

NTT Data

# How to make Business Agility a reality

素晴らしいガイド



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## Introduction

Organisations that are focused, resilient, responsive, adaptable, versatile and able to sustainably innovate are successful. Taken together, these traits are known as 'Business Agility'. The benefits are significant, including a 70% greater likelihood of being in the top quartile of organisational health, the best indicator of long-term performance<sup>1</sup>. Despite this, business journals are littered with failures, such as Tom Tom, which lost most of its stock value overnight as Google released free Android software doing the same thing<sup>2</sup>.

At NTT DATA, we know it doesn't have to be this way. This paper assesses the underlying challenges and describes our Business Agility framework to help clients thrive in the years to come.

# How Business Agility actually works - and its benefits

Business Agility empowers organisations to balance speed and stability to exploit change rapidly, whilst maintaining core activities. This means:

- The ability to **build the right things** by being able to identify products and services that customers want and which will generate the right return on investment for the company
- Having the capabilities to **build things right** (in the right way) through operational discipline, smart technology, incremental building and rapid learning cycles
- **Building the products and services at the right speed** to deliver value in time, to both the customers and company ownership. This is achieved by focusing effort and resources on fewer priorities, and using adaptive ways of working.

Organisations that do all these things successfully also exhibit another overarching characteristic, which is the driving force behind Business Agility - a supportive culture driven by a committed leadership team and vision that inspires them to continually challenge the status quo and to look for better ways of doing things.

Building and maintaining good levels of Business Agility is certainly something worth striving for, as it represents a sustainable competitive advantage. Recent research covering 237 companies across 23 industries found that organisations with higher levels of Business Agility achieved greater internal and external business benefits<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 1).

And the benefits increase further where Business Agility is a clear part of the business strategy. Strategic adopters are 71% more likely to grow profitably than non-adopters<sup>4</sup>.

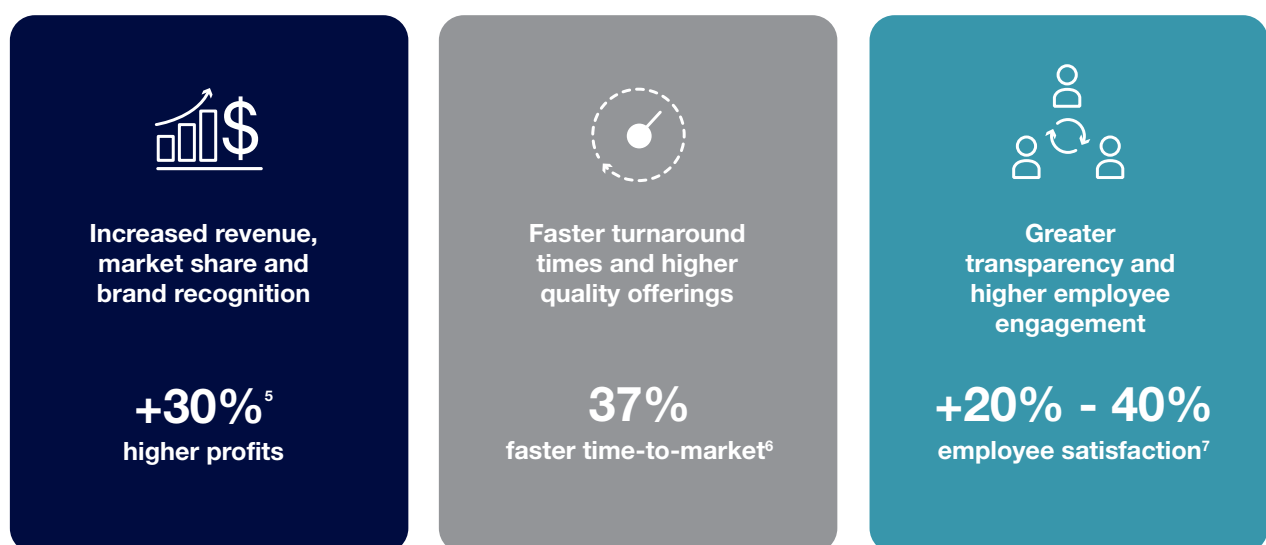


Figure 1: Main business benefits achieved by organisations with higher levels of Business Agility.

