

For: Enterprise
Architecture
Professionals

Business Agility Starts With Your People

by Craig Le Clair, June 17, 2014

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Enterprises Need A View Of Business Agility -- Broader Than Bits And Bytes

The age of the customer changes the nature of value and competition. Enterprises must turn their business into digital businesses as quickly as possible. But digital is not just about technology -- for firms to be agile, they must address the people and organization dimensions.

Knowledge Economy Requires Excellence In Organizational Dimensions

The changing nature of work has enormous implications for how we structure organizations, manage people, and leverage emerging technologies. High performing organizations are already leveraging new ways of working. Together, digital psychology, knowledge dissemination, and change management drive the most significant difference in economic performance.

Create An Age-Of-The-Customer Culture Within Your Enterprise

Building a digital business needs a road map and specific business goals. Our research has found that creating a digital business is as much organizational as technical. Any road map is best to begin directing digital efforts toward internal employees to create a digital culture and improve internal information sharing and management.



Business Agility Starts With Your People

A Digital Business Requires An Organization Able To Sense And Execute On Change

by [Craig Le Clair](#)

with [Alex Cullen](#), Julian Keenan, and Abigail Komlenic

WHY READ THIS REPORT

Adaption to change is crucial. At today's rate of change, acute awareness and reaction are mandatory. We surveyed 300 global businesses to dig deep into how prepared, i.e., agile, they are for types of events and business changes that the digital age will bring. Organizational agility, characterized by high awareness and execution in knowledge dissemination, change management, and digital psychology agility dimensions, drive significant performance for enterprises. We highlight organizations that have made market, organizational, and process changes based on digital strategies to become more agile, more productive, and grow revenues.

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This report is based on ongoing research into what Forrester defines as 10 key dimensions that link company performance with business agility. Specific input to this report came from the Q3 2013 US Business Agility Online Survey.

Related Research Documents

[The 10 Dimensions Of Business Agility](#)
September 9, 2013

[The Building Blocks Of Agile Commerce](#)
May 16, 2013

[Use A Metrics Framework To Drive BPM Excellence](#)
September 21, 2012

[Craft Your Business Change Delivery Process For Sustainable Business Agility](#)
August 31, 2012

THE AGE OF THE CUSTOMER REQUIRES AGILE BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

In the age of manufacturing and distribution, to be disruptive you needed to open a factory. In the age of the customer you only need to open a laptop. The age of the customer changes the nature of value and competition. Enterprises must make their businesses digital businesses as quickly as possible.¹ Why? Because only a digital business, built on digital customer engagement and digital operational excellence, will have the awareness and ability to execute in order to acquire and retain customers ahead of its competition. Today, there is a lot of conversation about the why and how of transitioning your business to digital. Firms need to be digital in the bits and bytes sense for the simple reason that their customers already are, but digital transformation must address organizational and market requirements with a broader enterprise approach. Here's why:

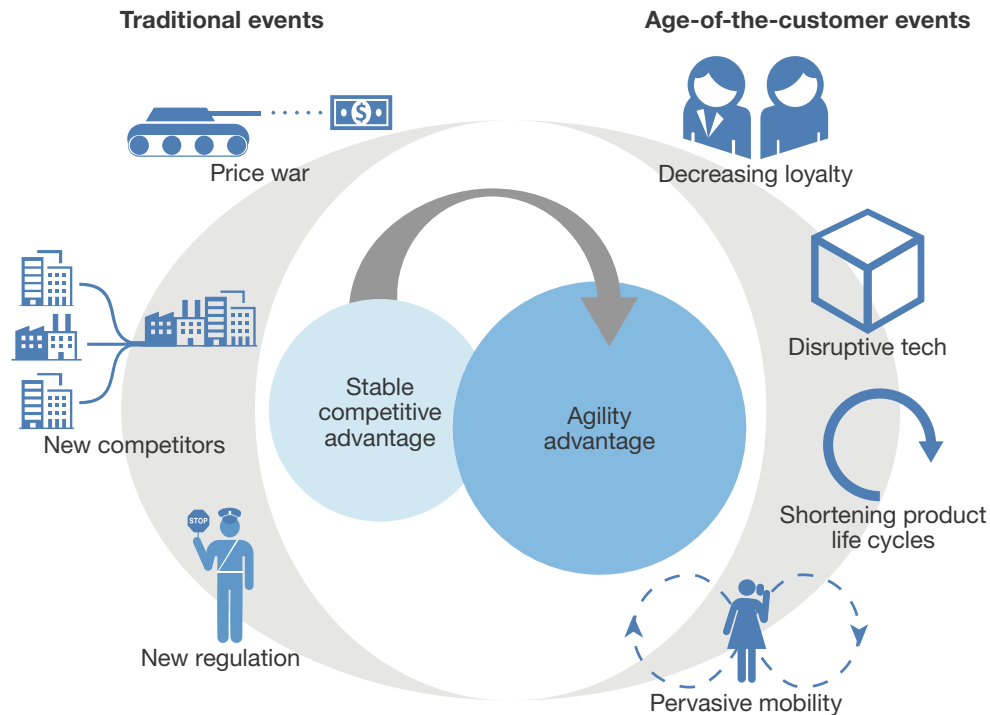
- **The global economy is becoming a knowledge economy.** We have progressed from the age of manufacturing, to a focus on distribution and supply chain, to the age of information, and now extending to the age of the customer.² In previous ages, tangible asset creation was the norm with performance, and competitive advantage was obtained with economies of scale, distribution reach, and brand dominance. Not so today. Knowledge and how employees apply knowledge is the new battleground.
- **Work is becoming knowledge work.** There are just far fewer production workers, i.e., those that perform repetitive tasks (like data entry) and respond to simple information requests. Relentless offshoring, automation, and customer self-service are slowly eliminating them. We hear numbers like this consistently —

