LEARNING AGILITY:
A New Construct Whose Time Has Come

Kenneth P. De Meuse

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Situational Leadership

Historically
- Fiedler (1967)
- Vroom & Yetton (1973)
- Graen et al. (1982)

Recently
- McCall, Lombardo & Morrison (1988)
- Brousseau et al. (2006)
- Goldsmith & Reiter (2007)

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Learning Agility

- **Definition**

  Ability to learn something in situation A and apply it in situation B.

- **Focus – Vertical Leadership**

- **Identification and development of Hi-Po's**

Session Objectives

- **Examine why learning agility is important to upward mobility**

- **Introduce measure – CHOICES®**

- **Examine relationship between CHOICES® and managerial success**
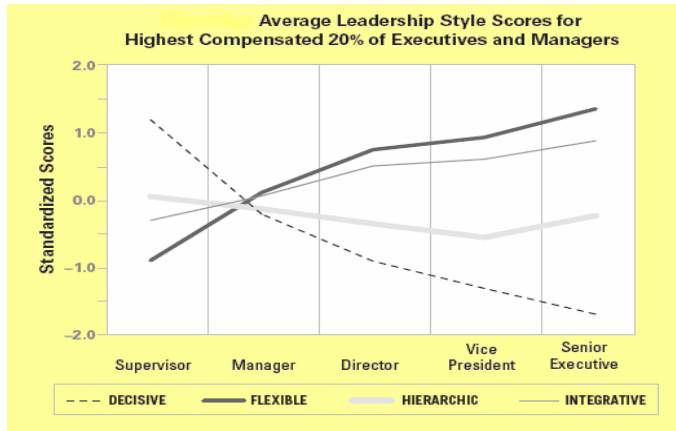
The Leadership Pipeline
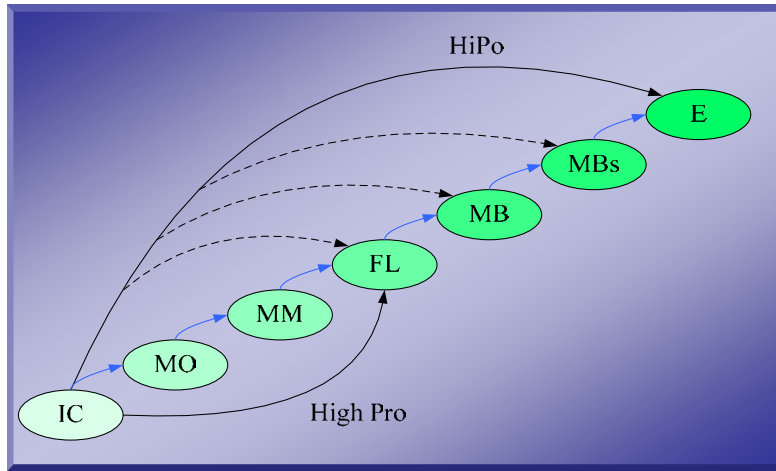
Adapted from *The Leadership Pipeline*
Charan, Drotter, & Noel (2001)

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The Seasoned Executive's Decision-Making Style
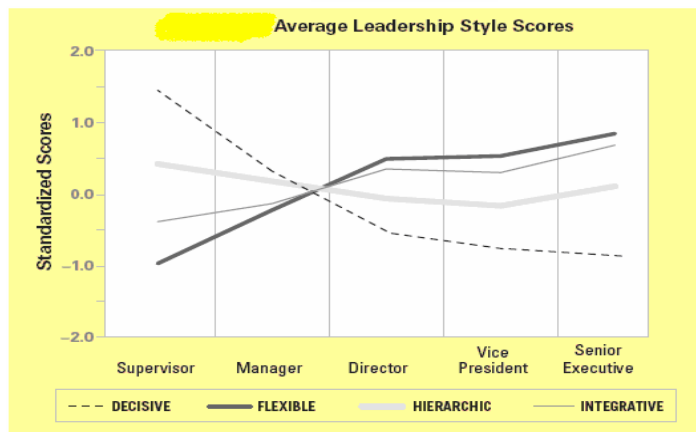
Adapted from *The Seasoned Executive's Decision-Making Style*
Brousseau, Driver, Hourihan, & Larson (2006)

