

GNES8 THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING AGILITY

Why do organisations need professionals with learning agility?

The world in 2021 looks different from the one we left behind. There have been substantial changes to many aspects of our lives: from the way we work, to where we work, from the technology we use to connect, to the very notion of social connection.

As the business environment rapidly evolves, a significant number of organisations are looking for guidance on the most effective ways to operate in the new VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) environment. This is a new business reality, and we all have to live with it. Learning is central to functioning effectively in this new world of work. Adapting to this constant disruption requires a new, agile mindset and the ability to rethink traditional processes and policies.

Learning agility is the ability and willingness to learn from experience and then apply that learning to perform successfully in new situations by acquiring the necessary capabilities.-

People who are agile learners will:

- Constantly look out for new experiences from which to learn
- Thrive on complex problems and challenges
- Enjoy making sense of the different experiences they encounter
- Deliver better performance as they have new skills

In particular, leaders should be more agile today than ever before. Adapting to continuously evolving business strategies, working with people across cultures and taking on dynamic assignments in real time, all demand that leaders be flexible and agile. Agile learners are proactive. They look for opportunities to learn and experiment with new approaches.

Three essential components of learning agility to successfully lead businesses in today's VUCA operating environment:

- **Potential to Learn:** The competencies that make you successful in a specific role today might not be sufficient tomorrow. An agile learner is a person that has an open and receptive mindset to new experiences.
- **Motivation to Learn:** Learners need to be engaged and inspired by the learning process because changing ingrained behaviours and long-held habits is hard work.
- **Adaptability to Learn:** Instead of following a business-as-usual routine, employees who are agile learners have an “adaptability to learn” attitude, consistently working on improving their skills.

Building critical skills and competencies for organisations

More and more, professionals need improved skills; and they need the RIGHT improved skills. What is needed is a dynamic approach to reskilling and redeploying talent in which all impacted stakeholders work together to sense and then quickly develop these needed skills.

Now is as good a time as any to become familiar with **upskilling** and **reskilling** your employees.

- **Reskilling – the process of learning/teaching new skills in order to perform a different job.**

Reskilling focuses more on creating new skills so that employees or individuals can do in a different job. Typically, reskilling is a program that requires employees to seek advanced training from a college or trade school.

- **Upskilling – the process of learning/teaching new skills in order to perform in the current job.**

Upskilling focuses more on improving people's skills so they can work within the same job.

Unlike reskilling which requires a person to earn a completely new certification, upskilling requires an employee to enhance their value to his/her organisation by improving their current skill set.

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Upskilling is more about improving your current skill set thus increasing competence in your current position- You can focus on one goal – improving your current skills.

On the other hand, when you choose to reskill, you will have more opportunity to make transitions between jobs. Your employability will increase as you earn certification in different competencies.

Advantages of hiring “T-shaped” individuals

T-shaped skills or a T-shaped person refers to special qualities that make a talent, or person, valuable whether these skills are from upskilling or reskilling.

A T-shaped individual possesses an excellent knowledge of and skills in specific areas and– can work with others in a collaborative way. Employing T-shaped professionals is beneficial to a company. With their core skills and ability to learn things quickly, T-shaped people excel in not only their main responsibilities but can also perform other tasks effectively. Thus, they contribute to the growth of the business as a whole. Specifically, they offer the following advantages:

- **Better communication and collaboration skills**

Because of their ability to discuss matters across the entire company, T-shaped individuals are able to interact with others and understand their needs as a whole. They understand the ways other people work and the reasons for doing things in a certain way.

- **Flexibility**

While T-shaped people can cite a main expertise, or a primary area of work, they can still offer their skills to other priority areas that may require their assistance. They are flexible enough to take on new tasks and help other team members to ensure that the overall goals and objectives are met.

- **Hard and soft skills**

In addition to hard skills, such as design or programming skills, T-shape professionals also possess soft skills such as the ability to network and think critically making them the complete package.

Finding or developing T-shaped people is an important consideration if teams are going to achieve agile maturity. It is important that the teams realise that this behavior is an attitude. If the team achieves this, their ability to deliver value and quality with a regular cadence will be greatly enhanced.

As learners continuously react to the market and gain new required skills, they become an adaptable force that can shift and bend with any changes in the market. As a result, employees will have a greater wealth of knowledge and become accustomed to what industries and markets demand, allowing you to leverage their skills to carry your organisation across murky waters.

Everything is changing in the way work is managed, planned and lived. We continue to undergo a transformation that no one would have predicted even a decade ago. “Agile transformation” was a proposal of visionaries. Nowadays, we can see both small business and multinational corporations modeling themselves on its principles.

Thankfully, throughout this turbulence, many businesses remained stable, reliable, and trustworthy. However, the focus moving forward is seeing your culture and your people flourish. No one said change is easy, but it is necessary.

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