



# Learning Agility & Remote leadership

Coaching tips for effective remote leadership



## **HFMtalentindex**

HFMtalentindex, part of the Assessio Group, is the market leader in psychometric online assessments & tools for strategic talent management. We provide platforms with scientifically tested, reliable and valid instruments for recruitment & selection, development, performance and talent & team mobility, including real-time analytics dashboards. We recognise, acknowledge and enable talent so that your organisation can benefit more from talent and ensure that no talent is wasted.

## **About our people**

We are unique thinkers and makers, innovators and improvers. We are leaders in the market, in terms of technology as well as client solutions. We are the leader in Learning Agility tools, data driven recruitment solutions, team insights and leadership assessments. Our focus is always on measuring and developing talent. Our team of psychologists, researchers and HR experts are always on hand to provide support. By creating together, we unleash the potential of people and organisations. More benefit from talent with zero talent waste.

# Introduction

With many organisations currently working from home due to measures taken against the Coronavirus, remote leadership is obviously a hot topic. It is particularly important to provide appropriate support to people who are not accustomed to working from home. As a supervisor, how do you achieve this? Is there an ideal remote leader?

A lot depends on what your team looks like and the targets you need to achieve. Remote working offers both challenges and opportunities for employees and supervisors.

## Learning Agility as a focus for remote leadership

Learning Agility is the ability to display new effective behaviour quickly in a new situation. It indicates your openness and potential to learn from new experiences. Now that we are all working remotely, we need to find ways to continue working together effectively in this unfamiliar context.

As a supervisor, how do you keep the team together remotely? You are continually encountering situations that now need to be handled differently, as well as people's varying responses. Knowing someone's Learning Agility can help you as their supervisor. How does someone learn under these circumstances? For example, someone with a low score for Change Agility approaches things differently than someone with a high score.

On the pages that follow, we provide coaching tips for each Learning Agility dimension, categorised into lower or higher scores, to help you optimise your remote leadership ability.

If you have any tips for us, please let us know: [info@hfmtalentindex.co.za](mailto:info@hfmtalentindex.co.za)

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# Reminder: what is Learning Agility?

**Learning Agility is the ability to rapidly develop new effective behaviour, based on new experiences, and then to apply this behaviour successfully.**

It is a form of learning ability and thereby gives an indication of a person's potential. People with a high score on Learning Agility learn more and faster from new situations than people with a low score on Learning Agility. High scorers are able to benefit more from the experience, are constantly looking for new challenges, seek feedback in order to learn, recognise patterns in unfamiliar situations and effectively involve others, in order to give meaning and understanding to experiences.

Roles and positions are changing more quickly. A changing role demands a different way of working, the ability to effectively respond to the reality of the day and continuously learn. Learning Agility indicates whether you have the potential to generally learn new things quickly. This may not be relevant now, but it may be in the future.

Learning Agility is measured in four facets (Change Agility, Mental Agility, People Agility and Results Agility) and one transcending factor: Self-awareness, which influences the scores on all dimensions.

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed description of the different Learning Agility dimensions, see page 14

# Change Agility



1 to 5,9

## Low to average Change Agility:

Change Agility partly depends on employees' vision of the future. People with a positive outlook on things are more likely to take action than those who are quick to see problems ahead. Remote working is a good example of a way of working that requires some getting used to. For people who are cautious and who see risks, this change can have a more than average impact. It is difficult to motivate someone who takes a cautious approach to start working remotely. They may feel as though they are being thrown in at the deep end, and this may bring them more uncertainty. You may be able to give these employees confidence and clarity about what exactly they will need to do when working remotely.

Employees with low Learning Agility want to know where they stand. As a supervisor, you can help by clearly explaining what you expect of them. It is also important to let employees know that they can make mistakes, so that they can learn from them. If technology is required to facilitate remote working, clear instruction and good support are essential.

## Coaching tips:

- Make sure that employees know that they are allowed to make mistakes when learning to work remotely.
- Give them confidence by providing clear instruction and explaining what is expected of them. For example, the deadline for an assignment and any procedures that are required to complete the work.
- Introduce routine, for example holding remote meetings every day at 9.00.
- Give the employee an assignment in which they can partly use their knowledge and experience. That means no completely new and unfamiliar tasks.
- Get the employee to work with someone with a greater propensity to experiment. For example, in using the technology for online meetings.
- Ask employees how they experience working remotely and what they find hardest.
- Remember that independence and freedom in their work can make people feel uncertain.
- Remote working has both advantages and disadvantages. Get employees to write down five advantages and five disadvantages of working remotely. Use the advantages to profit from the change. Use the disadvantages to challenge people to find a solution to them.

