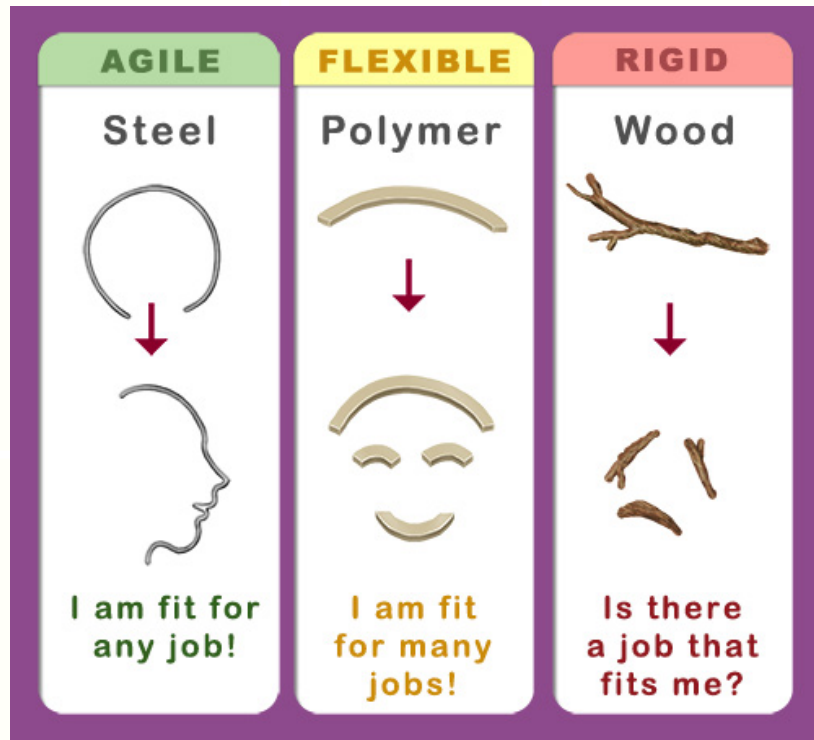


# AFR Learner Types

Learning in this Changing Evolving World



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*The Creative Fire within You*



*“The AFR Learner Types\*\* will define who will survive and thrive through the years 2020 to 2040.”  
- SRA*

**In** the article “Jobs in this Changing Evolving World,” we came to the conclusion that to remain employable, we must:

- Be prepared for changing times
- Learn to become a forever learner
- Keep yourself informed of the trends
- Learn to gain new competencies on the go
- Be mind-agile or become the Agile Learner

Observing the changes, projecting the trends, and then adapting to them by learning, unlearning, re-learning is what will determine the winners in the job-race of the future.

This automatically tells us a lot about how learning will and must change in the future, and we aren’t really talking about the youngsters but all those who are already in the workforce. Those who are going to be leaving the workforce in the coming decade are the only ones who needn’t bother.

And yet, this all appears to be very subjective. What does it mean to be prepared, or learning to be a forever learner? How does one decide what competencies are the right ones to acquire? What exactly is being “mind-

agile?” Even before we begin to answer these questions, we must find out what kind of learner we are, and the traditional VAK or Honey-Mumford Model or even the classic Kolb’s Cycle cannot help us answer this particular question, because here we are dealing with an entirely new paradigm.

I’d propose that we look at a new classification of learners to handle the future. I also call the AFR learners as the 20-40 learners for their relevance to the years 2020 to 2040.