# Common 21st century business challenges that hold organisations back

Whilst leaders often recognise the need to achieve greater levels of Business Agility, many large organisations have difficulties evolving. The most famous illustration of this situation is the number of listed companies that were thought invincible that have faded away. In 2017, only 28 of the original FTSE 100 remained listed on the index (1984-2017)<sup>8</sup>.

As companies mature and grow, they become more complex, with management adding hierarchy, structure and processes to enable stability and mitigate risks. Yet, over time it becomes easy to rely on processes rather than results. This is what Jeff Bezos refers to as Day 1 (outcome is dominant) versus Day 2 (servicing the process becomes dominant)<sup>9</sup>. When pushed in Day 2, the result, for many, is a significant loss of Business Agility, which typically manifests in six business challenges which can prove terminal if they go unanswered.

## Challenge 1:

### Escaping inertia in the face of external change

Businesses become slower at sensing and reacting to disruption because short-term thinking drives existing business models. Leaders know strategic thinking and establishing a clear vision is important, but in reality the majority of their effort is focused on day-to-day challenges (see Figure 2). This is what we call the cycle of short-term bias.

One reason is that, as businesses grow, leaders become more focused on risk management and on immediate return on investment. As a result, they can become more distanced from innovation and nascent business opportunities, consequently investing 3.5 times less in their future than forward thinking companies<sup>10</sup>.

Leaders know strategy is important



of leaders say that being strategic is the leadership behavior most important to their organisation's success



BUT they don't make the time for it



of leaders said they lacked the time for strategic thinking

Figure 2: What leaders think about the importance of strategy<sup>12</sup>.

Some organisations also enter a stage of denial, especially when successful. They become complacent about their long-term fitness, the impact of threats from new entrants and overestimate their ability to adapt at pace. This was a problem at Blockbuster, which had been the leader of the video rental market for years and turned down a partnership with Netflix on the premise that online movie rental was "niche" in comparison to shop rental. Ten years later it filed for bankruptcy, whilst Netflix has since become the global market leader in Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD)<sup>11</sup>.

## Challenge 2:

### Achieving the orchestration necessary to change successfully

When companies recognise change is inevitable there can be a tendency to go all in without first communicating a unified and compelling vision. This is the fundamental building block to creating organisation wide ownership of and commitment to change<sup>13</sup>.

A recent survey found that the lack of a meaningful change story is the number one reason why most conventional transformations fail to exceed or achieve their targets (see Figure 3)<sup>14</sup>. The story may have been defined but not communicated. The story may not resonate with all stakeholders e.g. focuses on financial incomes and forgets about user experience. Or there may be no formal story at all.

This leads to confusion among employees, which exacerbates a disconnect between strategy and execution that already exists<sup>15</sup>. How can the people tasked with making the change happen implement it effectively if they do not understand the end goal?

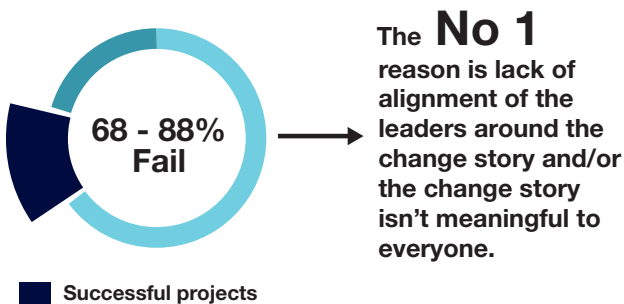


Figure 3: Most transformation programmes fail to exceed or achieve their targets.

## Challenge 3:

### Harnessing motivation for the journey, not just the destination

Leaders initiating a transformation journey without a unified coalition of people championing the change miss out on the driving force that is their own people. Even within cohorts of new employees specifically brought into companies, there is a sharp decline in morale after six months in 85% of organisations and this deterioration continues over time<sup>16</sup>.

Intrinsic motivators		Job you love
<b>Autonomy</b>	No micro-management Manage my own time	Feel in control
<b>Mastery</b>	The right competencies The right support	Feel like using full potential and growing
<b>Purpose</b>	Clear goal Working towards something worthwhile	Feel like work matters and makes an impact

Figure 4: How people feel about their job when why are intrinsically motivated.

