



TRACOM Research Brief

The Agility Gap

HR AND LEARNING EXECUTIVES CITE IMPORTANCE OF AGILITY BUT FAIL TO ACT

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— DR. CASEY MULQUEEN



TRACOM RESEARCH EXPOSES THE AGILITY GAP

A new survey of North American human resources and learning/training executives exposes a troubling lack of preparedness and effort to develop agility skills, despite the fact that these professionals and their executive bosses say agility is crucial to long-term success. The research from The TRACOM Group and global research firm Aranca exposes an Agility Gap that is a significant threat to these organizations.

For the survey, agility was defined as *“the capacity to recognize, create and capitalize on opportunities in a world full of disruptive change.”* Capabilities in these areas are consistently ranked by senior executives as critical for sustainable growth and success.

While 70% of survey participants said their senior executives were talking about the importance of Organizational Agility and 80% said their Learning and Development organization had been directed to develop this capacity, **less than half of their organizations have a program to develop these skills.**

CLEAR PRIORITY FROM THE C-SUITE

This new survey builds on other studies showing the critical value of organizational skills and a significant Agility Gap. A 2017 Deloitte survey of 10,000 global HR leaders found that building the “organization of the future” was the highest rated challenge, with 88% rating it important or very important. Yet the survey found that only 11% say they “understand how to build the organization of the future.” A 2017 poll conducted by TRACOM and HR.com found that executives at 79% of organizations were talking about the importance of organizational agility but only 19% would have a training program in place within 12 months.

AGILITY FALLING BEHIND OTHER PRIORITIES

This disconnect between executive strategy and training execution is further highlighted by the fact that 57% of respondents said agility training was not among their top training priorities. Participants were specifically asked to reconcile the lack of effort to develop skills they say are crucial and have been prioritized by the C-suite. A lack of funding and uncertainty over how to develop these skills were frequently cited.

UNSURE WHERE TO START

Many respondents didn’t know where to start with Agility training. Only four of the 75 respondents (5.3%) could name a vendor-provided agility training program or assessment. Just four others said they had developed their own training materials.

L&D executives recognize the importance of agility skills but too often aren’t doing enough to develop them. Regardless of the funding barriers and lack of internal expertise, they are failing their organizations.



“CLOs and CHROs have moved into the executive suite to combine strategic vision and solid execution,” Dr. Mulqueen said. “But this survey shows a significant disconnect between those two responsibilities. Learning executives must lead the way in delivering the agility capabilities that they already recognize as crucial to their futures.”

WHICH AGILITY SKILLS ARE MOST IMPORTANT?

Participants were asked to rate various aspects of agility on their importance. They ranked them as:

#5 Capacity to respond effectively when faced with change

#4 Ability to initiate and manage change efforts

#3 Capability to influence others to support new ideas

#2 Ability to influence opportunities for innovation

#1 Being comfortable with the risk of failure

The development of these skills represents an opportunity to significantly boost performance. Agile and innovative organizations start with agile individuals who make up the workforce. Agile individuals capitalize on changes in the environment, they challenge the status quo and they are constantly looking for ways to improve. They challenge themselves and those around them to be better and do better.

WHICH AUDIENCES NEED AND HAVE AGILITY SKILLS?

Participants indicated that agility skills were more important to employees in higher positions of responsibility, but also said their most senior leaders were not currently the most agile. And more people said they plan to provide agility training to VPs/Directors, front-line managers and individual contributors than plan to train C-suite executives.

How good are these roles at Agility skills?	% that have Low to Medium Agility:	% that have High Agility:
C-suite Executives	31%	69%
VPs/Directors	19%	81%
Front-line Managers	33%	67%
Individual Contributors	43%	57%
Sales Professionals	41%	59%

Interestingly, those that have agility training in place rank its value for all employees higher AND plan to push agility training much deeper into the organization than organizations that have not yet started. This indicates a recognition of the value agility training provides once it's initiated, and





perhaps a snowballing impact of pushing agility skills throughout a company.

FEW DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MID-SIZE AND LARGEST ORGANIZATIONS

Half of the survey participants worked for organizations employing 2,500 – 10,000 full-time employees, with half employing more than 10,000. For the most part, the responses were quite similar for the mid-size and large organizations, but there were a few interesting differences:

- » One-third more large organizations considered agility training in their top two training priorities than did mid-size companies.
- » Of those organizations that do not currently have agility training, three times as many midsize companies plan to implement it in the next year than do large organizations.

IMPLICATIONS

This study confirms the existence of an Agility Gap, and it shows that HR and L&D executives are fostering that gap.

“The bad news is that too few organizations have initiated agility training programs,” said Dr. Mulqueen. “But the good news is that there are practical techniques that individuals and teams can readily learn and apply to jumpstart an agility movement.”

For businesses and HR executives who are ready to develop agility skills, the first step is an education regarding the personal and organizational aspects of agility. TRACOM’s Agility Model is built on the latest research in brain science, behavioral psychology and business performance. It’s grounded in research but built for workplace impact.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Phone interviews with HR, training and learning executives from multinational companies employing at least 2,500 full-time employees were conducted from November 2017 through January 2018. All phone respondents were based in The United States or Canada, though their companies may be headquartered elsewhere. All respondents had the title of manager or higher and were involved in “selecting or authorizing training programs” for employees in their organization.

RESOURCES:

Visit www.tracomcorp.com/organizational-agility-training/ for additional resources.





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FOR AGILITY

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THE SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE COMPANY®

[WHY we do] We believe that improving peoples' understanding of themselves and others makes the world a better place.

[WHAT we do] We synthesize our discoveries into actionable learning and resources that improve an individual's performance in all parts of their lives. We call this Social Intelligence.

[HOW we do it] Through research and experience we uncover the hidden barriers to individuals achieving their maximum potential and identify how to help overcome them.

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