CE projects enables individuals and organizations to refine their approaches, optimize processes, and develop more effective solutions for minimizing waste and promoting sustainability.

Application: Implement pilot projects to test new CE models, such as product reuse, repair workshops, or circular supply chains. Analyze the outcomes of these projects to gather insights and apply these lessons to scale up successful practices and avoid past pitfalls in future initiatives.

Practical Activity: The 4 STEPS THINK CirEco Circular Business Plan

Objectives:

- Identify and understand key business components.
- Create visually appealing representations of business concepts.
- Develop strategic thinking skills.
- Enhance problem-solving abilities.
- Master the creation of organized business plans.
- Collaborate effectively with team members and stakeholders.
- Improve presentation and communication skills.
- Embrace iterative model development and adaptation.
- Utilize data and research for decision-making.
- Foster an entrepreneurial mindset through exploration and assessment of various business model possibilities.

Materials:

- Whiteboard or large paper for brainstorming.
- Laptops or tablets for research.
- Access to online resources on circular economy and sustainability.
- THINK CirEco Circular Business Plan template [here](#).

Time:

- Total Duration: Approximately 4-6 hours.
- Each Step: 1-1.5 hours.

Methodology:

STEP 1 Define Your CirEco Circular Vision

Activity: brainstorming session.

Process: Research the principles of the circular economy and the 7 R's. Write down ideas for a vision statement that aligns with these principles and your business goals.

Outcome: A draft of your circular economy vision statement.

STEP 2 Develop Your Product/Service Value Proposition

Process: Identify the circular aspects of your product or service and discuss how they meet customer needs. Write a value proposition statement.

Outcome: A clear value proposition for your circular economy business.

STEP3 Identify Your Target Customers

Activity: Market analysis and personal creation.

Process: Research potential customer segments and create detailed customer profiles.

Outcome: Profiles of your ideal customers and a broader audience.

STEP 4 Establish Revenue Streams and Marketing Strategies

Activity: Revenue and marketing planning.

Process: Brainstorm potential revenue streams and develop a marketing plan tailored to your target audience.

Outcome: A list of revenue streams and a draft marketing plan.

Food for Thoughts:

What challenges do you foresee in adopting a circular economy model within specific industries, considering current global sustainability trends? How can we effectively educate and involve customers in understanding the benefits of circular economy practices?

How might fostering a culture of innovation contribute to advancing recycling efforts within specific industries? Take up to 15 minutes to consider possible answers to these questions.

Learning materials suggestions

Exploratory studies of the Business Model Canvas: differences in the visualizations of the business model B Wit, P Dresler - 2021 - um.edu.mt