Experiments have shown that intrinsic motivators (factors that originate within the individual) such as Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose (see figure 4), drive higher results than the traditional extrinsic motivators such as money and grades, especially in the context of complex change<sup>17</sup>.

Individuals want to feel that what they do serves something meaningful beyond them. As a result, intrinsically motivated employees are 32% more committed - they perform 16% better<sup>18</sup>, and their businesses record 21% higher profitability<sup>19</sup>.

## Challenge 4:

### Minimising the impact of naturally occurring resistance

Change can be scary and hard work, and as human beings, we instinctively try to avoid it. This is not surprising, as it forces us to go through uncomfortable emotional stages before we learn to accept it.

Initially, the majority of us experience shock and denial. Then we get angry. We try to bargain to get out of the situation. And when we see there is no way out, we start feeling low and helpless, grieving for what we're leaving behind. This lasts until we start experimenting with the new system or process

and start feeling more optimistic about it, and finally accept and embrace it.

This is why intrinsic motivators represent a critical lever in the adoption of change. To stimulate their employees, leaders need to support them adequately at each stage of the change, from compelling vision, to clear on-going communications, measurements and feedback loops. If they fail to do so, this increases, deepens and lengthens the change curve and serves to increase the chances of a complete rejection.

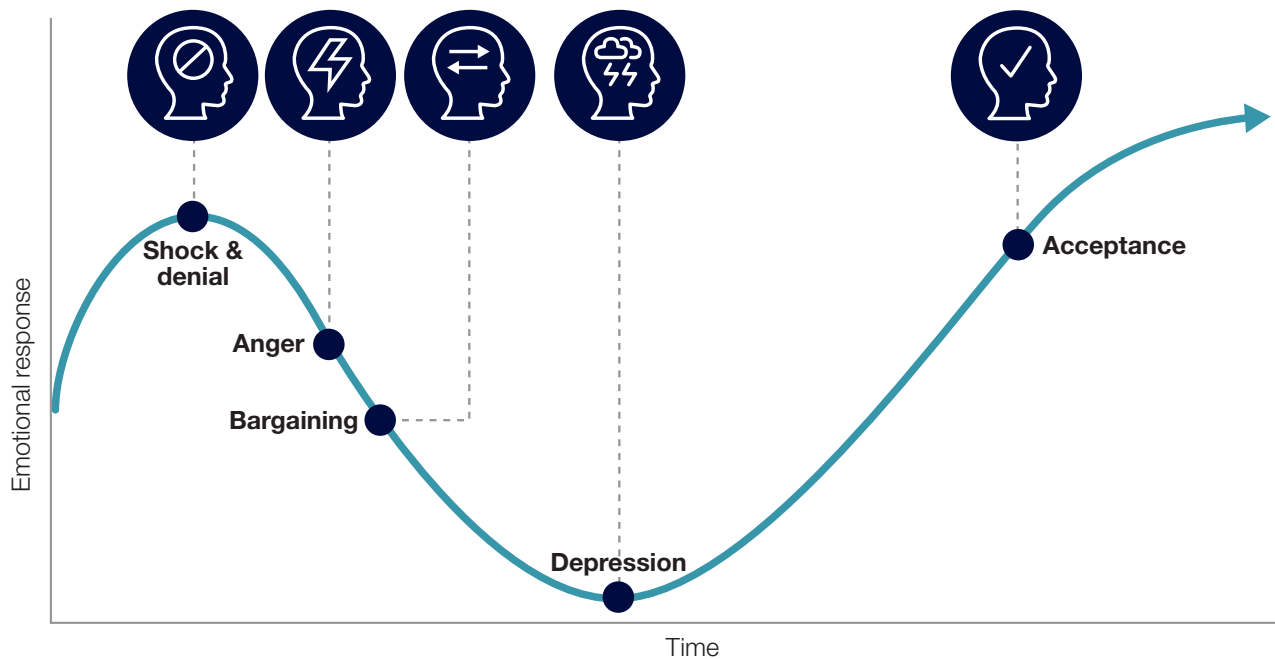


Figure 5: The five emotional stages of change.