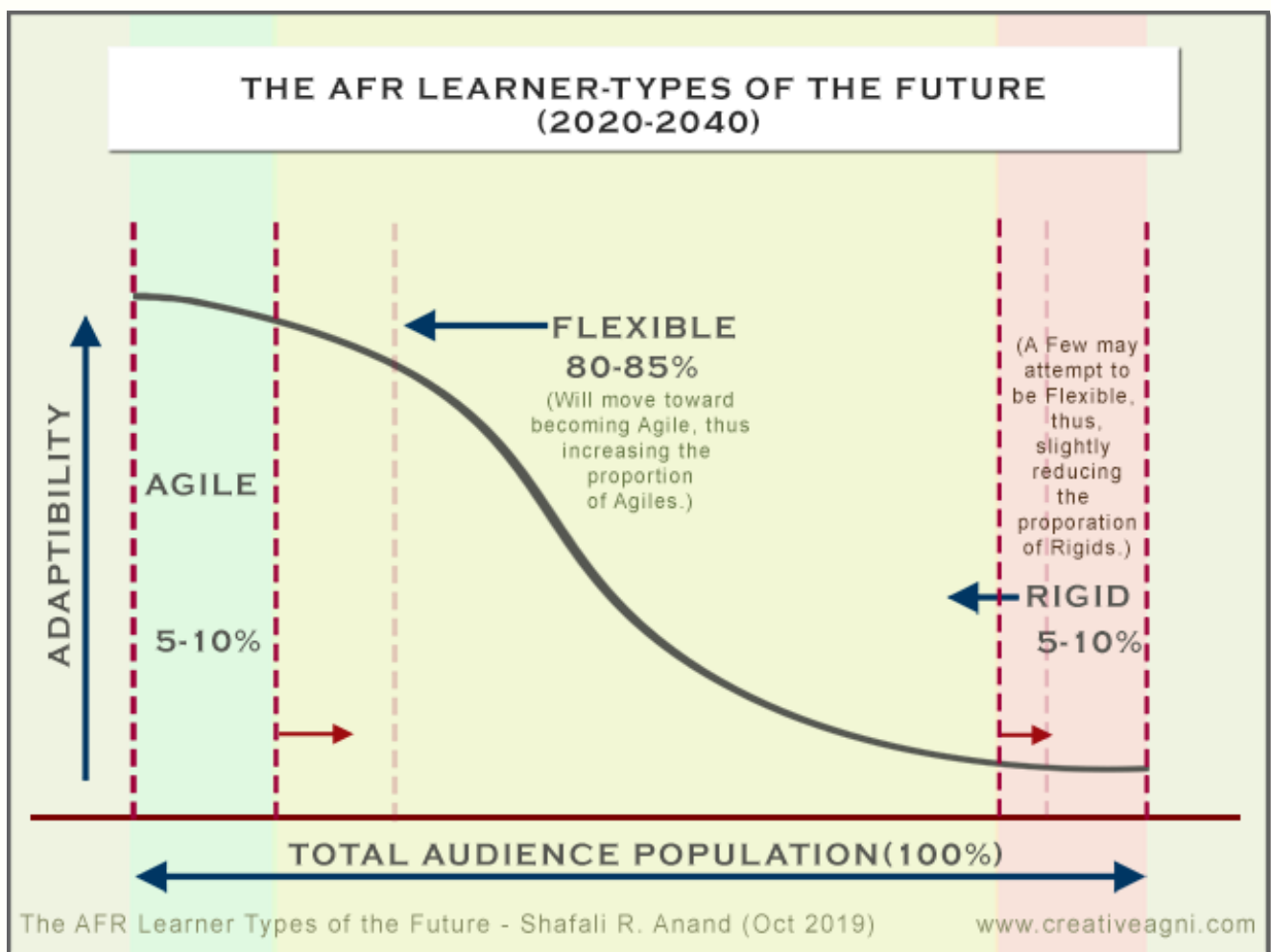
### **What Prompted me to Propose these three Learner Types?**

I should start with a bit of background:

I’ve been in adult learning for the last twenty years, and since 2004, I have been in continuous touch with learners between 25 and 55 years of age, for a period of about 2.5 months at a time, through my ID Certificate courses (which require the learners to shed their old learning methods & preferences and acquire new ones.) I’m a regular note-taker who learns from my own training experiences – and I’ve always been a keen observer of human behavior.

My personal experiences with hundreds of my course-participants each lasting 8-10 weeks, has led me to a simple classification of learners - The AFR Learners:

- **A** - The Agile Learner
- **F** - The Flexible Learner
- **R** - The Rigid Learner



### *The AFR Learner Types or Steel, Polymer, and Wood?*

To simplify matters, the Agile learners remind me of Steel; the Flexible learners, of Polymer; and the Rigid learners of Wood.

Here's another quick graphic to explain why, and then we'll talk about each of the three learner types in detail.

## THE AFR LEARNER-TYPES

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### THE CHANGING, EVOLVING FUTURE.

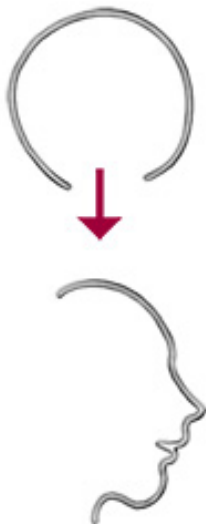
The AFR Learner-types have always existed, and yet, never before was this classification as important as it has become now. In the next decade, the Agile-Flexible-Rigid classification will become the backbone of recruitment and it would begin to matter more than a prospective employee's educational qualifications or even her existing skills.

