

## **Perspective: Another Aspect of the Learning Agility Dimension of Flexibility**

If the word, “flexibility,” brings to mind the image of an easy-going person willing to change course to accommodate others’ wishes (or, perhaps, a gymnast!), you may think it has no relationship to perspective.

However, E·A·S·I·Consult® defines flexibility on the Burke Learning Agility Inventory™ (Burke LAI™) as being open to new ideas and proposing new solutions, so, in that sense, it *is* closely connected to perspective, which is defined (via Google dictionary) as a “particular attitude toward, or way of regarding, something; a point of view.”

In teaching groups of leaders about learning agility, I have become increasingly aware that a one-line description for flexibility is insufficient. So, in seminars, I explain that, in terms of learning agility, flexibility means to impose a framework or paradigm on a situation. From there, you must determine whether that framework or paradigm adequately explains the situation.

By definition, a “paradigm” is a pattern, example or model. So, if we look at that word in relation to our definition of flexibility, you should see the dots beginning to connect; it is being open to new patterns, examples or models to explain what is happening in a situation.

**Another definition for you to consider: “framework” is a basic set of ideas, facts or circumstances within which something exists.** Again, in the context of learning agility and the dimension of flexibility, if I am using a framework to understand a situation, then I am open to new ideas, facts or circumstances as potential solutions.

If you took Psychology 101 in college, you may remember studying perception or **perspective. In psychology textbooks, that’s the section where you’ll often find a picture** you are asked to look at and describe. Some people see a young woman; others, an old woman. And yet another group sees both.

Which response is correct? The answer is: *all three*. Depending on the framework or perspective through which you view the picture, you will arrive at a solution as to what you see.

Another simple example of perspective is the adage that an optimist sees a glass as half-full, while the pessimist sees it as half-empty. Same glass, same amount of water, but a different description or perspective.

Another aspect to consider is employment in a foreign country and within a different culture. When I work with employees relocating from one country and culture to another - often with their families - one of the areas I look for is their degree of flexibility.

If you are an American taking an assignment in Japan, for example, there are more differences than similarities between the two cultures. There is a difference in language, of course, therefore you must be flexible enough to learn enough words and phrases in Japanese to communicate with others. In Japan, people drive on the opposite side of the road. If you plan on driving, you will need to be flexible and make that adjustment.

Beyond that are deeper cultural perspectives you must understand and embrace. Japanese people live in a collectivist or group-centered society, while the United States is individualistic. If you decide to live in Japan for several years as an expatriate, you will need to demonstrate flexibility in situations providing an opportunity to show learning agility. If you however, continue to look at a foreign country through the lens of your home country, you will find yourself misinterpreting situations on a regular basis.

So, flexibility as a dimension of learning agility is about opening up and looking at a situation in as many ways possible until you find one that really explains what is occurring.

### About the Author

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