

Agility and Resilience in an age of Complexity

The Pandemic has made it much more obvious that organizations need more resilience and as a result they must embrace the concepts of “Just in time” teams and associated agile strategic adjustments.

General Electric CEO Jack Welch eloquently described this new organizational model way back in 1990! “Our dream for the 1990s,” Welch wrote in GE’s 1990 annual report, “is a boundaryless company...where we knock down the walls that separate us from each other on the inside and from our key constituencies on the outside.”

So, if removing barriers and dismantling silos started in the 1990’s, what is happening to prevent this reality of being agile? Simply put – “Massive Complexity” and people operating with old legacy behaviors and models.

“The complexity of demands upon collective human systems [companies] have recently become larger than an individual human being [can manage]. Once this is true hierarchical mechanisms are no longer able to impose the necessary coordination of individual behaviors. Instead, interactions characteristic of networks are necessary.” (Yaneer Bar-Yam, Complexity Rising)

Executives (and those of us in IT) get caught in a trap. We think strategies, roadmaps and alignment of technology is all that is needed. That we then just hand to teams to digitally transform to our future! We all hope to find a road map, one that will show the clearest path through the complexity. We imagine this plan can be made solid and predictable. We get trapped and want to believe that the marketplace of today can be navigated like the marketplace of yesterday.

Proof that we cannot: Along came COVID and a global pandemic. Did we plan for this? Could we plan for this? The truth is that there is no road map for what’s coming, particularly a pandemic that literally ended companies’ existence.

Our response? Together we can compose a new workplace of the future. Technology leaders are corporate leaders and we have to PIVOT and use our agile and digital talents to drive ‘composability’. Like a JAZZ musician that has rules that allow them to adapt and change on the fly, how can we truly form teams that are composable and drive transformation?

So how do enterprises navigate and move intentionally across these disruptions? This presentation will look at both digital platforms and the emerging concepts around composability to educate the audience on techniques they can bring back to be more resilient and yes – even innovate in an age of volatility, unpredictability and complexity.