

RICHARD LEES
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shift



TRANSFORM
MOTION INTO PROGRESS
IN BUSINESS

WILEY

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Shift

Transform Motion into Progress in Business

Richard Lees

Azlan Raj

WILEY

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FOREWORD

At dentsu, we are striving to be champions for meaningful progress. This is one of the core principles that underscores our vision, but what does it truly mean? For us, *meaningful* refers to activities that add value to people's lives, while *progress* is the positive manifestation of motion with the focus placed firmly on our desired outcomes.

Meaningful progress is a force for growth and good. It is a force that can unlock unique possibilities to drive sustainable value and lead to lasting change. It is the gateway to the future for brands in all industries.

I first met Rich and Az after joining dentsu in 2020, and when they shared the concept of this book, I could immediately see how our ambition of championing meaningful progress was woven throughout its chapters. More than this, it maps out the connections that businesses of all sizes must consider if they, too, are to achieve meaningful progress.

In the highly competitive and fast-changing world that we find ourselves in, keeping up is hard enough and staying ahead can be a constant challenge. The currency of business nowadays is speed. Doing "something" is simply not good enough. There are numerous fronts that must be navigated simultaneously, and prioritising the important over the nice-to-have can be hard to do.

This struggle is one that Rich and Az understand well. The ideas they share in this book are simple to draw out. They are easy to explain, and certainly important to connect. However, they are difficult to do, which is why so many businesses get stuck in a trap of constant motion, whereby

a lot of tasks are done that keep everyone very busy and deplete budgets, but you lose sight of meaningful progress.

When this happens, it becomes increasingly difficult to translate this movement into clear and measurable business or customer value. This is when the focus often shifts to processes and projects, moving away from customer needs and the value that is derived from meeting them.

Az and Rich use a simple Formula 1 analogy to link the three core themes that a business must connect to create one seamless ecosystem for success. Drawing on their collective 50 years in the realm of customer experience, they use clear examples of the challenges that businesses face in order to highlight not only the importance of each core theme, but more importantly, the need to weave them across every element of the business landscape to deliver true value.

The first of these core themes is a clear vision that sets the direction and common purpose for your organisation, and the need for clear measures to ensure you remain on track. The second is the team and the need for alignment of purpose across an entire organisation. They also delve into radical collaboration, another of our passions at dentsu, as well as the need for autonomy. The final theme relates to reading the market and understanding the external factors that affect every business's ability to compete effectively.

The threads that connect these themes and their many integrated topics are the simple concepts of starting with the end in mind, recognising that motion does not necessarily equate to progress, and actively seeking out and measuring that progress.

If you can't turn motion into progress, what you are left with is a lot of very expensive movement. If you proxy

motion for progress, as many businesses do, you will become stuck. As you read, you may realise that your business falls into this category. If that's the case, you'll find tools in these chapters to help you turn motion into meaningful progress. I urge you to use them.

Since starting my role with dentsu, I have spoken to hundreds of clients and all of them mention the same challenges; chief among them are transformation and finding a way to measure the efficiency of their activities. In my career I have been both client and agency side; I have worked with some of the world's biggest brands and I have witnessed how these challenges manifest themselves in different organisational environments. I also understand the crucial role that strong leadership plays in navigating these challenges.

I believe a leader's role is to provide a careful balance between hope and reality. Great leaders paint a vivid picture of what they want to do and where they want to go. They align people and resources around their vision of the future, but they do so without neglecting the reality of where they are now. They are transparent, honest, and realistic about what the journey from their current reality to their visionary future entails. This is the foundation for achieving meaningful progress, and it is these ideas that you will find woven throughout this book in an interesting and thought-provoking way.

The compelling anecdotes and connected themes that are covered in this book are as applicable for marketing leaders as for CEOs. Dive in, learn what you can from the years of experience Rich and Az bring to this space, and have the courage to invent the future that you're taking your company into. In doing so, you too will become champions for meaningful progress.

Wendy Clark

*CEO, dentsu international, and former President,
Sparkling Brands & Strategic Marketing,
Coca-Cola North America*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In our roles, we have been privileged to work with some of the most respected business leaders in the world. These leaders have been kind enough to share their insights with us, and you will see some of their thoughts throughout the book.

