# AGILITY: THE NEW STABILITY IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

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*Abstract--*

*If vision is the foundation of why a company exists then agile organization has a vision that infers the necessity of adaptability and disciplined execution of the vision. The company’s culture that supports this kind of vision fosters innovation, speed, resiliency, team collaboration and efficiency within the organization*. *Every company today is investing in transforming itself into an agile organization dealing with uncertainties of external environment and those with a stable structure, are the ones that hold the key to agility, deal with speed better, resulting in both stability and growth in the long run.*

*Keywords— vision, agile, innovation, team collaboration, uncertainties, growth.*

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INTRODUCTION

Agility as a form of stability can leverage business into exciting new possibilities, responding to complex social issues in an authentic way in the long run. Adaptability and agility is not the kind where one is being forcedto change but it is a strategic choice where one choosesto adapt or change proactively on their own. An organization’s culture should be characterized by stability that has the characteristics to counterbalance the desire for innovation, result-oriented and goal-directed behaviour while remaining a progressive organization. Companies with both speed and stability have seventy percent chances of being healthy. Organization which focus only on stability or agility are the ones in which the counterbalance is missing since stability can only be created by creating a professional image at workplace.

SO WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

A professional image describes the way a person conducts themselves at work, the attitude they possess at workplace and how others perceive them. People often strive for a professional image that aligns with the expectation of their particular workplace, helping them influence decision making process by forming important business connections to communicate these decisions more effectively.

COMPONENTS OF A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

Understanding the components and their role in creating a professional image can help making assessment about how to present at workplace. An individual’s professional image includes four components-

* *Communication style*—The conversation habits and the language an individual chooses are both a part of the professional image. This includes how an individual speaks about himself, his work, about others, tone and words used at workplace.
* *Behaviour and attitude*—The individual mindset towards work can have a positive or negative impact on productivity and others can often sense the attitude based on behaviour. Taking initiative, addressing responsibility and encouraging others are all behaviour that reflects a positive professional attitude.
* *Nonverbal communication* –This may include body posture, eye contact and hand gestures, all of which can convey the thoughts and emotions in ways an individual may not be conscious, but which still affect how others perceive them.
* *Attire and grooming*—An individual’s dressing sense and style for professional gathering impacts the professional image. Demonstrating attention to the appearance reflects confidence and gives an impression that they understand their social role at workplace.

HOW TO CREATE A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE AT WORKPLACE

Eshtablishing a strong professional image helps maintain positive workplace relationship so one should learn to understand how to create this positive image--

* *Being mindful of first impression--*People form first impression quickly, and these impressions can impact scenarios like job interview and meeting with new clients. So individuals should be mindful of their appearances to project a positive professional image.
* *Assess your communication style-*Depending on your comfort leveluse a clear speech pattern to convey the purpose of communication by sharing accurate information, maintaining eye contact, while practicing active listening during conversation.
* *Consider what your clothes reflect about you*--If possible keep your attire neat, reduce the number of wrinkles in the clothing and dress within your means. It can increase your confidence level, which may help perform job responsibilities successfully.
* *Use social media thoughtfully*—Because of social media’s increased presence, it is important to be mindful of the version presented online. Your posts should match your professional image you’re cultivating at work. By being consistent about the image one can avoid any potential missteps about how others perceive your attitude and behaviour.
* *Increase your time management skills*—While attending meetings and presentations always remain punctual and arrive on time. It conveys a strong sense of professionalism, and often shows respect for work.
* *Find a mentor---* Find a colleague or supervisor who can make you learn how to navigate and maintain professional relationship, which is an important component of the professional image.
* *Remain positive*—Approach new situations optimistically with a warm and confident attitude.
* *Be accountable*—Assume responsibility for your actions, improve your conduct, inspire others to show the same aspect in their own professional perspective.
* *Strengthen your emotional intelligence*—Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive the moods of others and alter your behaviour accordingly. To enhance your professional image is to understand the priorities and motivation of others.
* *Attend networking events*—Attend networking event like workshop or seminar to develop industry connections in order to maintain positive image.

