

Speed and Reflecting: Dichotomy or Complementary?

As you might imagine, the more people take the Burke Learning Agility Inventory™, or Burke LAI™, the more configurations you see. At the same time, there are some patterns that tend to emerge.

But there are two dimensions - Speed and Reflecting - in which it is rare to see high - or low - scores in both.

In his research on learning agility, my colleague Warner Burke, a Professor at Columbia University, identified nine distinct dimensions:

- Experimenting
- Performance Risk Taking
- Interpersonal Risk Taking
- Collaborating
- Feedback Seeking
- Information Gathering
- Reflecting

E·A·S·I·Consult® took the 38 questions Burke had validated as effectively measuring learning agility and created an assessment, the results of which are compiled into a report that lets the test-taker know how much learning agility he or she has across the nine dimensions.

There is often a natural correlation between some dimensions. For example, people who score high in Interpersonal Risk Taking also tend to score high in Collaborating. Makes sense, **since they are both related to working well with others or being a “people person.”** Many times, people who score higher on Experimenting also score higher on Performance Risk Taking. Both of those learning agility dimensions involve trying new things.

But that isn’t the case for Speed and Reflecting.

Speed, as it applies to learning agility, means acting on ideas quickly to discard those that **aren’t working and accelerate other possibilities. Someone who scores high on Speed is a “quick study.”** He or she can use Experimenting to summarize a large amount of information into the three most important points or ideas. If, through Experimenting, it was determined that an option would not work, the person using Speed would then digest more information and identify another option.

Reflecting, on the other hand, is defined as slowing down to evaluate one's own performance. This is a learning agility dimension in which you stop, take a break and become very pensive. You are looking retrospectively at an event and using a filter, **determining what happened and, perhaps, it's significance or implications.**

My experience so far with the Burke LAI is people who score high on the dimension of Speed **typically don't score high on Reflecting and vice versa.**

I work with many sales groups. Salespeople in general tend to be very action-oriented and it is typical for them to score high on the Speed dimension of learning agility. These same salespeople often score lower on Reflecting, although sales managers are a little higher.

I also work with scientific and financial professionals. Overall, they tend to be higher on Reflecting and lower on Speed. As a generalization, scientists and accounting types are more measured and averse to risk. I am not saying it is not warranted, but it tends to show up on learning agility as a lot of thinking before acting, rather than diving into a situation quickly.

When I speak with groups about their Burke LAI results, I tell them that to be more learning agile, you need to be able to access all nine dimension of learning agility.

So how do I get my sales guys to slow down and my scientists to speed up?

If you are the scientist who wants to be better at Speed, you need to pick up the pace. You need to look at how long it is taking to perform an analysis and reduce the time by 50 percent. You must force yourself to not identify every variable in a situation but rather the top three that account for 80 percent of the problem. You should put yourself in a situation **in which you don't have** all the answers and live with that ambiguity.

If you are that salesperson, you need to take 30 minutes at the end of the week and think about what worked in the last week and what you need to do differently. There will be that desire to call one more customer versus wasting time reflecting. Take the time to reflect.

Speed and Reflecting are learning agility dimensions that don't naturally complement one another. But understanding how they can present themselves as polarities can help you to develop both qualities so they can coexist and make you more learning agile.

[About the Author](#)

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