“Today 70% of our inquiries are handled by self-service (IVR, web, or mobile) with only 30% that ever get to our call center. Unfortunately the number of agents we need has not decreased due to how complex these calls are.” (VP workforce planning, major telecommunications company)

What does this mean for enterprises? High performance will be achieved by supporting these workers with advanced information management.

- **Age-of-the-customer events now require a new form of business agility.** The primary difference between today's age of the customer and previous times is the type of events and their speed. The manufacturing age was subject to operational events, such as supply chain disruptions, cost pressures, macro shocks, and regulations. But these are being trumped by age-of-the-customer events, such as near instant shifts in customer tastes, new customer segments appearing out of nowhere, a flood of product innovation, and competitors' rapid mergers and acquisitions (M&A) events (see Figure 1). The age of the customer brings new forms of disruptive events that have given business agility a new meaning.

Figure 1 The Age Of The Customer Ushers In New, Digitally Based Events



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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Digitizing The Enterprise Should Start With The Organization

If you believe, as we do, that business agility is the crucial business perspective for digitizing your business in the age of the customer, then how must you change to become more agile? And where do you start? Business agility is a massively complex topic. There is no magic metric for agility that can be pulled from an enterprise data warehouse or performance management system. In one of our surveys, only 9% of companies said they measure any form of agility at the department or C-suite level.³ We define business agility as:

Business agility is the transition to a digital business that allows an enterprise to embrace market, organizational, and operational changes as a matter of routine.

By researching this question with CIOs and CMOs, we identified 10 dimensions of business agility (see Figure 2). Two concern market agility, i.e., responding to changes in customers. Five address process agility, which covers the traditional information technology elements of agility. Another three address organizational agility, or how people and culture can make an organization more agile. Taken together, these 10 dimensions span the qualities that make agile companies faster and more responsive to both customer and internal forces of change.

In each of these dimensions an agile company must both be aware that change is happening and *execute* on decisions to respond.

1. Awareness indicators apply to both external market forces, such as price wars or digital disruption, and internal process changes, such as new channel or security requirements.⁴
2. Execution indicators apply to the qualities that allow a company to move quickly on decisions to respond to change.

Combining awareness and execution agility, a company can become a formidable force in its industry.⁵ The result is rapid new product launches, revamped business processes, new business models and markets, and sustained performance. However, we found that in many dimensions, enterprises show strong awareness and yet execute poorly, becoming paralyzed. Conversely, dimensions with poor awareness and fast execution make for dangerously shortsighted strategic decisions. Fully agile companies must combine high awareness and effective execution (see Figure 3).

