Learning Agility

Using Past Experiences to Succeed Today and In the Future
What is Learning Agility?

- A person’s willingness and ability to learn from experience and adapt to change while applying learned principles to new situations
- A leading factor to determine leadership success
Imagine This...

- You are interviewing 2 internal and 2 external candidates for the position of Vice President of Sales and Marketing
Imagine This...

- Internal Candidate #1 is Director of Marketing and has been with the company for 20 years. He/she has a stellar track record and outstanding performance reviews.
Imagine This... 

- Internal Candidate #2 is your top sales person and has been with the company for 15 years. He/she has had conflicts with others internally, but his/her sales numbers are off the charts.
Imagine This…

- External Candidate #1 is a VP of Marketing at a similar company in Florida. He/she has changed companies and positions 4 times in the last 10 years and has excellent references.
Imagine This…

- External Candidate #2 recently earned his/her MBA from the Harvard Business School and is seeking an executive-level position at a company close to his/her family.
Imagine This…

– Who do you choose?
– How do you choose?
– Learning Agility can play a big role in your decision – but how do you accurately measure it?
Factors to Consider

- Many factors play into hiring or promoting candidates
  - Interviews
  - References
  - Background checks
  - **Assessments**
Why All 4?

Isn’t an interview and background check enough?

- Decisions about hiring or promoting cannot be resolved solely by subjective opinions
- Any decision based merely on opinion — even a group decision — can be completely wrong
- The candidate could “sell you” in the interview
- You could “sell” the position in the interview
- Background checks do not show you “who” the person is
Why Is Assessment Important?

- Assessments show you “who” the person is.
- Assessments show you tendencies.
- This helps make sure they are a better fit which leads to greater job satisfaction, less turnover, and employees who are more committed to your organization and its goals.
What Should You Assess?

- Assessment measures are tailored to specifically defined job characteristics such as:
  - Problem-solving skills
  - Intellectual ability
  - Judgment
  - Job-related aptitudes
    - Sales, writing, editing, etc.
  - Team-playing skills
  - Leadership knowledge
  - Personality
  - Self-awareness
  - Learning agility
What Should You Assess?

- Depending on the position different measures are more important
- Depending on your culture different measures are more important – including learning agility
- If your company is rigid, traditional, not accepting of change – learning agility is not as important to you
What Are Traits of Learning Agility?

Those who are learning agile tend to be more:

- Adaptive
- Reflective
- Willing to take on new challenges
- Likely to be successful in an organization
- Persistent in seeking feedback – not just praise – but feedback when something is wrong too
What Are Traits of Learning Agility?

- If you are familiar with our Dimensional Model of Behavior® – you may have already noticed the same traits exhibited by those who are learning agile are demonstrated by those who behave in a Q4 manner.
Dimensional® Model of Behavior™

INITIATES

Q1
- Aggressive
- Demanding
- Closed-minded
- Seizes control
- Forces ideas

Q2
- Aloof
- Unresponsive
- Cautious
- Neutral
- Guarded

Q3
- Overly agreeable
- Meandering
- Appeasing
- Compromises quickly
- Overly friendly

Q4
- Forceful
- Open
- Inquiring
- Task-oriented
- Responsive

LOW RESPECT

HIGH RESPECT

AVOIDS

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How to Uncover Learning Agility

In an Interview

- Ask open-ended questions
  - Tell me about a time you adapted to a situation.
  - Tell me about a time you were out of sync with a project.
  - Tell me about a time you stepped up to take on a new challenge.
  - Tell me about the thing you accomplished at work you are most proud of.
  - How do you handle change?
How to Assess Learning Agility

Multiple assessments lead to results

- Using only one instrument *CANNOT* accurately measure a person’s learning agility
- Composing a comprehensive report from a full battery of tests offers a better evaluation
- Instruments should measure:
  - Cognitive ability: ability to learn and adapt
  - Flexibility: willingness to learn
  - Openness to change: willingness to adapt
Assessments We Use

A sampling of how PA might measure agility*

- **Cognitive Skills**
  - Watson Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal
  - The Verify battery of tests (Numerical, Inductive, Verbal)
  - Raven Standard Progressive Matrices
  - Thurstone Test of Mental Alertness

- **Personality (Flexibility & Openness to Change)**
  - 16PF (Personality Factors)
  - California Psychological Inventory
  - Occupational Personality Questionnaire
  - Personality Research Form

- **The DMM**
  - Our proprietary measure of Q4 behavior

*These tests would vary depending on the company and position
Assessments We Use

- The true measure is in the interpretation and feedback itself
Can You Learn Learning Agility?

Yes and no

- Cognitive ability is virtually stable
- You can encourage learning how to be more open to change and flexible
  - Leadership Through People Skills
  - Executive Coaching
  - 360° Surveys
You are interviewing 2 internal and 2 external candidates for the position of Vice President of Sales and Marketing

Who do you hire?
It depends on your company’s culture

Does your company truly need someone with high learning agility in the position?

If so, Internal candidate 1 or External candidate 1 would probably be best

Who would you hire? Take our poll and view the results
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