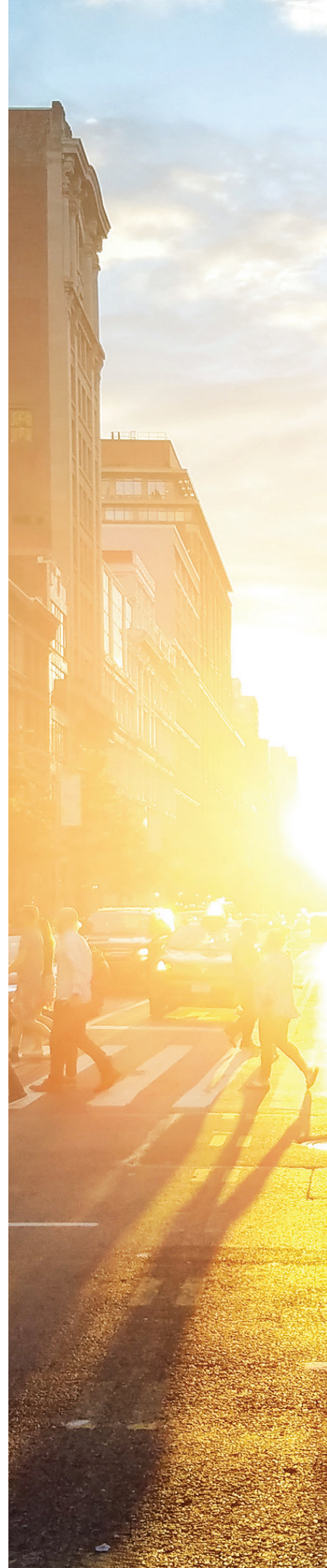
## Challenge 5:

### Creating new approaches to fit new contexts

Many organisations attempt to tackle the new challenges and contexts they face by applying existing business processes and ways of thinking. Developed as the organisation grew in order to manage complexity and risk, they are not generally fit for the discovery of novel ideas. This demands a process of rapid learning, decision making and prototyping in which calculated risks and failure are part of the day-to-day reality.

As Satya Nadella reflected on Microsoft initially missing the boat on cloud computing: “to be able to see these secular trends long before they become conventional wisdom, change your business model, change technology, and change the product is the challenge of business (...) and all of us have to deal with it”<sup>20</sup>.

Furthermore, in larger organisations one of the top items on many leaders’ agendas is operational excellence through continuous improvements of the legacy processes and systems<sup>21</sup>. It is easier to build a business case for operational cost reduction than an unpredictable return on investment from test and learn. Unfortunately, these incremental improvements are not transformational enough to bring the competitive advantage companies need in the face of unprecedented levels of change.





## Challenge 6:

### Championing the right mindset across the organisation

Companies that keep doing the same things they have always done, getting the same or worsening results, often do so due to the level of fixed mind-sets amongst employees. This is a belief that we have basic abilities, intelligence, and talents that are fixed traits, which cannot develop significantly over time. "I'm either good at it or I'm not". These people take feedback personally - they fear getting out of their comfort zone and give up quickly when they do not know how to do things.

