

What You Get From the Burke Learning Agility Inventory™

There has been a lot of discussion about the importance of understanding how learning agility ties into leadership potential. More and more companies recognize the relationship, said David E. Smith, Ph.D., the founder and CEO of E·A·S·I-Consult®. In times of change, leaders need to be more agile than ever. Adapting to new business strategies, working across cultures, dealing with temporary virtual teams and taking on new assignments all demand that leaders be flexible and agile.

Warner Burke, Ph.D., a researcher and professor from Teachers College, Columbia University recognized this fact more than five years ago. He was also aware that there were no well-researched tools that could measure learning agility. So, he and his colleagues at Teachers College set out to develop one.

Today we have the *Burke Learning Agility Inventory*® (Burke LAI®), distributed by E·A·S·I-Consult. Below is an overview of what the Burke LAI report offers to individuals and their managers or coaches. The report is set up to provide an overall learning agility score and individual scores for the nine learning agility dimensions it measures. Each dimension score is accompanied by a short narrative, explaining the dimension and providing recommendations on how to improve in that area. The scores include percentiles. These percentiles are based on a comparison (norm group) of 393 test scores from mid-level to senior-level managers. The scores were collected at the Center for Creative Leadership.



The Burke LAI uses a Likert-style rating scale, ranging from one to seven, with one indicating the lowest level being measured and seven indicating the highest level. Likert scores are referred to as “raw scores” in the report. To put the raw scores into perspective, the report also includes percentile scores. These scores are determined by comparing participants’ raw scores with those of the norm group cited above. The norm group scores have been used to establish percentiles that correspond to each raw score. For example, a percentile score of 50 indicates a raw score for which 50 percent of the mid- and senior-level managers scored lower.

The introductory, or “Overall Learning Agility Summary” page, offers a bar chart that ranges from 0 to the 100th percentile. The bar chart is divided by vertical lines at the 35th percentile and 70th percentile positions. This is to provide ranges of “below average,” “average” and “above average” as points of reference. Individuals who score above average in overall learning agility are likely to be open to change. They are flexible in the ways they approach new situations. They are skilled, motivated and consistent in applying agile behavior necessary for fast and adaptive learning.

The “Subscale Scores” page includes a nine-row bar chart indicating how a participant fared on the Burke LAI for each of the nine agility dimensions: *flexibility, speed, experimenting, performance risk taking, interpersonal risk taking, collaborating, information gathering, feedback seeking and reflecting*. Again, the bar chart ranges from 0 to 100th percentile, with vertical lines at the 35th and 70th percentile positions. A short narrative, “Summary Score Interpretation”, is provided to help the reader by pointing out which of the nine agility dimensions he or she could benefit from by improving those skill areas.

Finally, each of the nine subscales (agility dimensions) is shown with a bar chart, similar to the one above. The bar chart is followed by a paragraph which discusses the level of strength for the agility dimension (below average, average or above average) along with information on how the participant may be able to improve their skills in this area and how that affects overall learning agility. For example, someone scoring low in *performance risk taking* would first be advised that this dimension is similar to “sticking one’s neck out.” That person may be advised to begin taking small risks, such as volunteering for an assignment that would be challenging but not beyond his or her capacity. The person could then be encouraged to take on a larger, more challenging assignment, eventually increasing his or her learning agility.

In summary, the Burke LAI report is designed to provide the reader and her or his stakeholders with information that is founded in scientific research. The report is organized in a very logical order of broad information to very specific action plans for the participant.

About the Author

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