# Change Agility



6 to 9

## High Change Agility:

Employees with high Change Agility will find it easier to adapt to working remotely. They need less encouragement to take a different approach to their work, and they are more prepared to investigate how something can work for them than employees with a low score for Learning Agility. One way of accelerating the development is to give these employees the opportunity to share ideas about how things might be done differently. Remote working is a good opportunity to experiment, because many people are not yet clear how the project should be set up and which conditions are necessary to achieve results. Employees with high Change Agility will try out different ways to see what works well.

## Coaching tips:

- Give the employee more responsibility, and support the initiative shown by the employee in proposing new ideas for working remotely.
- Remote working can also lead to more control and structure to what people do and deliver. Try to find a balance here, because autonomy and the ability to determine how they do their work is important to employees with high Change Agility.
- Ask employees how they could organise and improve how they work remotely.
- Remote working also offers new opportunities. Ask the employee which additional tasks they would be willing to take on.
- Make a distinction between regular meetings and meetings requiring ideas and innovation.
- Be willing to appeal to the self-reliance of employees.
- In a team with a high Change Agility, it is possible that the ideas and initiatives will continue to flow. Remember the goal of the work and the meeting and make the employees responsible for elaborating ideas independently. Make sure to provide follow-up so that it's not just about producing ideas.
- Try not to control too much and give employees the scope to experiment.

# Mental Agility



1 to 5,9

## Low to average Mental Agility:

Employees with low Mental Agility are less interested in exactly how things work and often take a practical approach to remote working. They have relatively little need to spend time analysing what exactly happens and why. As a supervisor, you can encourage development in this area by explaining why remote working has been introduced and how it can affect the output of employees and the organisation. You should therefore provide more knowledge and background information and not immediately adopt an implementing role yourself. As a supervisor, you can also challenge employees by asking about the impact remote working will have, which points can be improved in the department and how to go about that. Which processes could be organised more effectively, for example, and which tasks could be performed more efficiently when working remotely?

## Coaching tips:

- Arrange a brainstorming session with the department and ask employees to present ideas about organising remote working better.
- As the supervisor, do not present yourself as the expert. Invite others to put forward their own ideas.
- Ask employees to support their views and challenge them with the following questions:
  - Is there enough information to draw a conclusion?
  - What advantages and disadvantages do you see?
  - Where can remote working help us?
  - What will be hardest for us in the future?
- Give positive feedback if employees have critical questions and do not immediately come up with a solution.
- Give employees tips for asking (further) questions if anything is unclear.
- Ask employees what they think of your own proposals for improvements.
- Explicitly tell them that creativity and any ideas for working remotely are appreciated.
- Ask questions that challenge employees to think about their own approach to their work.
- Get employees to provide a summary of brainstorming sessions.
- Get employees to prepare for meetings by thinking up questions.



# Mental Agility



6 to 9

## High Mental Agility:

Employees with high Mental Agility are keen to know the background to decisions and what working remotely can offer. They do not simply accept things and challenge supervisors with critical questions on the approach to working remotely and the application of processes. They read about things and try to find explanations for how situations arose by thinking analytically and creatively. They also often have alternatives for solutions.

## Coaching tips:

- Ask employees to help you to define the strengths and weaknesses of the application of remote working. Get the team members to do a SWOT analysis.
- Take the time to answer questions and never simply say 'that's how we do it here' and 'that's what we've decided'.
- Regard questions about how and why things are done as positive and challenging and not as criticism of your own approach.
- Get employees to explore which approach works best when working remotely and what the advantages and disadvantages are.
- Talk about problems that require time and attention and challenge them to achieve depth in their inquiries.



# People Agility



1 to 5,9

## Low to average People Agility:

Employees with a low score for People Agility are less likely to ask colleagues for help in solving problems. When working remotely, they do not realise that colleagues can help them achieve a better analysis of problems than if they do this themselves. They have less need to call each other or use each other as a sounding board.

As a supervisor, you can stimulate this by giving employees a problem to solve together and assigning them shared responsibility. It is possible to strengthen People Agility by showing employees that sharing information and learning from each other can lead to new insights. This is particularly important when working remotely, because every contact must come from an initiative. Colleagues do not spontaneously meet or share ideas like they do at the office. Providing structure to maintain online contacts and emphasising the importance of being open to different opinions and ideas are important components for developing People Agility.