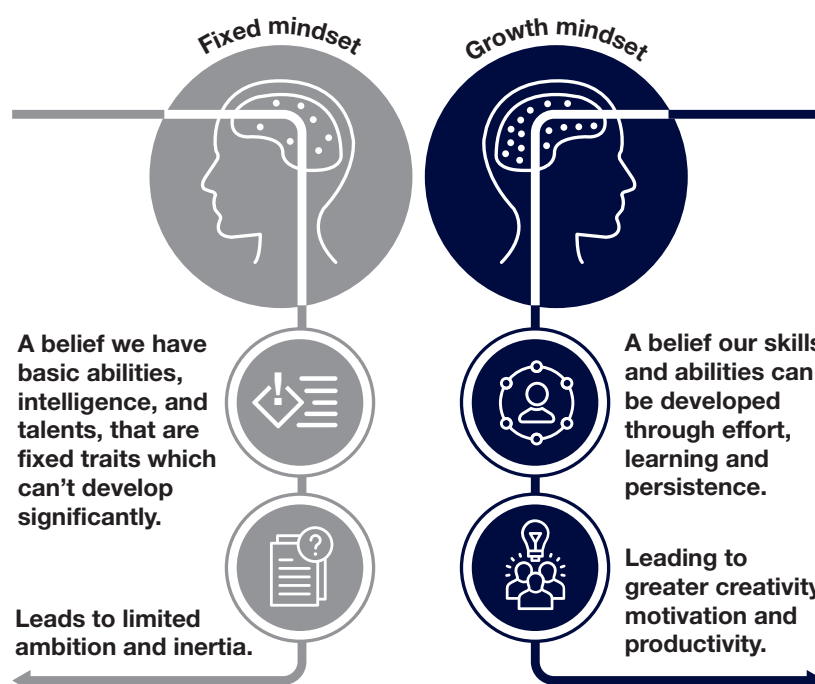


Figure 6: Fixed v Growth mind-set.

These self-limiting beliefs and behaviours are often deeply rooted, but they can be changed within any individual. However, to change a company, leaders themselves need to take a good look in the mirror and choose to get out of their own comfort zones. Only by being seen to encourage creativity and making a degree of failure simply part of the success process will any organisation evolve.

This 'learning to win' culture has been shown to create more than three times the number of top performing organisations. This is because a winning culture inspires and unifies the workforce behind common beliefs, values and purpose. A good example of this is what some of the Lego employees told a journalist during a visit to the Billund factory: "while the pay isn't overly generous and Billund is a bit dull, there's still nowhere else they'd rather work"<sup>22</sup>.

# How to address these challenges with Business Agility

As a result of our client work and supplemental research, we have identified and fully elaborated the key attributes that underpin Business Agility. We have established that there are six distinct attributes, which will be required to different degrees based on an organisation's situation and ambition: Focus, Resilience, Responsiveness, Adaptability, Versatility and Innovativeness.