Figure 2 The 10 Dimensions That Define The Digital Business

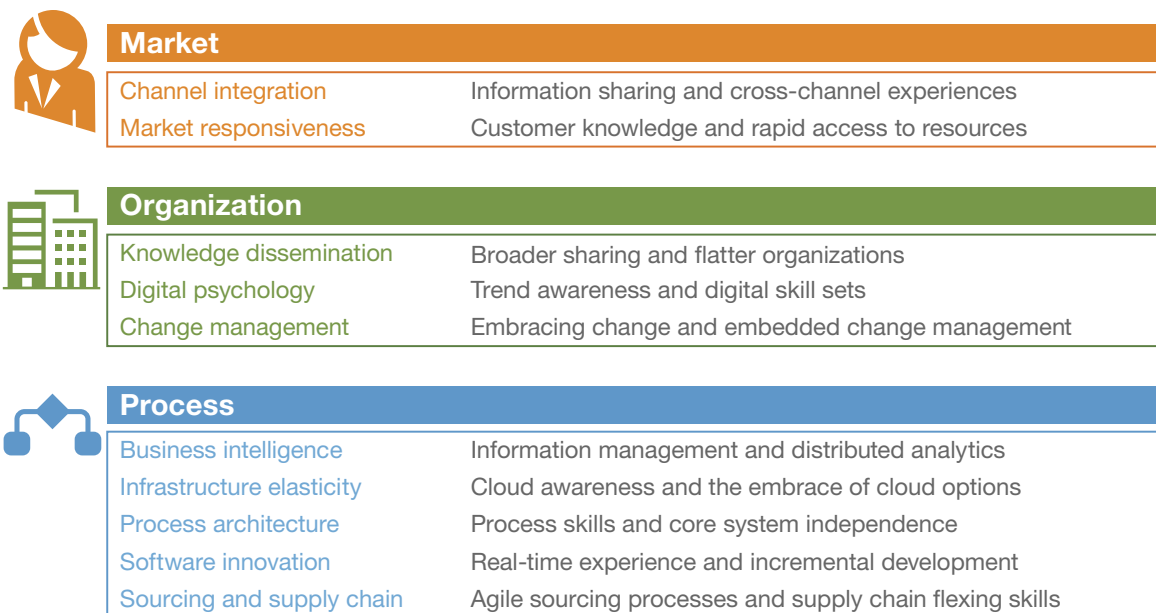
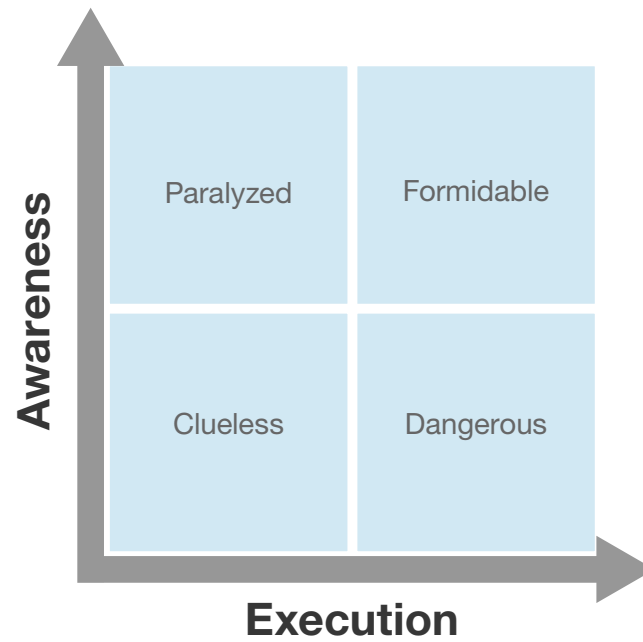


