LEARNING AGILITY: A New Construct Whose Time Has Come

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Situational Leadership

Historically
- Fiedler (1967)
- Vroom & Yetton (1973)
- Graen et al. (1982)

Recently
- McCall, Lombardo & Morrison (1988)
- Brousseau et al. (2006)
- Goldsmith & Reiter (2007)
Learning Agility

- Definition
  
  Ability to learn something in situation A and apply it in situation B.

- Focus – Vertical Leadership

- Identification and development of Hi-Po's

Session Objectives

- Examine why learning agility is important to upward mobility

- Introduce measure – CHOICES®

- Examine relationship between CHOICES® and managerial success
The Leadership Pipeline

Adapted from The Leadership Pipeline
Charan, Drotter, & Noel (2001)

The Seasoned Executive’s Decision-Making Style

Adapted from The Seasoned Executive’s Decision-Making Style
Profile of Top 20%

Profile of Bottom 20%
Glaring difference between successful people and those whose careers falter... is their ability to wrest meaning from experience, i.e., learning agility.

The Lessons of Experience
McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison (1988)

...one of the most reliable indicators and predictors of true leadership is an individual’s ability to find meaning in negative events and to learn from even the most trying circumstances.

Geeks and Geezers
Bennis & Thomas (2002)
**Learning Agility Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Agility</th>
<th>Describes people who think through problems from a fresh point of view and are comfortable with complexity, ambiguity and explaining their thinking to others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People Agility</td>
<td>Describes people who know themselves well, learn from experience, treat others constructively, and are cool and resilient under the pressures of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Agility</td>
<td>Describes people who are curious, have a passion for ideas, like to experiment with test cases, and engage in skill building activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results Agility</td>
<td>Describes people who get results under tough conditions, inspires others to perform beyond normal, and exhibit the sort of presence that builds confidence in others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mental Agility

- Curious
- Get to root causes
- Comfortable with complexity/ambiguity
- Find parallels
- Look for rules of thumb and repeatables
- Broad perspective

People Agility

- Self-aware
- Open minded
- Committed to personal improvement
- Can play many roles
- Likes to help others succeed
- Deal with conflict constructively
- Agile communicator
Change Agility

- Tinkerer
- Can take the heat
- Introduces new slants

Results Agility

- Very flexible
- Good in first time, new situations
- Resourceful
- Drive and presence
- Build high performing teams
Psychometrics of CHOICES®

- **Internal consistency** is above .80 for the four factors and overall scale.
- **Test-retest** (30 days apart) reliability was also high, ranging from .81 to .90 for the four factors and overall scale.
- Women score slightly higher than men on “people agility.”
- People are generally scored higher on “results agility” than on “people agility.”
- Learning agility as assessed by CHOICES is **not related to IQ and personality**.

Relationship to Leadership Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHOICES®</th>
<th>Correlation with VOICES®</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Scale</td>
<td>.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Agility</td>
<td>.28*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Agility</td>
<td>.44**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Agility</td>
<td>.34*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result Agility</td>
<td>.37**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 50. *p < .05. **p < .01.
Relationship to Being Classified as a Hi-Po

- One Fortune 500 special material company identified over 100 “high potentials” through series of “Talking Talent” sessions

- About 70% of these candidates were classified as “High Potentials” according to Lominger CHOICES® norms

- The rest of the candidates all were above the population mean

Relationship to Promotability

- Learning Agility was found correlated significantly with long-term potential for promotion and staying out of trouble (R-Square = 0.30 for both criteria) (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000)

- Learning Agility was found providing incremental validity over cognitive ability and the Big Five factors of personality in predicting job promotability (Connolly, 2001)
A study on 107 law enforcement officers found that Learning Agility was significantly correlated with 
supervisory ratings of overall job performance.

Furthermore, learning agility provided incremental 
validity over cognitive ability and the Big Five factors of 
personality in predicting job performance (Connolly, 2001).

Talent management is now a top priority for business 
leaders (SHRM, 2008).

Top organizations in leadership development have 
standardized high-potential assessment (Hewitt, 2004).

The absolute of talent management – Assessing talent 
accurately.
Learning Agility: Implications for Practice

- Assessing and selecting talent
- Differentiating talent pool in succession plan
- 360-degree assessment, coaching, and feedback
- Expatriate assignment
- Identifying who can take more on challenging assignment
- To build up a start-up team
- To assess organization’s capacity for change

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