CAN AGILITY AND STABILITY GO HAND IN HAND

Stability and agility complement each other. Without stability, a consistent and steadfast approach would fail and without agility stagnation can occur. Speed of delivery and system stability, are not an either or situation and elite performers deliver frequently, maintain high quality at low cost to result in fewer bugs.

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So what is an agile organization? A true agile organization represents a delicate balance between flexibility and stability, and a capacity not only to react to the demands of an ever-changing market, but also a desire to constantly rethink, reinvigorate, and reinvent the approach to business. The adoption of agile processes (ranging from quick adaptation to market changes to increased flexibility in dealing with customer demands) has quite rightly come to be regarded as an essential aspect of effective organizational functioning. One can unlock the organization’s adaptive potential by championing a culture of organizational agility.

The benefits associated with adopting an agile approach are undoubtedly appealing, ranging from increased product quality and customer satisfaction, to improved financial performance and team morale. For these benefits to be fully realized, one must exercise caution and ensure that all the efforts are not directed towards the implementation of process believed to enhance speed and efficiency.

Instead, one must demonstrate an aptitude for organizational agility, by creating a culture which provides a central focus on the continued satisfaction of 3Cs-change, contribution, continual readiness as core capabilities.

**C1 (Change):** The agile organization should be able to facilitate change in at least one of four ways: by facilitating the creation of change; by pre-empting change if it is created elsewhere; by responding proactively to change after it has occurred; and by continually learning from change in order to positively inform future creation, pro action, and reaction. For change to be successful, organization should engage in continuous and real-time evaluation.

**C2 (Contribution):** The agile organization appreciates that all key business processes should positively contribute to: perceived economy through actively adopting more cost-effective tools and techniques; perceived simplicity by adopting more simplistic tools and techniques and perceived quality through continual monitoring of these newly adopted tools and techniques.

**C3 (Continual readiness):** An agile organization should be continually ready for implementing new processes without incurring any unnecessary costs or delay. This requires continuous scanning of the market for emerging trends, ensuring continued alignment between the change and contribution related processes which have been introduced.

### EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE AGILE LEADER: FROM STABILITY TO FLUIDITY

For successfull maximization of the 3Cs capabilities, agility requires fluidity especially for those, in position of leadership must work to reduce the inevitable sources of friction which have the potential to slow down or even halt the progress of agile practices. Some of the key challenges likely to be encountered when introducing the agility agenda and the solution which can be deployed to overcome them are mentioned below--

**Challenge 1:**

**Organizational gravity**--When attempting to instigate transformative agile process, many employees may quickly gravitate back to old ways of working, especially if they do not witness quick results.

**Solution**-Leaders must ensure that their working teams fully appreciate that agility is reliant on willingness to embrace change. There should be a clear alignment between existing professional roles and newly introduced process to ease the agile transition

**Challenge 2:**

**Misalignment between process and culture**--Agility based practices fail to make an impact due to misalignment between process and culture. There may be a temptation to change the process rather than address the underlying cultural aspect.

**Solution**--Leaders must appreciate that organizational agility requires a delicate balance between stability and dynamism. From a stability perspective, leaders must ensure their organization remains true to its core vision and values, promotes standardized ways of working and champions continued cohesion. Leaders must promote a proactive culture, to equip employees effectively,sense and seize on emerging opportunities while adapting to changing customer demands, functioning across organizational boundaries so they can lend their support and expertise to emerging agile projects.