Figure 3 Agility Requires High Awareness And Execution



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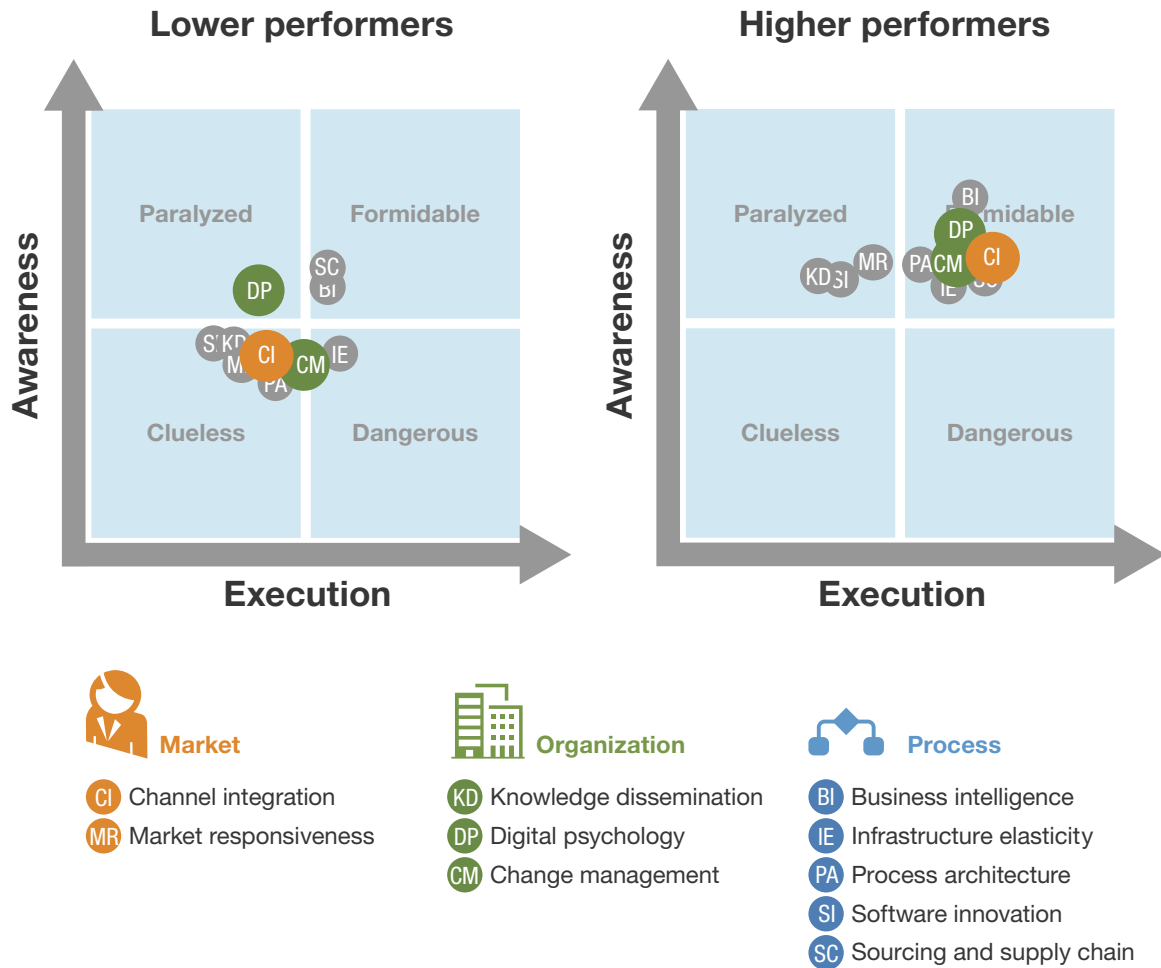
Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY REQUIRES EXCELLENCE IN ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSIONS

The changing nature of work has enormous implications for how we structure organizations, manage people, and leverage emerging technologies. High performing organizations are already leveraging new ways of working, and low performers are struggling to understand what the future means. We surveyed 300 global businesses to dig deep into how prepared they are for what the digital age will bring. What we found was clear: enterprises with better business agility outperformed their peers (see Figure 4). We separated high and low performing companies and looked at their agility scores across all 10 dimensions. We found that:

- **Agility requires addressing all 10 dimensions.** Firms have made progress on individual dimensions, but isolated progress does not add up to business agility. For example, a company's proficiency in analytics and supply chain, with modern process architectures, allows better insight, rapid changes, and quick deployment of new solutions. But to be an agile enterprise, it needs to work with market dimensions that provide customer insight and organizational dimensions that disseminate knowledge and create a digital culture.
- **Individually, organizational dimensions dominate performance.** Digital psychology, knowledge dissemination, and change management, when taken together, drove the most significant difference in economic performance among surveyed companies. High-performing companies allow knowledge dissemination to cut the legs out from old organizational models and digital psychology creates the go-forward approach required in digital culture. Change management is the overarching competence required to get your people on board for a change event.
- **Process dimensions matter, but are stronger in aggregate.** Higher performing companies showed more agility in software innovation and supply chain management. Yet, in isolation, no process dimension makes the economic contribution of channel integration or the organizational dimensions discussed below. At the same time, without strength in these dimensions, a company may find it hard to make changes in processes, systems, or business networks.
- **Infrastructure elasticity –an enabler of other dimensions.** Expertise in-cloud deployment had little correlation to performance, or a near-zero gap. In fact, on average enterprises with low awareness for infrastructure elasticity outperformed their peers.⁶ But infrastructure elasticity is an enabler for other dimensions that make your business more agile and, hence, a higher performer by eliminating barriers to scale to your business.

Figure 4 Those That Perform Well Are More Agile



Base: 310 US business and tech management leaders at the executive, director, or manager level

Note: The agility dimensions with the largest gaps between higher and lower performers are in color and enlarged. Dimensions with smaller gaps have been grayed out.
Source: Q3 2013 US Business Agility Online Survey

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Knowledge Dissemination Will Change Your Organization. Like It Or Not!