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Profile of Top 20%

Average Leadership Style Scores for
Highest Compensated 20% of Executives and Managers

Profile of Bottom 20%

Average Leadership Style Scores for
Lowest Compensated 20% of Executives and Managers
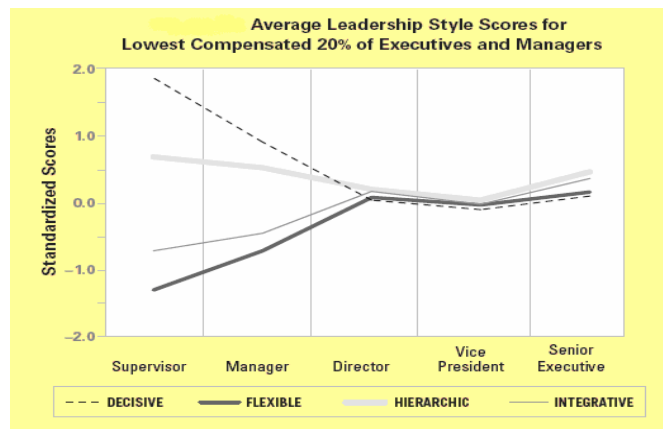
Competencies for Different Management Positions
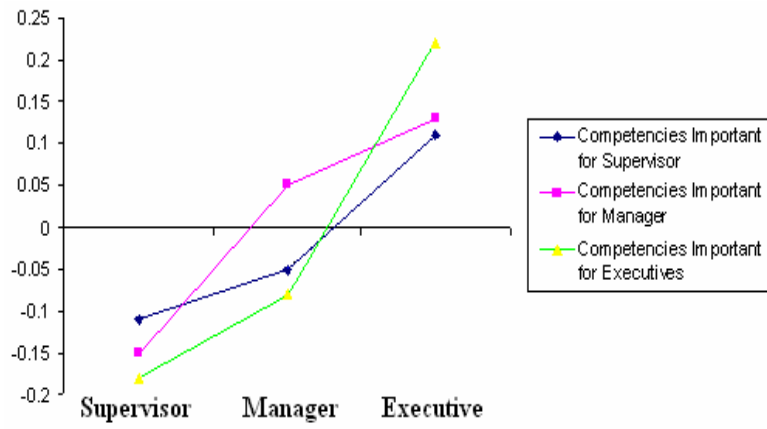
Glaring difference between successful people and those whose careers falter…is their ability to wrest meaning from experience, i.e., learning agility.

The Lessons of Experience
McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison (1988)

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…one of the most reliable indicators and predictors of true leadership is an individual's ability to find meaning in negative events and to learn from even the most trying circumstances.

Geeks and Geezers
Bennis & Thomas (2002)

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CHOICES ARCHITECT®
SECOND EDITION
QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

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NCE OF TALENT
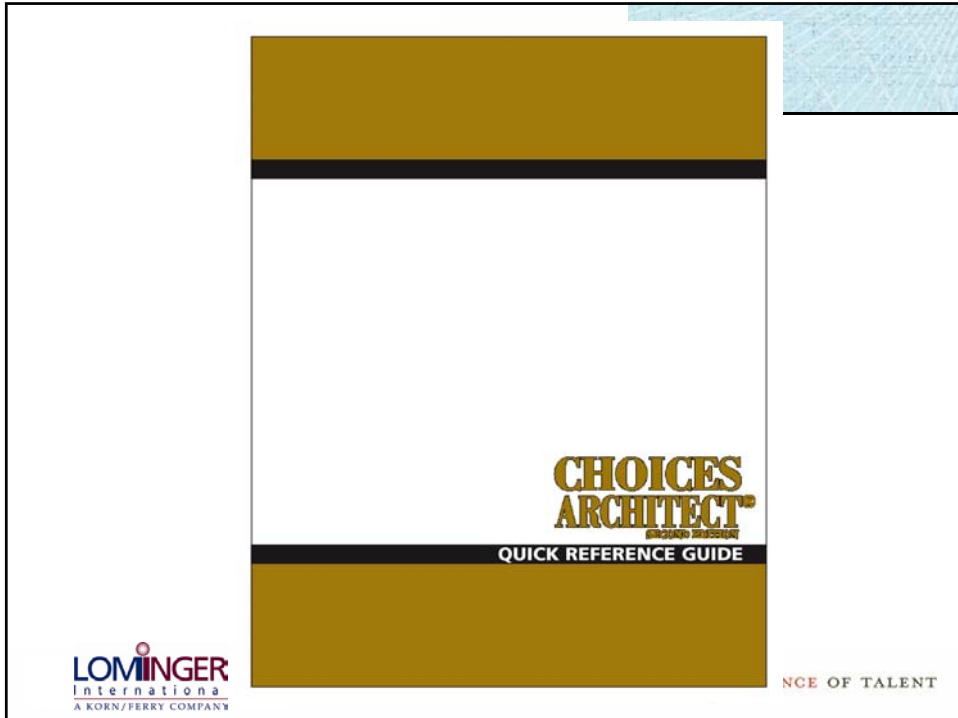
Lominger Assessment of Learning Agility – CHOICES®

