

Using **learning agility** to build a productive workforce



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Introduction

As job roles evolve faster, employees must adapt by learning on the job. Employees who are unable to adapt run the risk of not meeting their business goals, therefore impacting organizational productivity. Hiring candidates with higher learning agility is, therefore, a prudent decision. Employees with learning agility not only acclimate to changing situations better, but they are also eager to learn from new experiences. Such employees also thrive on solving complex challenges while consistently delivering better results and benefiting the organization.

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What is learning agility?

Learning agility is a person's ability or intention toward learning new things. It can also be defined as the willingness to learn from experiences and apply the learnings to different situations. The two primary components of learning agility are learning ability and learning orientation. Learning ability refers to cognitive competencies that allow a person to learn quickly by identifying patterns and trends. On the other hand, learning orientation refers to competencies predisposing a person to learn faster than others.



Apart from the abovementioned core components, learning agile employees exhibit these other traits:

Communication skills

Agile learners are good at communicating their needs. When in leadership roles, they efficiently share information and the requirements for a particular task with their team.

Adaptability

Employees with learning agility adapt well to familiar and unfamiliar workplace situations, ensuring that their tasks are successfully accomplished.

Listening skills

People with learning agility are often active listeners. It allows them to understand instructions clearly while making informed decisions.

Eagerness to learn

An individual with learning agility is eager to face new experiences and develop their skills at the workplace.

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Why is learning agility important?

One of the key reasons why learning agility is at the forefront is an increasing emphasis on personal advancement and learning. Apart from focusing on learning and development, present-day organizations are becoming increasingly complex and dynamic due to fast-changing businesses. Therefore, it is vital that employees keep up with various trends.

An organization with an agile workforce reaps benefits in multiple ways, including:



Future-ready workforce



Increase in the number of high-potentials



Higher overall organizational productivity and profitability

People with high learning agility tend to be better employees for the following reasons:

Better problem-solving skills:

Agile learners are good at communicating their needs. When in leadership roles, they efficiently share information and the requirements for a particular task with their team.

Enhanced creativity:

Employees with learning agility are more creative as they can identify patterns and trends and solve problems by adapting.

Improved performance:

Employees with high learning agility engage less in counterproductive behaviors and are willing learners. Both of which lead to better performance.

Greater job satisfaction:

People with learning agility stand satisfied with their jobs.

Better social skills:

People with high learning agility tend to have good people skills. They work well in teams and are effective communicators.

Reduced stress levels:

A direct outcome of the abovementioned point, employees with higher learning agility are found to have reduced stress levels.

Why should an organization focus on measuring learning agility?

Organizations thrive with employees who are willing and able to adapt and grow with it. When a company lacks such employees, it spends valuable resources finding a suitable replacement.

Hiring learning agile candidates ensures companies have a resilient workforce they can rely on. They are also likely to inspire this behavior in their colleagues while meeting new challenges head-on and driving them forward.

Apart from driving growth and improving the work culture, here are other reasons why recruiters should focus on measuring learning agility while hiring.

1. Hiring adaptable talent during graduate hiring

Fresh graduates form a significant part of the workforce in most organizations. As businesses continue to thrive amidst disruption, it is prudent to design recruitment strategies to hire adaptable talent. Talent that is flexible, ready to learn and grow adds value to business efficiencies. This is equally important while hiring graduate talent from universities and college campuses.

2. Hiring experienced talent

According to the book [Learning agility: The Impact on Recruitment and Retention](#) by Sarah Gravett and Sheri A. Caldwell, learning agility is the most crucial factor that helps predict a candidate's job performance. This makes it vital for recruiters to assess learning agility during recruitment.

An agile employee will perform better in unfamiliar situations, respond to events decisively and proficiently, solve problems by taking cues from past experiences and exhibit high creativity, making them coveted contributors at the workplace.

3. Planning succession strategies

Christopher Lee Bedford shares in his book, [The Role of Learning Agility in Workplace Performance and Career Advancement](#), that learning agility is one of the critical indicators of current as well future performance and hence should be a crucial element when planning succession. As the industry landscape is changing faster due to external reasons, thus, by measuring the learning agility of its current employees, organizations can create a pipeline of future leaders to take over.

How to measure learning agility?

