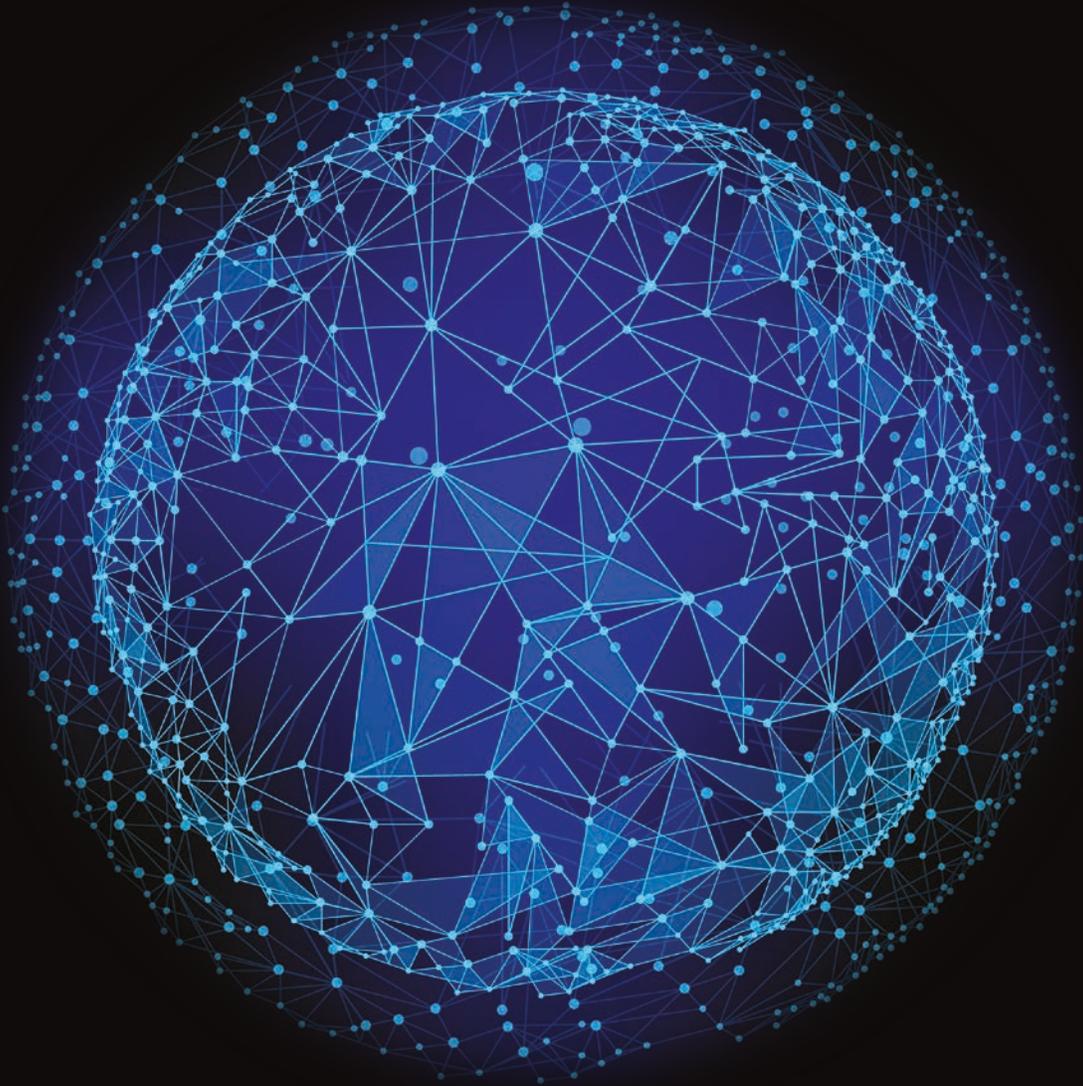


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The Adaptable Organization
Harnessing a networked
enterprise of human resilience

The Adaptable Organization

is a fundamental shift in operating and management philosophy that enables large-scale global organizations to operate with a start-up mindset and drive modern people practices that enable enterprise agility through empowered networks of teams

The team

Conventional wisdom believes that high-performing individuals deliver organizational performance. Adaptable Organizations place greater emphasis on the team and help unlock individual performance through team composition and new ways of working.