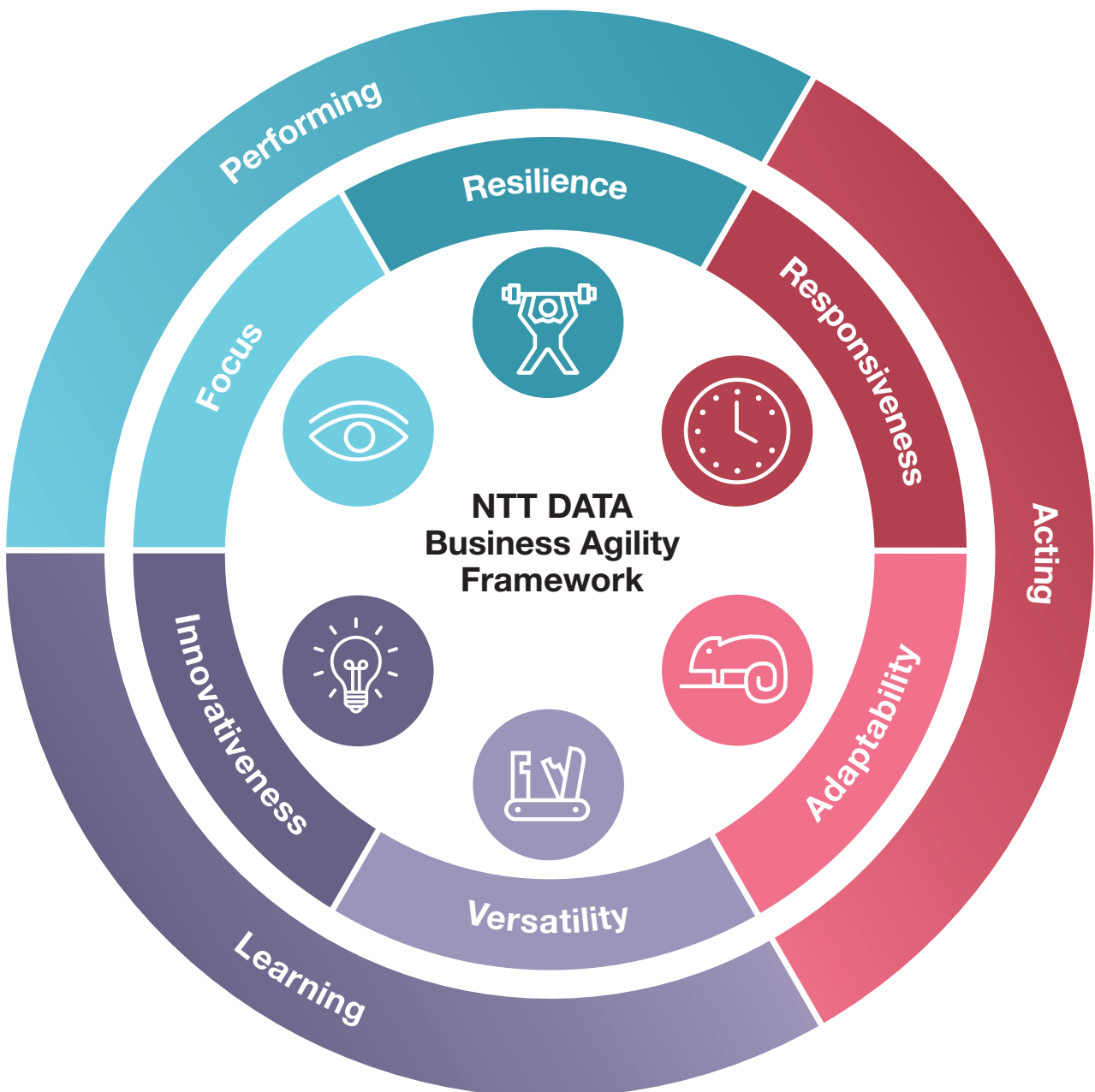


Figure 7: The six attributes of Business Agility.

Focus and Resilience ensure stability and drive sustainable performance, even through difficult times, by configuring the business consistently around value, whilst Responsiveness and Adaptability are the flexible spine of the organisation. These latter two attributes enable sensing disruption and overcoming inertia to seize new opportunities, while operating the core business. Finally, Innovativeness and Versatility represent the two learning attributes used to uncover hidden customer needs and find solutions to remain relevant or lead the way.

These attributes then break down into 31 underlying competencies which should be used as an ingredient list (we will not be covering these in detail within this paper). Not all companies with a higher level of Business Agility master all of the attributes and underlying competencies equally. Which ones an organisation needs to hone depends on its specific situation. We will cover this topic in the 'pitfalls to avoid' section and will provide information on how to select the attributes and competencies that your organisation needs.

## We will now take you through the six key attributes of Business Agility in more detail.



### Focus

Focus is the way an organisation aligns its vision, operating model and metrics against its business value levers. It sets the direction for the company's investment, and focuses resources and priorities. A good example is how Zara's strategic mission - "give customers what they want, and get it to them faster than anyone else"<sup>23</sup> - underpins the way it sets up its operations.

The company's marketing strategy is customer focused rather than product driven and relies on a highly evolved data infrastructure and a very effective manufacturing process.

- Zara's big data capability conducts highly efficient analyses of sales data, customer inquiries and social media trends to improve product offering and customer experience.
- On the production side, 50% of manufacturing capacity is reserved for in-season adjustments (four times higher than competitors). Coupled with lean go-to-market processes, this enables Zara to bring products from concept to store in just 25 days.

A focused company that delivers on its strategic vision often records higher brand equity. At Zara, shopper visit frequency is twice to three times higher than traditional women's apparel brands<sup>24</sup>.



### Resilience

Resilience is the way an organisation is able to recover from a setback by repairing or creating something new from something which has been damaged, destroyed or rendered obsolete. For this to happen, the organisation needs core foundations that provide stability, even in a context of constant change.

In 2004, Lego was on the brink of bankruptcy and a new CEO was appointed, Jorgen Vig Knudstorp. Within four years, Knudstorp turned the business around from a £217m loss to a £163m net profit in 2008<sup>25</sup>. His recovery plan built on existing foundations (e.g. employees' sense of belonging, customer loyalty) and refocused on the core (i.e. making construction sets). As you would expect, one part of the plan focused on streamlining the operations and controlling cost. But the other part, the most important one, focused on the culture. Knudstorp recruited fans of Lego, flattened the hierarchy and acted as a servant leader where he provided strategic intent while giving creative control to the employees. This boosted people's motivation - they care so much for their business that they claim they wouldn't work anywhere else, which in turn made a major contribution to Lego's success in becoming the world's largest toy manufacturer in 2017<sup>26</sup>.