The customer experience in the age of the customer is the aggregate of daily decisions of thousands of employees. Are you giving them the knowledge and the power they need to create an experience that is easy, effective, and enjoyable? Our research says far too many enterprises do not. Awareness for knowledge dissemination, as measured by the ability to share information, is low for most enterprises. Few companies are formidable, combining strong information-sharing with flat organizational structures.⁷ And this is holding many otherwise great companies back. Our research found these flatter organizations make decisions more quickly and are organized around the customer rather than the old silos of process and technology. They tap the minds of employees, while wasting less time on turf battles.⁸ When researching knowledge dissemination across 300 enterprises, we found that:

- **Flatter organizations are inherently more agile.** Traditional hierarchical enterprise need to be rapidly converted into flatter, more nimble entities to cope with digital disruption. Yet, previous research found that confusion, due to lack of central coordination, and redundancy of effort sometimes resulted from highly decentralized organizations.⁹ Something was indeed missing in these “edge” or flat organizations of the past that is now here today. Efficient, low cost ways of moving and sharing information was the missing ingredient. Over the next three years, enterprises that combine advanced information sharing technology with flatter organizations will be highly effective, adaptable, and will outperform their peers.
- **The “loop” gets bigger with collaboration, file sharing, and enterprise social tools.** In most enterprises, meetings, emails, and traditional forms of communication are used to assert authority and maintain vertical hierarchies. Who gets included — and who does not — sends a signal about who’s “in the loop” and establishes status hierarchies. Emerging information-sharing tools serve to bypass institutional forms of social organization to directly empower people.
- **Traditional enterprises fear knowledge dissemination.** Knowledge dissemination has little regard for organizational boundaries, hierarchies, roles, plans or job titles. These boundaries lose authority as control of information — the former way of enforcing organizational culture — is diminished due to organically developed and disseminated knowledge. In traditional firms, the careers of those who have risen to the top are built on the principles of hierarchical bureaucracy. As a result, knowledge dissemination is feared in corporations because it threatens status hierarchies.
- **Knowledge dissemination is a liberating force for some enterprises.** 190 years is a long time to be in business. And for one US west coast insurance company most of that time was in one location. But times change. Recently, the insurance company opened an Omaha division to expand its annuity business, which requires working closely with distribution partners that sell these complex investment products. Knowledge dissemination has helped the insurance company sustain the required collegial and collaborative culture. How? It uses instant

messaging for employees to just drop in on remote colleagues and desk top video that puts a face to a conversation. In fact, all 50 employees have headsets, microphones, and webcams. According to the company's CIO:

“Without these tools they [employees] would feel disembodied. They would be more siloed. With the rapid dissemination of information they are apt to speak up two levels of management to act quickly. We could not meet agility needs without this collegial environment.” (Assistant VP at retirement services, major life and annuity insurer)

- **Organizational dimensions help eliminate aging and siloed operating models.** The organization structure, processes, and ways of working are now your firm's greatest enemies in addressing the age of the customer's agility challenges. A top priority of enterprises is revising these processes from the outside in and breaking down functional islands that inhibit information flow and create disjointed customer experiences.¹⁰ Executives cite organizational inertia and functional obstacles as the primary barriers to delivering on their digital strategies. Sixty-six percent of executives believe functional departments are too fixed in their ways and 68% believe the functional teams in their companies act as barriers to effective coordination.¹¹

Enterprises Outperform Peers With Digital Psychology

Business agility and digital innovation are second nature to enterprises with high awareness and execution for digital psychology. This means high awareness and enthusiasm for digital transformation combined with strong digital skill sets. Employees who understand and embrace digital trends are now an age-of-the-customer essential.¹² Those that establish a digital-first culture with digital psychology are already outperforming their peers — and they are just starting the journey (see Figure 5). We found that:

- **Digital psychology is paralyzed for most enterprises.** Execution capability lags significantly behind. While 74% of business executives say their company has a digital strategy, only 15% believe that their company has the skills and capabilities to execute on that strategy.¹³ In short, awareness for digital psychology is improving but execution lags significantly. This places most companies in our paralyzed quadrant. Failure to bring the right people into the organization, or to retain and develop them once they're there, is an obstacle that companies face.¹⁴ Executives see digital disruption coming but their businesses are not equipped.
- **Some companies fuel the digital-first mindset in their firms.** Education, training, and inspiring your employees with digital seminars, roadshows, and education programs work to enhance awareness for digital psychology (DP). Engage your HR teams early to help define how team goals, employee performance plans, and rewards need to change. For example, Nestlé has invested heavily in digital education of its executive communities in order to create networks of digital champions across its various regions and brands. Nestlé has made a clear

and thoughtful choice about how to change its organizational culture. Developing great digital leaders through its digital acceleration team program and then seeding them back into the organization has transformed Nestlé into a digital juggernaut.¹⁵

- **Others create a digital innovation culture.** You can boost your digital psychology awareness by encouraging employees to innovate with digital approaches. For example, 7-Eleven has instilled a “hackathon” mindset to get closer to consumers.¹⁶ One 7-Eleven employee showed executives the power of open data and the strength of an application programming interface (API) strategy when he created a 7-Eleven mobile app on his own and without permission, which showed positive daily business results. The executives became believers. They created the new business innovation team outside of the core, giving room to innovate, move fast, and learn about customers. The hackathon mindset came about from talking to a lot of people outside of headquarters’ four walls.

