The Critical Path to Agile Leadership

Recent research has determined that the importance of "leadership agility" is a set of behaviours that help drive innovation and grow a company's bottom line.

Numbers such as revenue and employee reviews are all easy things to quantify. A leader either increases the company's earnings, creates new revenue streams, and is well-regarded, or they simply cannot.

In our constantly changing business environment, the ability to be "agile" is not easily quantifiable but is still very important. The ability to be agile and embody its key characteristics allow a leader to "stay flexible, grow from mistakes, and rise to a diverse array of challenges." The constant demands on leaders requires a mindset that that is centered and expansive at the same time.

In designing and delivering leadership programs and processes across various levels of organizations, I have noticed that agile leaders have the ability **to "refocus skills, perspectives, and ideas that are no longer relevant and learn new ones that are."** However, this ability is not innate – it takes practice and focus. Ultimately, there is a critical path to becoming an agile leader.

1. **Agile leaders are curious.**
   Agile leaders question. They are curious and challenge the status quo. Although they have their own original ideas and ways of doing things, they are open to others as well. They desire to understand how things work and strive to make broad connections and entertain new perspectives. They are constantly learning and taking in new knowledge and they are not afraid of being novices. Innovating requires new experiences, which provide perspective and a bigger knowledge base. Leading with agility generates new ideas through the ability to view issues from multiple angles.

2. **Agile leaders are imaginative.**
   Agility requires imagination – lots of imagination. You are not required to constantly come up with the "next big thing." Agility is about looking for better ways to run your team or a piece of the business to serve your customers. To develop your imagination, you must embrace your playful side. Embracing this side will allow you to experiment with new ideas and combinations that will help your business be more productive, cost-effective, and customer-centered.

3. **Agile leaders reflect.**
   Although agile leadership is about having a future-focus, they also know when to look back and to learn from those experiences. A major aspect of being agile is to continually seek feedback and processing it. Seeking feedback allows a leader to have more insight into their own shortcomings and blind spots. Research shows that self-awareness was found to be "the single highest predictor of success across senior leadership roles."

Being open to experience is fundamental to learning. Individuals who remain closed or defensive when challenged or given critical feedback tend to be low in learning agility. By contrast, quick learning agile individuals seek feedback, process it, and adapt based on their newfound understanding of themselves, situations, and problems.

By practicing curiosity, imagination and self-awareness, a person will lay the foundation for an agile leadership mindset. These essential skills will help leaders stand out for their resilience, calm nature, and ability to remain at ease no matter the situation.

"It's not just that they are willing to put themselves into challenging situations; it's that they're able to cope with the stress of these challenges and thus manage them more effectively."

Are you willing to be agile?

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With over 20 years in the learning, development and training industry, Corey is well known for his ability to connect with any audience at any size. He has provided participant focused learn and development design and consulting, professional speaking, coaching and training for organizations - of all sizes - across North America. He has a focused results-based partnership approach to develop and deliver customized solutions that meet an organization's unique business needs and resolve their most significant issues, helping them to create a lasting competitive advantage.