## Coaching tips:

- Ask employees in a group to present a joint proposal for improving processes.
- Challenge employees to list the questions they want to ask their colleagues and to itemise what they could learn from others.
- Do employees know who they can ask for information and which questions they can put to which people?
- Emphasise the fact that no one can know everything and that learning from others can accelerate the learning process.
- Encourage employees to give each other unsolicited advice, to share knowledge and to actively approach or call each other.
- Encourage employees to discover other people's motivations and understand other people's views.
- Coach employees not to immediately present a counterargument, but to ask lots of questions so that they properly understand the other person's opinion.
- Ask employees to share (new) knowledge with colleagues during online meetings and to inform others about new developments.

# People Agility



6 to 9

## High People Agility

If employees have high People Agility, they will be more likely to seek each other out online to learn from each other and will be open to other people's opinions. They may also regard remote working as an obstacle to their cooperation and working together to learn from each other. Because they feel that colleagues' opinions provide added value and they understand that they do not know everything themselves, they will be more likely to initiate contact. As a supervisor, you can facilitate employees by giving them opportunities to strengthen the interaction between colleagues. You can emphasise that they can use their qualities when working remotely because they work harder at proactively sharing information. They will also want to be informed by others.

## Coaching tips:

- Give employees the online possibilities and structure to meet each other and share information when working remotely.
- Ask employees to involve others in discussions at meetings. Alertness is another challenge during online meetings.
- Get employees to organise sessions in which they share knowledge and experience online.
- Ask employees to support colleagues who do not share information so easily. Get employees with High People Agility to motivate employees with low People Agility to show initiative and share more.



# Results Agility



1 to 5,9

## Low to average Results Agility:

Employees with low Results Agility consider it less important that specific targets are set when working remotely. They do not see the results as critical and probably give more priority to other aspects of the work. It can be hard to get these employees to focus on output, and that will be even more the case when working remotely.

A change to working remotely, with its more business-like and task-oriented approach, will be hard for these employees because they find it difficult to deal with the pressure involved in change. They are more likely to be distracted or become stressed by this than be helped to focus on the objectives to be achieved. You can help employees by explaining the objectives of working remotely and making the steps that are part of working remotely small and predictable.

## Coaching tips:

- Check that the employees know what objectives must be achieved. Ask follow-up questions on how this is perceived.
- Ask employees how they experience pressure and what they find most difficult about working remotely.
- Allow employees to set their own goals and describe them.
  - Ask follow-up questions on why it is important to achieve the objective.
  - How much time it will take to achieve the objective?
  - When must the result be ready?
- Ask employees to evaluate themselves at the end of the day, in order to evaluate whether the objectives have been achieved.
- Link employees with low Results Agility to employees with high Results Agility.
- Inform employees about the importance of the objectives to be achieved.
- Give support and confidence if you notice that working remotely and achieving the objectives causes additional pressure and stress.

# Results Agility



6 to 9

## High Results Agility:

When working remotely, employees with high Results Agility monitor their objectives and regard achieving results as important. You can help them by setting challenging targets and making clear agreements on the results to be achieved. Employees with high Results Agility can deal with the stress that working with targets can entail. However, when working remotely they can also become too focused on wanting to achieve the objectives and disrupt their work-life balance.

## Coaching tips:

- Make joint agreements about the objectives to be achieved.
- Check the results, but as a supervisor, don't micro-manage this. In fact, when working remotely, the autonomy and responsibility lie with the employee, who is also aware of the importance of the objectives to be achieved.
- Make adjustments if you see that pressure is causing attention to be diverted to issues that are less important.
- Monitor the work-life balance, particularly if there are no official working hours when working remotely.



# Self-awareness



1 to 5,9

## Low to average Self-awareness

Employees with low Self-awareness are less consciously concerned with their personal development and the impact that working remotely could have on that. They often enjoy working in a practical manner and are less inclined to reflect on possibilities for development in the future, such as working remotely. This may be related to ambition and drive, but it may be that employees are not used to working on their development. Employees may also feel less responsible for their own development. Discussing the impact of remote working can generate high awareness and give more motivation to their personal development.