## Responsiveness

Responsiveness is how fast an organisation recognises and acts on events. It relies on adequate mechanisms to sense change quickly and lean capabilities to enable effective and adequate actions that will drive customer satisfaction.

In 2011, Costa Coffee created Costa Express, one way to continue leading the coffee industry, whilst maximizing financial performance. In 2012, it sensed the demand for self-serve high quality coffee and translated this into a clear vision - build an innovative machine that recreates the user experience you get in a café. The management wanted to go to market as quickly as possible, so speed and decisiveness were key to this project.

- Partners were selected through a lean procurement process (no traditional RFP, no fixed specifications)
- Decision making autonomy was given to the team with direct reporting to the board
- < 24-hour decision making cycle was enforced

The new machine entered production eight months after project kick-off, which was five times faster than normal<sup>27</sup>. By 2013, Costa Express had doubled in size with 2,000 machines and raised NPS by 10%<sup>28</sup>. In 2020, Costa has more than 9,000 Express vending machines<sup>29</sup>.



## Adaptability

Adaptability corresponds to how well an organisation is able to change its operating model when current components are an impediment to achieving its desired outcomes. Netflix is a good example of a company that adapted from physical to fully digital operations. In 1997 it started as a DVD-by-Mail business and by February 2007, had distributed its billionth DVD<sup>30</sup>. This did not stop the company from introducing Video Streaming in the same year. As of April 2020, Netflix was the global market leader in SVOD with 54% market penetration<sup>31</sup>.

To be successful, adaptability relies on the openness and flexibility of the leaders who recognise they do not have all the answers and encourage novel ideas. The Netflix leadership recognised the power of data and analytics early on to understand customer preferences and drive their product strategy. Also, they did not shy away from partnering with their direct competitor, Amazon, conscious that AWS Cloud services would provide them with a competitive advantage. Netflix now accounts for more than 15% of the world's internet traffic<sup>32</sup>.



## Versatility

Versatility is the way an organisation is able to achieve its desired outcomes and goals whether under business as usual or varying circumstances. The foundational concept is a growth mindset, which helps find solutions to problems, identify opportunities for improvement or create new ideas.

When Turkcell radically changed its vision from being a traditional network operator to becoming a 'digital experience provider', it recognised that telecom expertise was only a small part of the skillset it needed. The company adopted a continuous learning mantra, encouraged the development of T-Shaped resources and organised cross-industry boot camps to inspire employees and drive innovation. It also set up a technological infrastructure, an applications and agile management model that maximised learning, open collaboration and remote working. As a result, it saw rapid growth in its portfolio of digital apps. Anecdotally, fizy (Turkcell's music streaming app) is three times as popular in Turkey as Spotify<sup>33</sup>. And in the last three years, it became one of the fastest growing and most profitable telcos in the world (between 2017 - 2019, EBITDA increased from 32.4% to 41.5%<sup>34</sup>).



## Innovativeness

Innovativeness is an organisation's ability to create new approaches and products in response to customers' unmet needs. Leaders who inspire others, challenge the status quo and look for better ways of doing things drive the way forward. In their view, innovativeness needs to deliver two benefits - customer satisfaction and return on investment. Walt Disney was an example of a transformational leader who was talented in discovering innovative ideas and converting them into successful business strategies. He consistently created new business models from dreams that were solidly tested before being executed (e.g. movies, theme parks, cruises, hotels, music, magazines, retail stores). Building on Walt's mindset, the group has maintained a culture of safety for ideas. No idea is too small and employees are rewarded to generate ideas.

Because companies with strong innovativeness come up with new ideas that excite their customers, they tend to record high brand equity. On launch day on 12 November 2019, it took one day for Disney+ (Disney streaming service) to hit 10m subscribers (vs. analysts' projection of 8m in 7 weeks)<sup>35</sup>.