Individual performance is intrinsically linked to team composition.

This logic around high-performing team development has been clear for some time, but many earlier team-based designs failed because the organizations put individual performance ahead of team and did not account for instability in the external environment.

A high-performing team is always worth more than the sum of its parts and radiates resilience which resonates throughout the organization. Three distinct components mark a diverse, high-performing team:

1) a shared outcome, 2) iterative and empowered execution, and 3) a climate or culture promoting fairness, constructive conflict and psychological safety, (see figure 7 for more details). Teams that have deliberately moved into the rhythm of trust, clear mutual accountability, and

Our research shows ideas developed by teams with three or more members have 156 percent greater appeal with customers, than teams with one or two key contributors¹⁰

transparency have constructed a safe climate that celebrates diversity of thought and anchors team members in the social purpose of the organization.

With each member bringing diverse perspectives, unique skillsets, and broad experiences, an organization's potential grows.

In this landscape, an uninterrupted dialogue connects individuals and teams to overall

mission, objectives and priorities to align activities to target outcomes. Tasks assigned to team members should be meaningful to maintain commitment while simultaneously driving collective team ownership. Team members are empowered to make decisions and free to take on new roles as needed to achieve the mandate.

A cohesive team of average players can easily outperform a team of dysfunctional star athletes.

Figure. 7: High-performing teams should meet three broad conditions



Clear focus unites the team to the organization's purpose.

In an Adaptable Organization, a network of teams centers upon a clear purpose and a set of core values. While this common purpose provides guidance and direction for individuals and teams, each team has its own clear focus on one mission or outcome. The number of desired outcomes sets the number of teams, and as outcomes change, teams shift to meet the new demands.

Iterative and empowered execution with transparent decision rights is critical.

The principles of agile software development and agile management have succeeded in many business contexts. Such principles put the customer and outcomes at the center of every decision. They are able to achieve adaptability by failing fast and delivering work frequently, stressing collaboration over individual contribution, promoting frequent face-to-face meetings to identify issues and make decisions, and reflecting at regular intervals on how to be a more effective team. All these elements are key factors in adaptability.

Many of our clients (beyond the IT function) have been adapting components of agile methods to keep teams aligned including daily stand-ups, iteration reviews, cross-team planning to handle more complex problems and retrospectives that offer a safe place to discuss problems and improvements. Taken together, these methods help connect teams and support the right environment for accountability and autonomy.

The adaptable environment helps create a safe place for collaboration and connected ways of working.

Many organizations believe that their teams already practice effective collaboration, but most do not. What teams label

'collaboration' usually is not; instead many people work with who and what they know, taking a 'low risk' approach to getting work done. As organizations embark on the adaptability journey it is important to consider what tends to hold most teams back from true collaboration:

- No universal understanding or definition of collaboration
- Confusing collaboration with consensus-building, where consensus can be used to avoid accountability
- Preference for face time, even where video conferencing exists
- Formality. When people resist showing their "human" side, it can take longer to build a safe space for team rapport
- Too much focus on the immediate team, in lieu of a deeper understanding of how the broader organization works

No single, prescribed methodology makes teams great, but effective organizations always take time to build collective understanding to work in this new way. They invest in workplace environments that enable true collaboration. Leaders also become a linchpin for modelling new ways of working.

The team is a core element of the Adaptable Organization and can only be as successful as the leader who empowers and enables it. Teams cannot thrive in new environments if leaders are stuck in old mindsets and ways of working.

True collaboration can unlock latent productivity and inclusion, and can realize higher employee engagement and agility to help accelerate execution of the business strategy.

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