### Coaching tips:

- Discuss with the employee what you expect from remote working and what that could mean for them in the future.
- Give the employee time and opportunity to actively engage in their own development.
- Discuss the possible changes involved in remote working and ask what effects this could have on the employee's own work.
- Discuss with the employee how much time they have spent on their personal development.
- Reflect together with the employee on their strengths and weaknesses in terms of working remotely.
- Ask what the employee needs to learn to be more effective.
- Ask the employee what they think of giving and receiving feedback and how they regard their own development.
- Discuss in concrete terms how much time and attention the employee has devoted to their personal development in the past 10 years.
- Give feedback with care, as employees with low(er) Self-awareness may be less used to receiving criticism and feedback.
- Indicate that working remotely also offers opportunities to work on personal development.

# Self-awareness



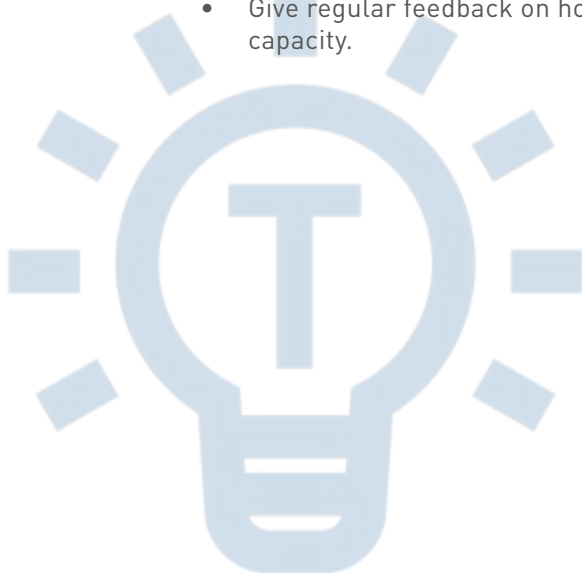
6 to 9

## High Self-awareness

Employees with high Self-awareness are motivated to address their personal development and regard working remotely as an additional opportunity. They are curious about how this change can help them develop. They are open to feedback and seek contact with other colleagues for that purpose. They have good insight into their own strengths and weaknesses and want to become better at what they do. They request feedback and are aware of their behaviour and the potential effects of working remotely.

### Coaching tips:

- Give employees time to reflect on the impact of working remotely and let them share that with others in the team.
- Get employees to draw up a plan to achieve their ambitions and discuss together how they could achieve this.
- Get employees with high Self-awareness to support colleagues who score less high on this.
- Seek possibilities yourself or refer the employee to someone who could work with them to strengthen their skills and competencies in other roles or jobs.
- Give regular feedback on how working remotely is going and what the employee could strengthen to benefit more from his/her learning capacity.



# How is Learning Agility constructed?

Learning Agility is measured in four dimensions and one transcending factor: Self-awareness, which influences the scores on all dimensions.

## Change Agility



People with a high score on Change Agility are characterised by a constant curiosity, that is fuelled by new unknown things. They like to experiment, try things, and have a passion for new experiences. As a result, they experience more. They are able to learn more from their experiences, because they are intrinsically motivated to investigate matters and enjoy when things are not yet known to them.

## Mental Agility



People with a high score on Mental Agility enjoy using new ideas to create new insights when things are complex or unclear. They like to analyse and are often able to get to the bottom of things in new ways, by thinking outside the box. They have an open perspective and are challenged by new ideas. This helps them recognise patterns in new experiences more quickly than others. They quickly understand how the situation works and what they can learn from their experience.

## People Agility



People with a high score on People Agility are constructive to others and are open to people with different backgrounds and opinions. They have a need to properly understand what others mean and take others' opinions seriously. This makes it easier for them to get in touch with others and they succeed better in learning from the input of others. In addition, they can adapt more easily, for example to people from other cultures. As a result, other people share more with them.

## Results Agility



People with a high score on Results Agility have a strong desire to be successful and always look for the best way to achieve results. They are often ambitious, self-confident and remain calm under pressure. Because they are better able to set goals in new and unfamiliar situations, they maintain focus and learn quickly what is or isn't important in order to make new things successful.

## Self-awareness



People with a high score on Self-awareness know their own strengths and weaknesses. They are often critical of their own performance and their actions. As a result, they are more keen on how they can do things better and their overall willingness to learn is higher. Therefore, Self-awareness has a special role in Learning Agility: a high score increases the possibilities on the other Learning Agility dimensions, while a low score limits them.



Want to know more about Learning Agility? Contact us to discuss how you can apply Learning Agility in your organisation.

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