Figure 5 Organizational Dimensions — A Growing Gap Between High And Low Performers



Change Management Helps Business Agility Succeed

The affected stakeholders for a given event, despite stated desires to the contrary, (whether a new process, acquisition, or shift in customer taste), have a great fear of the impending change. There is a comfort and security with the known environment that inhibits learning about new realities and suppresses beliefs in the potential benefits. Change management is the antidote and we define it this way:

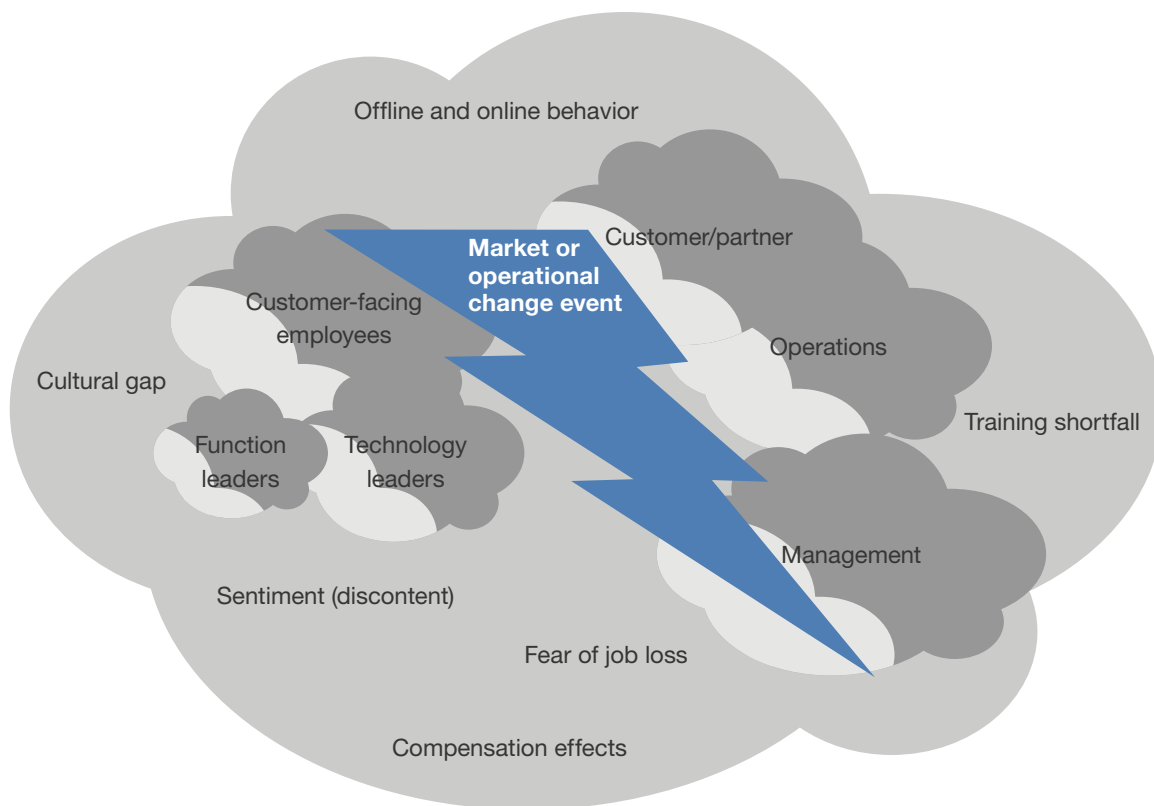
The process, tools, coordination, and planning to manage the people side of change through sentiment awareness and change-management skills that together achieve a required state of business agility.

