



A NEW BUSINESS IMPARATIVE:

Identify & Develop Learning Agility in the Next Generation of Corporate Leaders

THE CHALLENGE: How to identify the *right* future leaders to guide the organization through challenging times by inspiring confidence, getting buy-in from key stakeholders, and wisely balancing the needs of the organization and its people.

Many companies have a hit or miss approach to identifying their future leaders, and their processes can cost a lot of time, effort and money. Recent studies show that there is about a 50 % failure rate of leaders selected for fast-tracking and grooming for future executive roles. Why is this the case?

Recent leadership research suggests that the well-entrenched assumption that the best predictor of *future* behavior is *past* behavior is only one factor in determining who qualifies as a “high potential”. Thanks to the relatively new concept of Learning Agility, we have learned that behaviors that brought success in one job may no longer be predictive of success in the next – hence the 50 % failure rate cited above.

Today, success in a new role frequently requires the ability and drive to learn from past experiences, step out of one’s comfort zone, take risks, and learn from mistakes, while simultaneously adjusting to new tasks, new roles and responsibilities, new relationships and a new boss.

DETERMING A LEADER’S LEARNING AGILITY

Learning Agility is defined as the capacity to learn from experience and the flexibility to behave differently depending on the needs of the situation. The process of accurately assessing someone’s Learning Agility focuses on the individual’s leadership potential independently of job performance.



Learning Agility has been found to be a strong predictor of leader success because people who are learning agile more readily absorb new skills, behaviors, and insights and carry them forward into new and unfamiliar situations with ease.

Seven facets of a Leader's Behavior are assessed when determining Leadership Agility:

1. Interpersonal Acumen – understands others' unique motives, values and goals, instills confidence in them and encourages them to perform their best.
2. Cognitive Perspective – thinks critically and strategically to solve complex problems, focuses on multiple inputs rather than only one or two perspectives.
3. Environmental Mindfulness - fully observant of their external surroundings, attentive to changing job duties and requirements, approaches environmental changes nonjudgmentally, regulates emotions effectively.
4. Drive to Excel – motivated by difficult assignments, set challenging personal/organizational goals, can be counted on to deliver the results.
5. Self-Insight – accurately understands oneself, their capabilities, weaknesses, beliefs, feelings, and personal goals in the workplace.
6. Change Alacrity - curious, eager to learn new ideas and ways of behaving, open-mindedness, relishes change, seeks innovation and sometimes risk.
7. Feedback Responsiveness – solicits, listens to, and accepts personal feedback from others, considers the merits, takes corrective action for improvement is deemed to be appropriate.



HOW DO ORGANIZATIONS BENEFIT FROM ASSESSING & DEVELOPING THEIR LEADER'S AGILITY?

- They're able to assess leadership potential and make executive succession decisions more scientifically, quantitatively and objectively.
- Guesswork, perceptual bias and subjectivity are reduced. "Gut level feelings" about a leader can still be offered: however, there is now a mechanism for balancing them with other more objective data from the Learning Agility assessment process.
- When making important talent management and succession planning decisions, the focus shifts from opinions, hearsay, and limited observations to applying independently collected and objective information from a neutral third party.
- Identification and development of *High Potentials* becomes less time-consuming, more reliable and less costly.
- An added benefit is that data from Learning Agility assessments can be valuable for M & A and organizational re-structuring decisions.

CONCLUSION:

Organizations can pay a high price for utilizing inadequate methods to identify, develop and promote leaders up through the organizational hierarchy. It was recently estimated that the price to a Fortune 100 company of a derailed senior executive can be as high as \$3.1 million.

More importantly, the hidden costs of failed leadership in the form of unmet business objectives, lost clients, and disengaged employees eventually falls to the bottom line. Bad management at any level is costly.

Traditional, past performance-based methods for identifying future leaders are not adequate for success in today's volatile, uncertain, chaotic and ambiguous business environment (VUCA.) The multifaceted and strategic application of Learning Agility offers a highly reliable methodology for ensuring that a company's leadership pipeline contains those who are *most likely to succeed!*