*The AFR Learning Types are:*

1. The Agile Learners (Steel): Nimble, pliable, exceptionally strong.
2. The Flexible Learners (Polymer): Bend some, change some, strong.
3. The Rigid Learners (Wood): Unchangeable, breakable

#### AGILE

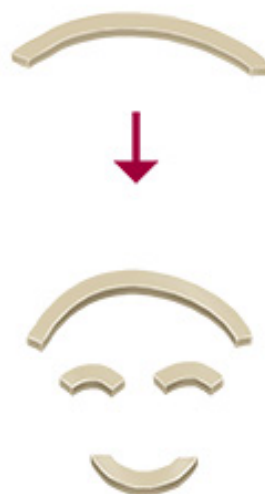
#### Steel



**I am fit for any job!**

#### FLEXIBLE

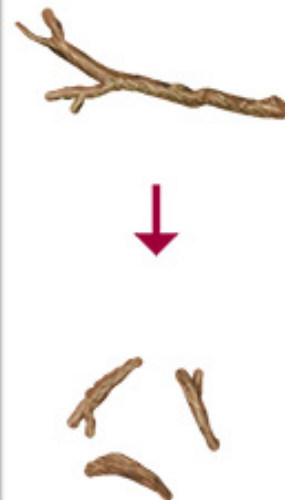
#### Polymer



**I am fit for many jobs!**

#### RIGID

#### Wood



**Is there a job that fits me?**



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## A. The **AGILE** Learner (*Steel*)

The Agile learners are quick on the uptake. They are keen observers of trends. They are also capable of viewing their own selves from a distance and know their own traits well. They select a learning experience after a careful consideration of what they want to achieve and which learning experience would take them to their destination. They start a learning experience prepared to change their existing cognitive and even affective schemas. The Agile Learners are willing to experiment, change, adapt – they are quick and nimble learners, who will do extremely well in the next few decades, when technology will chart out new job-maps.

(About a tenth of my course-participants fall in this category.)

### *These learners:*

- Love to Experiment
- Aren't self-righteous
- Are Curious
- Are not afraid of committing errors
- Are willing to challenge themselves
- Don't cling to older ways of doing things
- Are very high on Intra-personal Emotional Intelligence

*They'd be the pioneers or early adopters in any new kind of job.*

## B. The **FLEXIBLE** Learner (*Polymer*)

The Flexible learners usually need a little help. They discover a new learning paradigm through discussions with their friends, they take time to decide – but once they do, they

try to accept the new reality. They do their best to get into the game and even though a few changes are difficult for them to digest, they still make honest attempts. They will survive and as they gradually adjust to the volatility of the new job world, they would even thrive.

(About 80-85% of my course-participants belong to this category.)

### *These learners:*

- Are cautious
- Aren't self-righteous
- Are cautiously curious
- Are careful about committing errors
- Are willing to challenge themselves
- Are willing to give up a known comfortable way if given reason
- Are high on Emotional Intelligence

*They'd be the wave-riders in the jobs of the future.*

## C. The **RIGID** Learner (*Wood*)

Finally, the Rigid learners are those who find it difficult to accept changes. They don't like to change anything. They look at the changing world with disdain, and usually decide upon a learning experience because their environmental feedback told them to (going to a dozen interviews and realizing that they need a skill or they wouldn't get a new job, seeing someone junior get promotions because they added a new skill, and so on.) These learners, if they end up in a learning experience, refuse to do things in a different/new way. They believe their way is the best, and so they aren't able to excel in the new learning.

(Over the years, about 5-10% of my participants have come from this category.)

### *These learners:*

- Are apprehensive, even paranoid about new learning
- Are self-righteous and take offence easily
- Often confuse feedback with criticism
- Aren't very curious, more laidback
- Prefer proficiency over competency
- Believe that the old-ways of doing things is still the best
- Are unwilling even resistant to change
- Are low on Emotional Intelligence

*They'd be the fence-sitters of the future.*

## Conclusion

I've seen all the three kinds enough number of times, a couple of times in the same class.

If you want to rule the next decade, you must identify yourself and start changing now. None of us were made to do one job and one job only. We are humans. Creative, Adaptable,

**\*\**The AFR Learner Types*** is a classification proposed by Shafali R. Anand. This classification helps us prepare ourselves to better tackle the challenges of the changing, evolving world of the future. Read more about [Shafali R. Anand](#))

Changeable, Agile...and in being these, we create, adapt, change the world that we exist in.

### *The Silverlining*

Know Thyself (or more appropriately, Know Myself) is going to be the Learning Mantra of the Future.

The Rigid Learners with the courage and objectivity to self-identify themselves (You'll know whether you are one if you can see yourself from a distance and trace your own thoughts and behavior,) can work on their emotional intelligence as the first step toward moving into the Flexible Learner category.

The Flexible learners (the biggest group) can move into the Agile learner category by becoming more sensitive to change. It isn't that these learning styles exist as airtight containers with no movement between them. They don't. Instead, they allow us to understand our challenges and determine how we can push the boundaries left (refer to the graph in figure 1) and become more adaptable to change.



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