

Learning agility - the most important indicator of the potential of new hires

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How to select for success



In the future of work, no one really knows exactly how job roles and responsibilities will shift. One simple fact remains clear amongst the unknown - your employees will need to be learning agile to proactively lead the way through these new challenges. And these challenges aren't far off either – in fact, many are already occurring as we speak. The future is happening now!



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Learning agility is the key indicator that determines whom amongst your human capital can cope, or even thrive, in the face of new demands. Incorporating Learning agility into your selection methodology helps you to hire people who can perform effectively now as well as in the future. Measuring the Learning agility of new hires moves the organisation step-by-step towards an agile culture, and allows for less time spent on learning and development initiatives later on.

Learning agility – what and why?

Learning agility can be defined as the ability to develop new effective behaviour in the face of new experiences. Some people are naturally more Learning Agile – embracing ambiguity, uncertainty and mental challenges. Others are more reluctant to venture into the unknown, preferring to stick to what they are familiar with.

Employees and new hires with higher learning agility will develop better tools and behaviours to deal with new challenges, in a shorter amount of time. They will also set this example for their team and help to instill these values in the business as a whole, thus helping to create an agile organisation.

The concept was originally established as a key predictor of leadership performance, based on research from the late 1990s and early 2000s. Since then, further research has established learning agility as a key skill that links to the performance of both individuals and teams - at all levels and stages within the organisation.

For a quick explanation, please watch the video, “Understanding Learning agility in 90 seconds”:

Selecting for success now and in the future

The measurement of learning agility within selection aligns with the strategic need to employ change agile employees who can grow with your organisation, and not only those who can fill an immediate gap.

Whereas many selection methods measure candidates in comparison to the current role requirements (current potential), Learning agility focuses on an individual’s future orientation - in other words, how they will be able to adapt and grow with the organisation over time. Today’s performance is certainly no guarantee for future performance in modern, competitive organisations. Many studies have linked the learning agility of employees to better outcomes in the workplace, including performance now and performance in the future.

Those who are more open to learning, experiment more and are able to quickly make complex connections, will make the difference for those organisations who are experiencing the effects of disruptive technologies, artificial intelligence and rapidly changing landscapes.

Strategically applying Learning agility throughout the talent management process

Going beyond the selection phase, learning agility can be applied effectively at all stages of the talent management lifecycle, to help HR and the organisation as a whole realise the vision of an agile culture. This means measuring and developing agile behaviours amongst applicants, all the way through to onboarding, development and succession planning.

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