

## **Burke Learning Agility Inventory Looks Closely at Job Success**

We know picking the person with the most potential for success in a new role or job can be a challenge.

**Insights from Marshall Goldsmith's New York Times best-selling book, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There***, demonstrates this. Goldsmith points out, among other things, that many leaders find comfort in clinging to past behaviors. The higher you progress within an organization, the more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) the job becomes. To have potential for your next role in an organization, especially a leadership role, you must apply learning agility in your approach to challenges. Successful people use agility to learn from experience, opening them up to try new behaviors in unfamiliar situations.

So how do you take the guesswork out of future promotions?

A major healthcare organization, which we will refer to as Healthcare Org in this article, recently asked this very question.

They showed a keen interest in the *Burke Learning Agility Inventory*® (Burke LAI®), a new measure of learning agility. As already mentioned, learning agility has been identified as a key component to the success of newly hired or promoted leaders. The Burke LAI was researched and developed over a six-year period by Dr. Warner Burke and his team at **Teacher's College, Columbia University**. We at E·A·S·I·Consult® recognized that the inventory has strong test qualities and does a professional job of measuring learning agility.

What Healthcare Org officials wanted to know is how well the Burke LAI predicted leadership **performance. They were interested in going beyond Goldsmith's expert judgment to conduct a scientific study that would determine the Burke LAI's success in identifying employees with strong learning agility and see if this was related to their success on the job.**

This conversation led us to a controlled study of the Burke LAI with Healthcare Org leaders. E·A·S·I·Consult specializes in this type of study, often referred to as a test-validation study. The Burke LAI was administered to 74 directors and vice-presidents to determine their overall learning agility score and nine related dimension scores.

*For a full description of the Burke LAI validation report, visit the [E·A·S·I·Consult website](#).*

The next step was to collect information on the performance of those 74 participants. The **participants' supervisors were enlisted to provide us with job-performance ratings**. To avoid any bias in the collection of ratings, a special assessment form (not tied to any form of

compensation decision) was created. Not taking this cautious approach often leads to inflated and unusable ratings.

To further encourage honest and accurate ratings, supervisors were informed that all individual ratings would be collected by E•A•S•I-Consult and would not be shared with anyone at Healthcare Org. Any feedback provided to the organization was offered in group format only.

What did we find?

The Burke LAI performed its job well. Very simply put, those who scored higher on the Burke LAI received higher ratings from their supervisors regarding their role as a leader. Those who scored lower on the Burke LAI received lower ratings from their supervisors. For example, **one of the supervisor ratings was “Results Orientation”. This was defined as “driving aggressive goals to strategic targets”. Another performance rating was “Business Growth,” defined as “changing approaches (as needed) to optimize outcomes”.**

From a scientific perspective, this is a demonstration of how a predictor like the Burke LAI correlates with job success. Thus, the Burke LAI is a *valid* predictor of leadership potential and job success.

As a result of the study, organizations can feel confident in using the Burke LAI for the *selection* of new employees and leaders, and as an integral part of their *succession planning* program. This will allow them to identify high-potential candidates and assign them projects, tasks and positions that will ensure a pipeline of talent for the future.

Why use the Burke LAI in your organization?

**As shown above, the Burke LAI scientifically measures a person’s level of learning agility and predicts his or her success on the job.** This is especially relevant in a VUCA environment. The Burke LAI excels in this area.

**Sound selection and promotion decisions don’t come without effort and investment. A good hire** requires accurate and relevant information about the candidate. Without this, you are taking an unnecessary risk. Learning agility goes a long way in ensuring people will excel in their areas of ability and beyond. Hiring the right person by using the Burke LAI should provide a competitive advantage to organizations that start from the day of hire through a person’s **career. Changes in technology, the business environment and the world, all ensure that the learning agile will excel.**

But there are also other attributes that make the Burke LAI readily applicable to work environments. Number one, it is behaviorally based. Each of the nine dimensions and the individual items that make up the dimensions are based on specific and objective behaviors. **For example, “To what degree does this person.... quickly develop solutions to problems?”** This behavior can be easily measured. And developing this behavior is straightforward and measurable. This is not the case with other learning agility measures.

The Burke LAI is also more parsimonious - straightforward and simple - than other agility measures.

**Where some include dozens of “learning dimensions,” the Burke LAI has only nine:**

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

The Burke LAI has developmental support materials to help participants utilize the feedback they gain from their comprehensive report and improve their skills in the appropriate areas. And finally, the Burke LAI is reasonably priced.

### About the Author

*David Smith, PhD, is the president and CEO of E•A•S•I-Consult<sup>®</sup>. 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](mailto:ContactUs@easiconsult.com) or call 800.922.EASI.*