

Doing Agile Right

Transformation Without Chaos

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Agile – the business philosophy that relies on fast moving, self managing teams for innovation has officially entered the mainstream of corporate management.

The reason for agile's rapid spread are neither obscure nor surprising- most big companies find it difficult to innovate.

Most companies are weighed down by the structures and procedures of bureaucracy.

Agile liberates the innovative spirit that so many organizations stifle.

Agile dies when it is micro managed.

There are three challenges in organizations – 1. human organizations are complex systems, they work differently in different environments. 2. copying org charts , companies create new shiny departments and 3. Matrix management

When you look at structure and people in an agile way, think of talent gaps and agile career paths.

The roots of agile go back to Walter Shewhart and the bell labs in the 1930s. deming too that in 1938 and made it the PDCA – plan, do study act cycle.

How do agile teams work? To tackle an opportunity, the organization forms and empowers a small team, most of whom are assigned full time. The team is multidisciplinary and manages itself.

Agile teams are a combination of mindsets and methods.

Agile teams work with total transparency. Team members hold daily meetings to review progress and identify roadblocks.

Agile teams increase productivity and employee satisfaction.

Agile teams use sprints to get faster feedback from customers.

How does one scale agile? Either by having more teams or by making the enterprise agile.

A company that pursues agile at scale is likely to remain bureaucratic.

Flow efficiency defined as work time divided by work time plus wait time is never more than 20 to 25 % in a company.

The more agile teams a company launches , the more the friction between agile teams and the traditional bureaucracy.

An agile enterprise creates harmony between innovation and operations. Amazon is a good example.

Like the optimal heart rate for an athlete, there is an optimal level of change for every business.

Change deficiency is when an organization doesn't adapt, change excess is when an organization does too much and is in chaos.

Uber is an example of change deficiency.

**Employees learn by doing things themselves.
Employees are not children but leaders often
treat them the way helicopter parents treat their
kids.**

In an agile environment , leaders tell the team what to focus on, but don't get into the mundane detail.

Trust was a fundamental building block of McGregor Theory Y concept. It simply means the leader will not take unfair advantage of an employee, consciously or unconsciously.

Agile provides a way of building trust, of making people trustworthy over time.

Workplace trust is built by people collaborating productively.

An agile team assumes that the best judge of what the customer wants is the customer.

Members of a good agile leadership team create greatest value when they unleash the energy of many people in the organization.

The agile leadership team respects the complexities of navigating various systems.

The agile leadership team , in short is a strategy team guiding the entire organization.

Transitions in organizations are a perpetual movement process, not ones with a completion date.

Agile leaders take five actions:

- 1. They communicate and overcommunicate**
- 2. They build decision makers**
- 3. They strengthen lines of communication between teams**
- 4. They accelerate learning loops**
- 5. They shift measurement and rewards to larger teams, not individuals.**

**A good agile leadership team avoids
bureaucratic arguments**

Agile enterprises do four things differently:

- 1. They gather extensive customer/consumer input**
- 2. They provide guidance on how to do things**
- 3. They focus and sequence events to ensure there is not much multi tasking**
- 4. They visit the plan frequently.**

Agile by definition needs new skill and capabilities.

Leadership means more than leading a bunch of people. Agile leaders should be measured on how they contribute to an agile environment.

Agile enterprises emphasize coaching over the career path.

Agile companies simplify their job structure.

Companies can think of rewards at four levels – individuals, teams, teams of teams and enterprise. Senior managers typically are tied to enterprise rewards.

**Opportunities always align three components :
customer solutions to business processes to
technology**

Agile has spread fastest amongst technology innovators, especially software engineers.

Agile is good for software development because:

problems are complex

solutions are initially unknown

product requirements will most likely change

the work can be modularized

In software development the following matter:

architecture

excessive specialization

departmental silos

The rules of the agile world

- Learn to love agile teams and then create your own
- Work in ways that makes humans happy and successful
- Break large tasks into small steps and test solutions
- Welcome and celebrate learning
- Make it fun

A agile leadership manifesto

- Track progress through active personal engagement
- Stop talking and listen deeply
- Push decisions down to the right level
- Encourage everyone to contribute to discussion, at least invite them
- Seek diverse opinion
- Seek feedback regularly
- Regularly ask for assumptions
- Ask why not as opposed to why
- Focus on top priorities