Learning Agility: the ability and willingness to learn from experience and apply that learning to perform successfully in new situations.

### Personal Mastery

- You are self-aware, understand your capabilities, the impact you have on others.
- You volunteer for more experiences, and quickly assume leadership on projects.
- You find solutions to difficult problems and see the parallels and contrasts easily.
- You examine problems well, make fresh connections with ease; a critical thinker.
- You can leverage strengths effectively and know how to compensate for weaknesses.
- You aren’t afraid to experiment and are comfortable with the discomfort that comes with change.
- You deliver results in first time situations through team building and personal drive.
- You are conflict agile, know when to avoid, accommodate, compete, compromise and collaborate.

### Individual & Team Enablers

To improve learning agility, develop these:

1. **Innovation**: for each problem you face, come up with new solutions. Make brainstorming new ideas a habit.
2. **Performing**: look for similarities between new situations and things you have done in the past. Ask questions and really listen to others. When stressed, pause, take a moment to consider what’s really required.
3. **Reflecting**: Challenge others to give you open and honest feedback. Show your openness to the process by only asking clarifying questions. Don’t explain your actions or make excuses. Conduct after action reviews to reflect on actions.
4. **Risking**: Take on a new challenge that scares you. Tell people what you are doing—ask for their support and help.
5. **Defending**: View feedback as a gift. Resist temptation to respond, try not to explain your actions to the other person or create excuses in your head. Thank them!

### Corporate Areas for Growth

Several strategies can enable learning agility to become a corporate-wide competency:

- **Create opportunities** for employees to lead key projects, rotational assignments through formal structured planning.
- **Foster on-going learning** through codified focused developmental activities that prioritize learning agility components through books, classes, and training.
- **Structure methods** to reflect and receive feedback through 360, coaching, peer and action learning, and mentoring which will challenge existing perspectives, encourage analysis from other viewpoints.
- **Provide programs and incentives** to encourage innovation that are tied to company objectives (saving money, enhancing quality etc.)

*Some of the benefits of learning agility are* promotability, confidence, a broad toolkit to apply to business challenges.

“Leaders create meaning out of events that devastate non-leaders….they look at events that unstring the less capable and see something useful.” Bennis and Thomas
Leaders need to... In today’s global, complex and ever changing world, leaders need to be comfortable and thrive with uncertainty and change. Learning agile leaders seek new information, knowledge and skills that keep pace with the global marketplace to address the changing needs expectations for learning by new generations and geographies of employees. Learning agility is one of the most reliable indicators and predictors of long term potential and the ability to stay out of trouble.

### Coaching Questions/Case Study

- When you face a new or difficult problem how do you attack it? Do you solve it alone or engage others?
- When do you find you hesitate to do something new and different? What holds you back?
- What type of learner are you? How do you learn most easily?
- When was the last time you disagreed with someone? How did you handle it?
- When is the last time you took on a project did something that you were afraid of?
- When given feedback about yourself, how do you react?

### Personal Action Strategies

- **Expand your network** – connect with someone new each week. Use those new connections to broaden your knowledge or skill set when challenging the status quo or navigating difficult situations.
- **Assess your resilience and tenacity** – when faced with a hurdle do you jump it or does it stop you in your tracks? Identify what you need to keep going through adversity and then get it for yourself.
- **Increase your exposure** – volunteer for new projects, leadership roles on teams, and task forces. Be seen as “up for any challenge” and a “go-to” person.
- **Seek feedback** – get comfortable asking for feedback after key meetings/projects. Ask what you did well and what you could do even better – and then apply it.
- **Try new things/experiment** – suggest new ways of doing things to improve processes.
- **Take an enrichment class** – get out of your comfort zone and stretch your thinking with something new.

### To Learn More

- **The Five Dimensions of Learning Agile Leaders**, Kevin Cashman, Forbes
- **Leadership Agility: Five Levels of Mastery for Anticipating and Initiating Change**, Joiner & Josephs, 2006

“The glaring difference between successful people and those whose careers falter...... is their ability to wrest meaning from experience, i.e., learning agility.”

*McCall, Lombardo and Morrison*

### Team Action Strategies

- **Adopt use of learning processes** – military After Action Reviews use 4 key questions to debrief team actions/projects:
  - What was planned?
  - What actually occurred? (facts vs. judgments)
  - What went well and why?
  - What can be improved and how?
- **Provide a safe playing field** – develop a team norm and support system for members navigating through tough learning scenarios.
- **Reward agility** – create and present an agility award for team members in rapid learning scenarios or projects (e.g. Medal of Courage or Innovator of the Year)
- **Assess learning agility** – use a learning agility continuum and have each team member assess their own learning agility and share (if appropriate). Create development plans and support each other to increase their agility scores.