Our awareness indicator is “the degree a company understands employee sentiment.” Execution is the extent content management skills and accountability are embedded in the business. This boils down to a simple idea: to understand the level of behavioral change required for an event and dealing with it. Here are strong practices we have observed in content management high performers. They:

- **Assess cultural adaptability and employee sentiment.** Cultural adaptability is a measure of the organization’s propensity for change. Not to generalize, but the group spear-heading a new E-commerce initiative may embrace change better than a set of experienced paralegals being encouraged to use a new web-based authoring tool for financial reporting.
- **Understand the true impact of the change.** There is no such thing as an isolated change, and yet enterprises approach employees in exactly this way. Change events comprise layers upon layers of tangled system interfaces and human processes. People are connected to the new reality on professional and personal bases. Much like layers of software, the human components of the change and their dynamics are infinitely more layered than what meets the eye (see Figure 6). The project team, responsible for implementing the change, will generally focus on only the technology and the system interface layers. The operational, management, maintenance, and human interface layers are often ignored.
- **Celebrate even small victories.** People who see progress build are more committed to following through on change. For example, the managing director of a major financial certification institute was automating a key function. It was a difficult change and the teams were working really hard. The director had identified a number of milestones and believed in celebrating when a group reached one. This not only recognized the team’s efforts but gave it the energy to continue because those workers could feel the progress. One important milestone meant that no more paper was needed. She asked the team to bring all the files, documents, and papers that it no longer needed. One-by-one people shredded their papers to the cheers of the group.

- **Project the true content management costs.** There is significant focus on the sticker prices of a new system to meet a market change or acquisition, often the basis of a return-on-investment (ROI) calculation. Content management costs are often understated and fall into three categories: 1) the expense involved for the company to determine what to do e.g., the internal costs designing the new process; 2) the costs associated with managing the human dynamics surrounding the new system; and 3) the lost productivity that occurs when attention and resources are shifted to deal with the change event.

Figure 6 Change Events Send Tremors Through Departments and Functions



RECOMMENDATIONS

CREATE AN AGE-OF-THE-CUSTOMER CULTURE WITHIN YOUR ENTERPRISE

Building a digital business needs a road map and specific business goals. We can help. Our research has found that creating a digital business is as much organizational as technical.¹⁷ Any road map is best to begin directing digital efforts toward internal employees in order to create a digital culture and improve internal information sharing and management. In particular:

- **Determine where digital best applies.** Create a business agility road map. Where should your enterprise invest to apply digital transformation? Just for processes that interact with enterprise resource planning (ERP) or customer relationship management (CRM) processes, digitizing transactional processes buried inside the company? Or perhaps programs to create a digital culture with employees and promote information exchange?
 - **Flatten and decentralize, then invest in knowledge dissemination.** The age of the customer requires enterprises to make decisions lower in the organization, supported by advanced awareness and execution capabilities, across 10 dimensions. Customers are now highly informed and can act quickly. Your employees must do so as well. Investment in internal social and collaboration tools and culture allow this flattening to be efficient.
 - **Grant employees the freedom of choice over projects.** Develop a strategy that works for your enterprise to promote innovation. For example, let employees gravitate to tasks, projects, and processes that they are excited about. The morale boost alone will pay huge dividends.
 - **Allow age-of-the-customer pressures to flow through the internal organizational.** The enterprise that best matches to the external age-of-the-customer environment will be best prepared. This means doubling down on organizational dimensions, ramping up all things digital. Drive competence in market responsiveness. Directly link employees to the external world to enhance market awareness.
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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Business leaders don't think of digital as central to their business because in the past, it hasn't been. But now your customers, your products, your business operations, and your competitors are fundamentally digital. A piecemeal strategy of bolting on digital channels or methods is no longer sufficient. Instead, you must think of your company as part of a dynamic ecosystem of value that connects digital resources inside and outside the company as needed to compete. You must harness digital technologies, both to deliver a superior customer experience and to drive the agility and operational efficiency you need to stay competitive. For more information, see the March 10, 2014, "[The Future Of Business Is Digital](#)" report.
- ² Empowered customers are disrupting every industry, and CIOs need to understand how technology management must adapt in this rapidly evolving world. This report outlines how the age of the customer will place harsh and unfamiliar demands on institutions, necessitating changes in how they develop, market, sell, and deliver products and services. CIOs and their teams will be called on to support these changes, widening their agendas beyond IT (infrastructure) to include business technology (BT), i.e., the technology, systems, and processes to win, serve, and retain customers. For more information, see the October 10, 2013, "[Technology Management In The Age Of The Customer](#)" report.
- ³ Forrester surveyed 739 executives, in conjunction with IQPC in Q3 2012. For specific linkage statistics for operational key performance indicators (KPIs) and the C-suite, see the September 21, 2012, "[Use A Metrics Framework To Drive BPM Excellence](#)" report.
- ⁴ Forrester divides agility events into customer and operational. Customer events include shortening product life cycle, decreasing loyalty, decreasing delivery time, increasing on line, channels, and response times, increasing personalization, and supporting new digital technologies. Operational events include regulation and compliance, new security requirements, price pressure (war) changing product requirements, digitization of relevant documents, digital disruption (business model), internal costs, and internal M&A.
- ⁵ Even when you break things down this way, into 10 dimensions of awareness and execution, it's still challenging to measure the full breadth of agility. But while agility itself is not easily measurable, there are measurable properties that are usually associated with agility. These include corporate attributes like wide access to customer knowledge, flatter organizations, and applications that run in the cloud. Our epiphany was that while the abstract quality of agility was tough to benchmark, we could measure indicators, or hallmarks, of agility to evaluate how agile an organization was. These indicators are much more easily identified — they include things like business intelligence available throughout the enterprise or agile sourcing processes.
- ⁶ Cloud doesn't matter. For more information on why competence in cloud deployment does not drive economic performance, see the following blog. Source: Craig Le Clair, "Sorry — But Cloud Really Doesn't Matter", Craig Le Clair's Blog, January 4, 2014 (http://blogs.forrester.com/craig_le_clair/14-01-04-sorry_but_cloud_really_doesnt_matter).
- ⁷ Specific measurement and definition of knowledge dissemination is the extent of investment in social and collaboration tools and how flat/hierarchical the organization's leadership models are.

