

Characteristics of Agile Leaders

By Hilary Sayers on 13th May 2013

Late last year we forecast strong demand for agile leaders during 2013 and promised to bring you a series of articles on the characteristics of leaders who thrive on new challenges and experiences.

So, what are those characteristics? First, let's define what we mean by an agile leader. To lead, a person needs knowledge and skill to engage and motivate people, providing them with the direction, support and resources they need to perform. Beyond this, the ability to learn from experience and put those lessons to good use in new and different situations, and to adjust and adapt in times of change are the hallmarks of agile leaders.

The concept of learning agility is simple, but scientific. Research into executive performance, across multiple industries, shows that successful leaders demonstrate strong and similar patterns of learning from experience. Over the last two decades Lominger International has led the way in defining the five behavioural aspects of agile leaders:

Mental agility - they are critical thinkers who are comfortable with complexity, examine problems carefully and make fresh connections that they make understandable to others.

People agility – they understand the value of getting things done through others, are exceptional communicators and see conflict as an opportunity rather than a problem.

Change agility – they like to experiment and can deal with the discomfort of change; they have a passion for ideas and are highly interested in continuous improvement.

Results agility – they deliver results in first-time situations through resourcefulness and having a significant presence that inspires others.

Self-awareness – they know what they're good at and not so good at and actively address the not so good.

This set of skills allows a leader to learn something in a given situation and apply it effectively in completely different circumstances. Leaders who do this well are able to assess unfamiliar problems and quickly figure out what they need to know and do to resolve them. This is a particularly valuable asset for those who want to reinvent themselves and their businesses.

Since learning agility relates to an individual's readiness and ability to learn from experience it is obvious that some people are stronger in these areas than others. Also, we know that a person may have strengths in one or more of the five behavioural aspects and be lacking in others. Recognising this, leaders can target specific behaviours to work on to be more effective in their particular business environment.

building leadership skills that matter

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