

Lessons in Learning Agility from Davos, Switzerland

As many of you know, January brings the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in **Davos, Switzerland, and it's interesting to** read about the topics being discussed.

Although this meeting always seems to receive a lot of press from business publications, the **forum is actually a nonprofit foundation with a mission of “improving the state of the world** by engaging business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, **regional and industry agendas.”**

Considering that mission, I was struck - but not altogether surprised - by how often the conversation turned to elements of learning agility.

During this year's event, held January 23-26, Brian Moynihan, Chairman and CEO of Bank of America, described the one skill people will need to be successful in the future job market over the next several decades. In an article on CNBC.com, **Moynihan said “the ability to be successful in the future job market is going to come down to the ability to absorb tremendous amounts of information.”**

Moynihan went **on to say that the future will also require all workers to “take in massive amounts of data, and then also be able to process it, think through it and intellectually assess to determine what's important,” and concluded that continuous learning and “trying things out” was crucial.**

That same day, several other prominent business leaders shared their wisdom and advice on success. In [another CNBC piece](#), tech entrepreneur and billionaire Mark Cuban called failure a **“learning experience” as he reflected on quitting or getting fired from three jobs in a row early in his career. Cuban said “Each and every one of us is really good at something, and the hard part is finding out what that is, and once you get there, then trying to be as good as you can at it.”**

Microsoft founder Bill Gates said he had experienced his own “share of failures,” including an internet TV show initiative that flopped. Rather than let failure defeat him, Gates said he views it as an opportunity for learning and change.

And Sara Blakely, who launched Spanx shapewear out of her apartment and is now worth \$1.9 billion, talked about how her father always encouraged her and each of her siblings to **continuously try new things. What's more, her dad actually “celebrated” failure,**

congratulating his children when they tried out for something and were horrible at it because he wanted them to be free from worrying about the fear of failing.

A key theme running through these stories is the important role learning - and the ability to change and adapt from what is learned - plays in success. This, of course, is also at the heart of many aspects of the new *Burke Learning Agility Inventory™*.

Among the nine dimensions that compose the **Burke LAI™** are a few dimensions related to the learning process, Information Gathering, Experimenting, Performance Risk Taking, and Interpersonal Risk Taking.

Information Gathering includes “using various methods to remain current in one’s area of expertise” and “staying informed about professional and work matters, especially as they change frequently.” Moynihan points to this skill in his description of what it is going to take to be successful, now and in the coming years.

The next three dimensions of Experimenting, Performance Risk Taking and Interpersonal Risk Taking encompass what Cuban, Gates and Blakely see as critical to succeeding in business.

Experimenting is “trying out new behaviors (i.e., approaches and ideas) to determine what is effective,” and Performance Risk Taking includes “seeking new activities (i.e., tasks, assignments, roles, etc.) that provide opportunities to be challenged.” Interpersonal Risk Taking incorporates, “discussing differences with others in ways that lead to learning and change.” These three **Burke Learning Agility dimensions serve as a foundation for trying out** new approaches and learning from the experiences, including the failures.

As the exclusive partner of the *Burke Learning Agility Inventory*, E·A·S·I·Consult® has been utilizing this tool for the past two years. During that time, we have seen the success the *Burke LAI* has had in helping to identify and develop leaders at various levels, as well as High-Potentials.

Since the challenges of your organization include continuously learning massive amounts of data, encouraging employees to try new approaches and efforts and always learning from their failures, we would enjoy discussing various approaches that will significantly assist your organization in attaining those goals.

[About the Author](#)

Joseph Gier, Ph.D. is Vice President - Consulting Services at E·A·S·I·Consult® and is a licensed Psychologist. E·A·S·I·Consult works with Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and mid-

sized corporations to provide customized Talent Management solutions. E•A•S•I-Consult specialties include individual assessment, online employment testing, survey research, competency modeling, leadership development, executive coaching, 360-degree feedback, online structured interviews, and EEO hiring compliance. The company is a leader in the field of providing accurate information about people through professional assessment. To learn more about E•A•S•I-Consult, visit <https://easiconsult.com> or email ContactUs@easiconsult.com or call 800.922.EASI.