- ⁸ Business leaders will throw out old organizational models as they aim to become agile, organizing around the customer life cycle rather than the old silos of process and technology. Small, lean centers of excellence will support business-savvy digital consultants embedded in the business to support digital expertise as it grows across the firm. For more information, see the March 26, 2014, “[Build An Agile Organization](#)” report.
- ⁹ For more information, read various papers of “Edge Organizations.” These were largely academic studies that found flatter organizations able to execute more rapidly but also subject to inefficiencies. Source: Anthony Alston, “implementing Edge Organizations: Exploiting Complexity”, The Command and Control Research Program, (http://www.dodccrp.org/events/10th_ICCRTS/CD/papers/107.pdf).
- ¹⁰ Capability mapping and target operating models are used to redesign these aging processes. For a review of these approaches and justification from this reform, please see the February 21, 2013, “[Develop The Implementation Road Map For BPM Excellence](#)” report.
- ¹¹ For more information, see the March 26, 2014, “[The Digital Business Imperative](#)” report.
- ¹² Many IT organizations we speak with still focus on traditional back-end systems (e.g., ERP, CRM). But the world of digital customer experience places a premium on new technology and techniques, and many IT and AD&D groups lack these skill sets, especially in mobile, analytics, HTML5, real-time metrics, and content optimization. For more information, see the March 20, 2014, “[Five Lessons For Achieving Successful Digital Customer Experience Technology Results](#)” report.
- ¹³ For more information about the Forrester/Russell Reynolds 2014 Digital Business Online Survey, see the October 31, 2013, “[The Chief Digital Officer: Fad Or Future?](#)” report.
- ¹⁴ In June of 2012, Forrester Global Digital Disruption Assessment Survey was fielded to 285 global executives and found that 65% of executives felt their employees were excited about changes that digital could bring to the company. However only 38% of executives felt they had the necessary digital skills. Executives recognize that digital disruption provides a chance to use digital tools and experiences to differentiate. In fact, 87% of respondents see this opportunity for their firm. Unfortunately, 56% say that it will be competitors outside of their industry that have an easier time using digital to gain a competitive advantage. For more detail, please see the March 5, 2013, “[Assess Your Digital Disruption Readiness Now](#)” report.
- ¹⁵ Nestlé is accelerating marketing innovation and overall cultural change through the Nestlé Digital Acceleration Team (DAT) in Vevey, Switzerland. The program foundation is built on four core pillars — listening, engaging, inspiring, and transforming. During the eight-month program, up to 12 participants engage in hands-on community management, brand engagement strategy projects, and intense training on the three core pillars. The goal of the program is to educate, inspire, and develop digital leaders who will go back to the brand and regional teams and drive change. With more than 300,000 employees to inspire, this corporate-driven approach has gained the necessary senior leadership support and the ability to create a groundswell throughout the global organization. For more information, see the May 14, 2013, “[Culture Is Key To Marketing Innovation Velocity](#)” report.

- ¹⁶ Changing culture is difficult but some companies are working hard at it. This is critical as traditional marketing tools, channels, strategies, and tactics are becoming less effective in the age we live in now — that of the perpetually connected customer, the shift from the funnel to the consumer life cycle, and the impact of digital disruption that dramatically changes the marketing landscape. To see how 7-Eleven is changing culture, see the May 14, 2013, “[Culture Is Key To Marketing Innovation Velocity](#)” report.
- ¹⁷ To understand the transformational strategy for your organization and review what other companies are doing in this research, see the October 31, 2013, “[The Chief Digital Officer: Fad Or Future?](#)” report.

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