**Challenge 3:**

 **Lack of urgency**-- Agility requires swift and proactive action.

**Solution**--Leaders must create a sense of urgency by ensuring agility-based transformation as a top strategic priority and not an optional short-term initiative. While highlighting the benefits associated with adoption of agility, it is crucial that top executives must appreciate that once introduced agile processes are the central component of the company’s key to long-term success. Agility actually creates opportunities for the business in the form of increasing employment rates while practicing new leadership styles

**AGILITY AND LIVING IN THE TENSION**

An organization’s aptitude towards agility depends on the combination of speed to actionable decisions and structural stability. These two factors seem to be diametrically opposite to each other but work together in alignment to keep the company from becoming too rigid or erratic. The speed of decision making facilitates the company to adjust to a constantly changing landscape. With support of an appropriate level of structural stability the firm easily focuses on executing results in the short term while meeting long term goals. Those companies that can create a balance and walk the tight rope between flexibility and efficiency of process reap the benefits of agility, capturing opportunities that other companies see only in hindsight. This tension starts unfolding as companies grow from smaller, entrepreneurial outfits into larger, complex system. Bureaucratic system and stifling to the firm’s ability to adjust, hinders the speed of progress as the firm grows from a small company where fewer individuals make decisions compared to a large company. Consequently, the organizational stability that was already below average prevents it from adapting quickly to this new transformational process.

**FACTORS OF AN AGILE ORGANIZATION**

Highly agile companies follow a combination of certain critical factors that provide support for timely decision making--

* ***It begins with agile leaders*-** The culture of agility percolates from the top management who inculcates innovation throughout the organization integrating the company’s vision, mission and key decisions and consistently communicates it to all levels, encouraging the ability of risk taking by the executives. These agile leaders inspire and empower their organization, approaching challenges differently based on lessons learned, look for opportunities to capitalize on external ideas, have flexibility to respond to changes, embolden employees to bring ideas to the forefront of the organization. These culturally agile leaders keep the organization moving constantly preventing them getting paralyzed by too much uncertainty from the external environment.
* *Delegation and empowerment* should be embedded in the organization. Agility as a cultural norm means that individuals have the ability to be fast and make adjustment without giving away the business in case of any failures.
* ***The culture* drives individual’s attention to process and system.** An organization can avoid making erratic decisions by creating clear structure, establishing boundaries to provide long-term stability.
* *Communicating clearly identified roles and expectations,* for maintaining high performance level, objective-based meeting, cross-functional collaboration and continuous improvement protocols to employees as implementing these systems and processes can produce highly viable results.
* ***Pursue talent diversity* actively.** Within agile organization, diversity of skills and abilities encourages a variety of thought that brings a wide-ranging perspective of employees on where to play and how to win. This encourages healthy competition internally by challenging individuals to innovate and solve problems from a different viewpoint. It might vary depending on the company or an individual’s level of curiosity and tenacity which would make them compatible for an environment that encourages quick learning and response.
* The key in making quick decisions is responsiveness, so the yearly performance review is insufficient to meet these needs. It’s important that leaders of high-performing agile companies should focus on *performance improvement and providing continuous feedback*. This requires frequent feedback to exploit the opportunities to grow and develop thinking of the people.
* Planning and execution occur in nearly every company in the industry, but operational discipline truly differentiates an agile organization from the rigid ones.One of the factors that sets an agile organization apart is its ability to act and respond to changing conditions since v***ision without flawless execution is delusional.***
* Finally, corporate agility practices includes everything from *increased sensitivities* *and decisions* when responding to market trends and thinking strategically, guided by company values and processes that allow for decision-making by employees at all levels.

**CONCLUSION**

For incorporating agile practices, strategic thinking leaders who can cultivate mental flexibility and systems thinking are required. These leaders actively recognize the results of top performers and continuously point out the correlation between exceptional outcomes and the ability to adapt and deliver the desired outcome. An agile culture is created and reinforced on daily basis by these leaders mindfulness with its impact on performance, employee empowerment and accountability, customer and employee satisfaction and better operational efficiency. The idea of organizational agility is very enticing as it takes deep conviction, strong initiative and unwavering tenacity to first envision its impact and then translate and reinforce the behaviour required throughout the organization. Leaders need to establish a clear vision and direction for the business for building an agile organization, understanding the need for openness to new ideas and fanatical attention to efficient system and processes. These leaders set performance metrics for agile performance empowering individuals through effective delegation, reducing organizational layers that slow down decision-making and managing outcomes with clear expectations to achieve those outcomes.

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