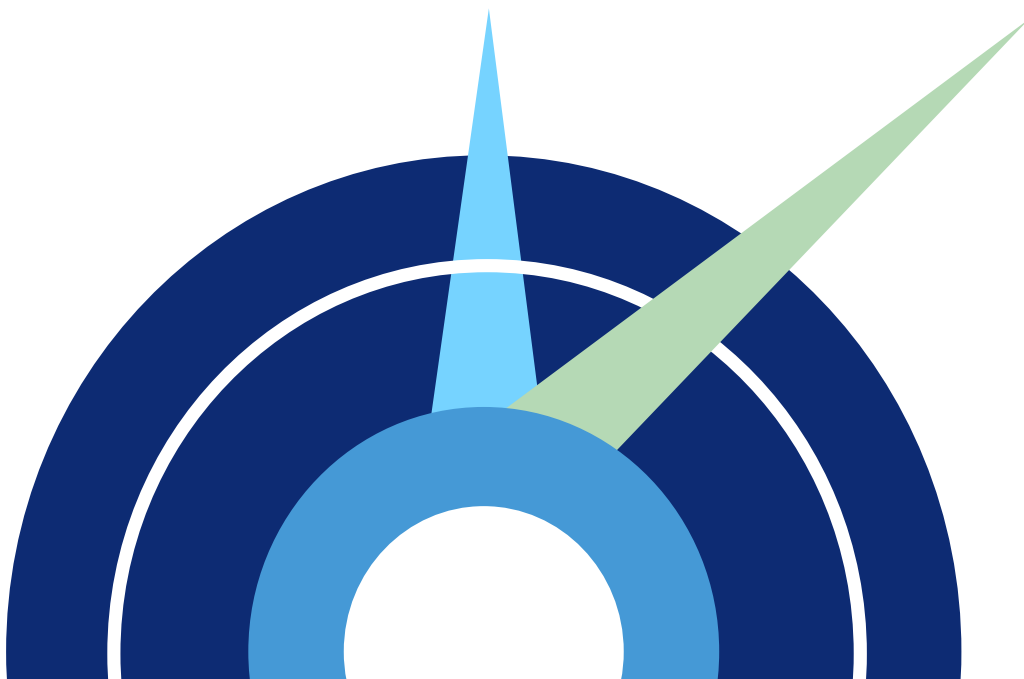
1. By using a learning agility assessment

A scientifically backed learning agility assessment is the best tool an organization can utilize to assess candidates. The test not only helps HRs find candidates with high learning agility, but it also allows them to plan L&D programs by understanding employees' learning preferences. With [Mercer | Mettl's learning agility assessments](#), users get scientifically validated results measuring the learning agility of candidates and offering detailed insights.

2. By measuring cognitive ability

An individual must have a certain level of cognitive ability to be learning agile. [Mercer | Mettl's Cognitive Abilities Assessment](#) predicts the candidates' critical thinking, abstract reasoning, and analytical and problem-solving skills.

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3. By assessing a candidate's ability to adapt during the interview

Another way to assess a candidate's learning agility is by asking open-ended questions during the interview. Asking a "What if" question – such as "What if they were given a new task to complete, how will they accomplish it?" – allows recruiters to gauge how well candidates adapt to a novel situation.

HR managers can present real-life scenarios, such as a limited budget for a task, to measure how quickly a candidate solves the problem.

4. By using performance reviews for existing employees

For existing employees, organizations can use both assessments and performance reviews. A performance review with questions such as how the employee approaches a new task or how well they adapt to recent changes can help evaluate the learning agility of existing employees. In addition, feedback from colleagues and supervisors on how well the employee responds to challenges is helpful.

Keeping in mind that the best candidates have a strong desire to learn and grow will help identify more learning agile employees.



How Mercer | Mettl can help

The Mercer | Mettl Learning Agility Assessment is one of the most efficient ways to assess and identify learning agile candidates and employees. The test accurately measures learning agility by evaluating candidates' learning abilities and learning orientation. It also assesses talent for the following competencies:



Focus and perseverance



Planning and organization



Inquisitiveness



Open-mindedness



Drive for mastery



Abstract reasoning

Furthermore, the assessment also measures digital readiness, which is defined as employees' readiness level in an organization undergoing a technology transformation. Digital readiness comprises two aspects - digital potential and digital proficiency.

The assessment also helps organizations:

Hire and create a future-ready workforce:

The test helps companies hire learning agile candidates. As learning agile employees adapt to new skills and to the changing needs of business at a faster pace, hiring them ensures the organization has a future-ready workforce.

Build effective L&D programs:

The assessment allows companies to identify the learning preferences of their employees and create an effective L&D program.

Identify high-potential employees:

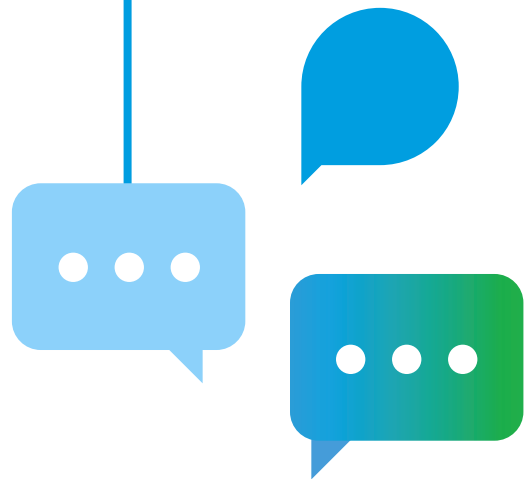
The test helps employees identify high-potential talent who can learn new skills and take up more challenging roles.

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Conclusion

Learning agility plays an important role in today's business environments. Employees with high learning agility are proven to be high performers. In addition, organizations that focus on recruiting and promoting learning agile candidates are future-ready, making it easier for them to adapt to changes.

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About us

At Mercer | Mettl, our mission is to enable organizations to make better people decisions across two key areas: acquisition and development. Since our inception in 2010, we have partnered with more than 4,000 corporates, 31 sector skills councils/government departments and 500+ educational institutions across more than 90 countries.

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