# Lessons learnt from implementing Business Agility

Like all meaningful journeys, adopting a strategic approach to Business Agility requires planning, self-awareness and commitment from the leadership team. To help you begin on this journey better armed, we would like to share our four key learnings from implementing Business Agility.

## Don't assume everyone knows what Business Agility means

The terms Business Agility and Agile (for Agile Software Development) are regularly used interchangeably. Whilst they are closely related and both rely on some of the same Lean principles, they are certainly not one and the same thing. See Figure 8.



Figure 8: What Agile and Business Agility actually mean.

Therefore, before embarking on your journey, you need to help your organisation build a common level of understanding of the role and the value of both these concepts.

## One-size-doesn't fit all

Business Agility has a clear definition and a list of attributes and underlying competencies. This does not mean that the journey to Business Agility is the same for all organisations or that it translates into the same needs. Applying a standard approach without regard to the specifics of the organisation is a recipe for failure.

The solution for your business will be found by applying the framework to your specific context both internally and externally. In practice, the first step is to understand the organisation's ambition and strategic objectives. This will show how important Business Agility is for the organisation and drive the identification of the attributes and competencies required to excel.

This is why in our view, Focus is the most important attribute of all. The existence of a compelling, unified and shared strategy has two benefits: 1) It provides the direction of travel and will help identify which of the attributes and competencies an organisation needs to hone. 2) Also, if the strategy already exists, is clear and well understood, it will speed up the Business Agility journey. If it does not exist, the definition, sponsorship and communication of the vision and strategy must be the first actions, which will delay the start of the transformation journey.





## **Genuine executive involvement in the doing is essential to drive change**

Leaders will often ask their teams to do the analysis and provide them with well-informed recommendations. However, the new thinking is different and it is crucial that the executives are involved from start to finish of the process. This does not mean a monthly Steerco meeting - they need to be involved in the 'doing'.

Research has demonstrated that a lack of real executive sponsorship or insufficient support is the top barrier keeping organisations from adopting Business Agility<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, we cannot over stress the importance of the executives' involvement and commitment in this journey.

Business Agility is a competitive advantage, and to drive fast execution and employee adoption, it needs to be high up in the CEO's strategic priorities. In addition, it is likely to require meaningful changes to ways of working, including new processes, behaviours, and potentially longer-term organisational structure changes.

To support this type of change, executives need to be involved from the start so they have a deep understanding of the actions required, and can make rapid decisions once they accept them. It also gives them the opportunity to make some changes early on. These changes may be small and symbolic, but as long as they are effective and visible, the leaders set the example for the rest of the business.

## **Change cannot be affected by top down 'commands'**

Success is rarely the result of an individual talent. Most athletes, scientists, star CEOs and artists built their success on the support structure around them. For this transformation to be successful, it will need to rely on collective expertise and engagement, meaning the executives and their middle management working together as one team.

This means the traditional approach to issuing one way orders to cascade through the organisation will need to change. This is because, once the focus for the organisation is defined, executives will need to quickly learn to give intent, not orders, to the next level down if they are to create a powerful and unified coalition of people who champion and drive the change.

The way to do that is to create a sense of purpose where the middle management feels they are part of the solution. The executives need to draw on their direct reports' expertise and experience to build the bigger Business Agility plan and agree the critical actions to kick-start the transformation. Finally, in order to avoid bottlenecks and create a deep sense of motivation, the middle management team need to have some degree of autonomy in the way they deliver on the intent.



## Conclusion

Despite being recognised as a vital component for future organisational success for over a decade<sup>37</sup>, many established companies have struggled to increase their Business Agility in that time. A rise in the importance and adoption of Agile software development methodologies in the same period has served to blur the terminology and has accidentally muddied the water. The result is many organisations will struggle to cope with the common 21st century business challenges outside of our current uncommon times.

It does not have to be that way, and we have written this paper to help create greater clarity for all the curious, but busy, executives out there today. You can create a blueprint for change and help others to come on the journey with you by using our attribute framework (focus, resilience, responsiveness, adaptability, innovativeness and versatility) and their underlying components to understand your current situation and plan for future success.

This is not a simple journey, but as the late Alvin Toffler once said: “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn”. We hope reading this paper will contribute to your ability to relearn.

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