Our adaptive leaders

Whilst we had some contributors share their thoughts anonymously, we wanted to thank them and all the individuals below who have shared their thoughts in this book:

Paloma Azulay, Global Chief Brand Officer, Restaurant Brands International

Aaron Bradley, VP of Technology & Innovation, Wella Company

Benjamin Braun, CMO, Samsung

Wendy Clark, Global CEO, dentsu international

Nicholas Cumisky, YouTube

Craig Dempster, Global CEO, Merkle

Doug Jensen, SVP – GTM & COE for Analytics & Activation, Estée Lauder

Nicola Mendelsohn, CBE, VP GBG, Meta

Nick Ratcliffe, Customer Experience Director, Volkswagen Group Ltd

Paul Robson, President of Adobe International, Adobe
Craig Smith, Chief Brand Officer & Co-Founder,

Decidable Global Ltd, and Former Digital Commerce Director, Ted Baker

Marisa Thalberg, EVP, Chief Brand and Marketing Officer, Lowe's

Deborah Wahl, Global CMO, General Motors

Margaret Wagner, EMEA President, Merkle

Jennifer Warren, VP Global Brand Marketing, Indeed

Shelley Zalis, CEO, The Female Quotient

Our adaptive families

We would like to thank our families for the support they've given us. They've been there through the late nights and the long weekends, being both our samples of one and to ground us when needed. Our wives have kept us going and our children have done their best to keep the noise down whilst we've been working! We definitely wouldn't have made it through this journey without them.

Our adaptive readers

We would also like to thank you, the reader. Our aim was to provide something that was useful to you with a flavour of fun and a sprinkle of our personalities. We hope that the blood, sweat, and tears that we've put into this book (please don't let that sway your opinion) is as enjoyable for you to read as it was for us to write.

INTRODUCTION: ROCKING HORSES DON'T BELONG IN BOARDROOMS

“Don't confuse motion for progress. A rocking horse moves all day but goes nowhere”!

– Alfred Montapert

Picture a child sitting on a rocking horse. She is laughing as she sways back and forth. Maybe she is pushing the rocking horse to go faster, encouraging it by shouting phrases like, “Giddy up!” As you watch the child enjoying her ride on the rocking horse, you smile. She is safe; she is happy, and you know that regardless of what her imagination is telling her, she is going nowhere (in the physical sense). You leave her to her game, confident that you won't look out of the window to see her galloping across the garden on her rocking horse in half an hour.

You would certainly think it odd if you walked into a boardroom to see the CEO, CMO, CTO, or any of the other directors sitting on a rocking horse. However, all too often, businesses have boardrooms filled with metaphorical rocking horses; they just don't realise it. They don't always distinguish between *motion* and *progress*, or know how to turn the motion they are generating into progress.

Charting progress in a modern business world

The business world today, especially after black swan events like the 2008 financial crisis or the global COVID-19 pandemic, is characterised by an increasingly big number of known unknowns. It seems clear that the past is

probably no longer a safe basis for predicting the future, and much of what we have learned and been taught may well have limited relevance to our future decision making.

The competition feels like it can come from anywhere, and time is definitely no longer on your side. As Rupert Murdoch said (in 1999!), "The world is changing very fast. Big will not beat small anymore. It will be the fast beating the slow".

To not only survive, but to thrive in the new world is a constant challenge that requires businesses to fast become the masters of many things. Agility (speed) and adaptability (ability to change) have become strategic differentiators, giving those businesses that can rapidly adapt and build a muscle to respond to change a massive advantage.

"The speed and availability of data, technology, analytics, content, and platforms is creating this perfect storm where we can finally capitalise on the opportunity presented by the total customer experience in a way that we just couldn't before. If brands are not on that journey to that complete and total customer experience across those dimensions of sales, service, commerce and marketing, they just won't be around in the future."

Craig Dempster, Global CEO, Merkle

Some businesses have the advantage of already being in this state (let's call them the leaders). Others are undergoing massive transformations to close the gap and either attain or regain this state (let call them the followers, who are playing catchup). However, to do this requires sustained and directed momentum, or motion, but motion alone will not give you the advantage. The advantage comes from turning motion into progress.

This might sound simple enough, but often this is more difficult to achieve than it first appears. The result in many businesses is a great deal of motion that adds little real value and instead wastes precious time and resources, and may even contribute to a loss of competitive advantage. The opportunity, as we explain in this book, is to turn that motion into progress. To do that, you need to connect the three core themes of the business ecosystem, which we are calling the principal, the crew, and the season.

The race to the top

Our favourite analogy to describe what a business needs to do in order to turn motion into progress is Formula 1. Behind the fast cars, daring driving, and excitement of race days there are three key components at work: the principal, the crew, and the season.

The principal of each team sets the direction and leads from the front. The crew needs to collaborate and work together to constantly improve the car, its engine performance, drive the car, and find ways to shave even 0.1 of a second off the lap time or length of a pit stop because that 0.1 second can mean the team's driver wins the race. Then there is the Formula 1 season, which lasts for much longer than a single race. Every race throughout the season is different. The car itself will perform differently depending on both the track and the weather conditions on the day, and the crew will need to adapt according to the conditions.