Learning Agility Factors	
Mental Agility	Describes people who _think through problems_ from a fresh point of view and are comfortable with complexity, ambiguity and explaining their thinking to others
People Agility	Describes people who _know themselves_ well, learn from experience, treat others constructively, and are cool and resilient under the pressures of change
Change Agility	Describes people who are curious, have a passion for ideas, _like to experiment_ with test cases, and engage in skill building activities
Results Agility	Describes people who _get results_ under tough conditions, inspires others to perform beyond normal, and exhibit the sort of presence that builds confidence in others

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Mental Agility

- Curious
- Get to root causes
- Comfortable with complexity/ ambiguity
- Find parallels
- Look for rules of thumb and repeatables
- Broad perspective

People Agility

- Self-aware
- Open minded
- Committed to personal improvement
- Can play many roles
- Likes to help others succeed
- Deal with conflict constructively
- Agile communicator

Change Agility

- Tinkerer
- Can take the heat
- Introduces new slants

Results Agility

- Very flexible
- Good in first time, new situations
- Resourceful
- Drive and presence
- Build high performing teams

Psychometrics of CHOICES®

- *Internal consistency* is above .80 for the four factors and overall scale
- *Test-retest* (30 days apart) reliability was also high, ranging from .81 to .90 for the four factors and overall scale
- Women score slightly higher than men on "people agility"
- People are generally scored higher on "results agility" than on "people agility"
- Learning agility as assessed by CHOICES is *not related to IQ and personality*

Relationship to Leadership Effectiveness

CHOICES®	Correlation with VOICES®
Overall Scale	.42**
Mental Agility	.28*
People Agility	.44**
Change Agility	.34*
Result Agility	.37**

N = 50. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Relationship to Being Classified as a Hi-Po

- **One Fortune 500 special material company identified over 100 "high potentials" through series of "Talking Talent" sessions**

- **About _70% of these candidates_ were classified as "High Potentials" according to Lominger CHOICES® norms**

- **The rest of the candidates all were above the population mean**

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Relationship to Promotability

- **Learning Agility was found correlated significantly with _long-term potential for promotion_ and _staying out of trouble_ (R-Square = 0.30 for both criteria) (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000)**

- **Learning Agility was found providing _incremental validity_ over cognitive ability and the Big Five factors of personality in predicting job promotability (Connolly, 2001)**

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Relationship to Job Performance

- A study on 107 law enforcement officers found that Learning Agility was significantly correlated with *supervisory ratings* of overall job performance

- Furthermore, learning agility provided *incremental validity* over cognitive ability and the Big Five factors of personality in predicting job performance (Connolly, 2001)

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- Talent management is now a top priority for business leaders (SHRM, 2008).

- Top organizations in leadership development have standardized high-potential assessment (Hewitt, 2004).

- The absolute of talent management – Assessing talent accurately.

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Learning Agility:
Implications for Practice

- **Assessing and selecting talent**
- **Differentiating talent pool in succession plan**
- **360-degree assessment, coaching, and feedback**
- **Expatriate assignment**
- **Identifying who can take more on challenging assignment**
- **To build up a start-up team**
- **To assess organization's capacity for change**

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