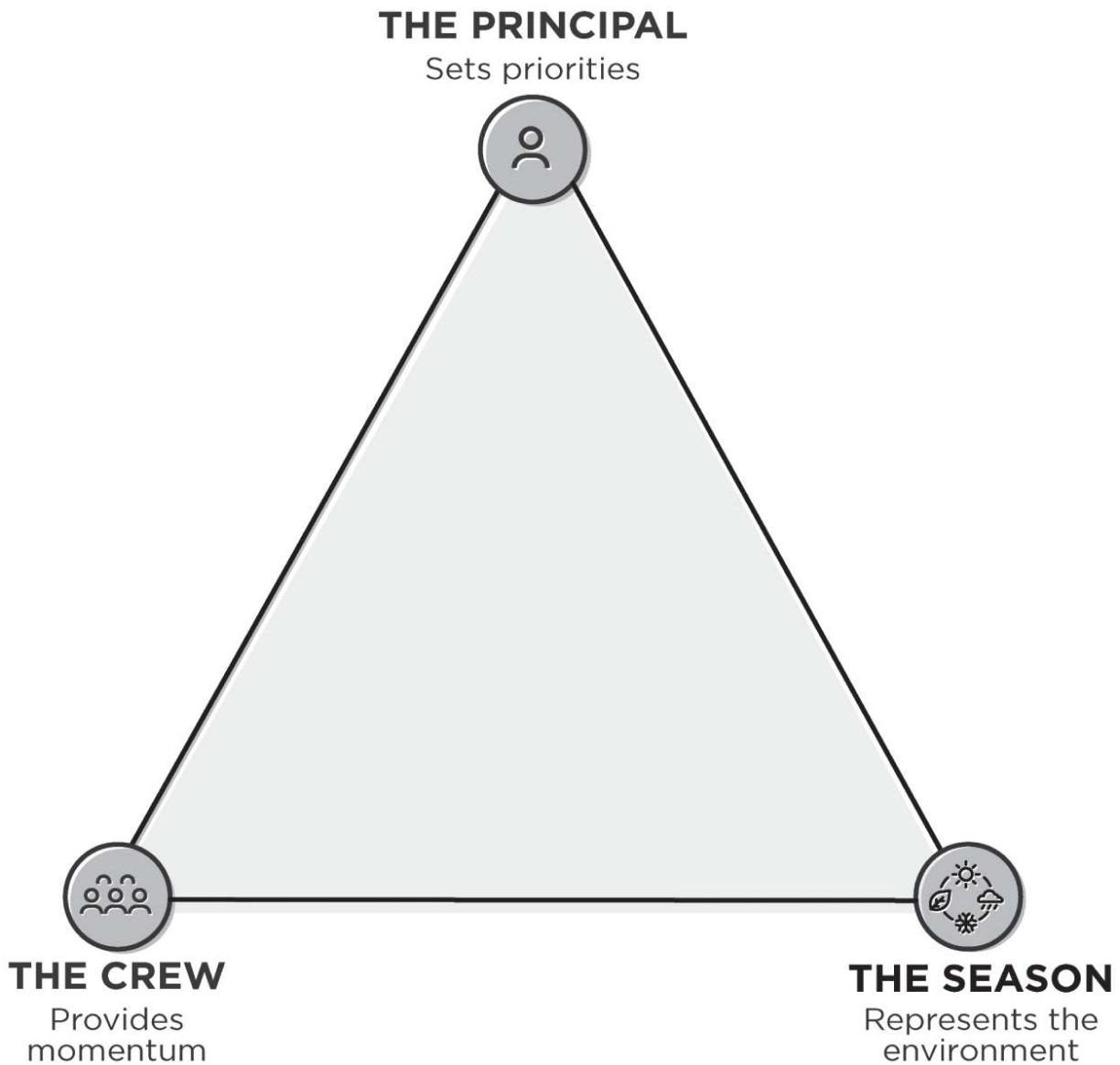


Figure i.1

When we apply those three principles to a business, we can see a clear correlation to core enterprise functions and challenges. The principal represents the leaders within the business, the people who make those big decisions, keep one eye on the big picture, and make sure that the company is moving in the right direction. The crew is the broader teams, the people on the ground who make things happen. When they are all aligned behind an organisation's

vision, great things happen and progress begins to accelerate.

The season is the external environment that will have an impact on not only how the business performs, but also on how the team functions and performs in different situations. The season is the one element of the pyramid that the business doesn't have total control over. What any organisation can control, however, is how it responds to its environment. This becomes a game of agility, where the businesses that learn fast and adapt quickly survive, and those that don't, die.

You need to have all three components of the pyramid in place and working together in order to achieve progress. Without all of these components, your business will struggle to successfully turn motion into progress.

If you just have the principal with the season, but the crew is not aligned and engaged, you create fatigue. You will only have a short amount of time to build momentum and achieve your goals before you run out of energy.

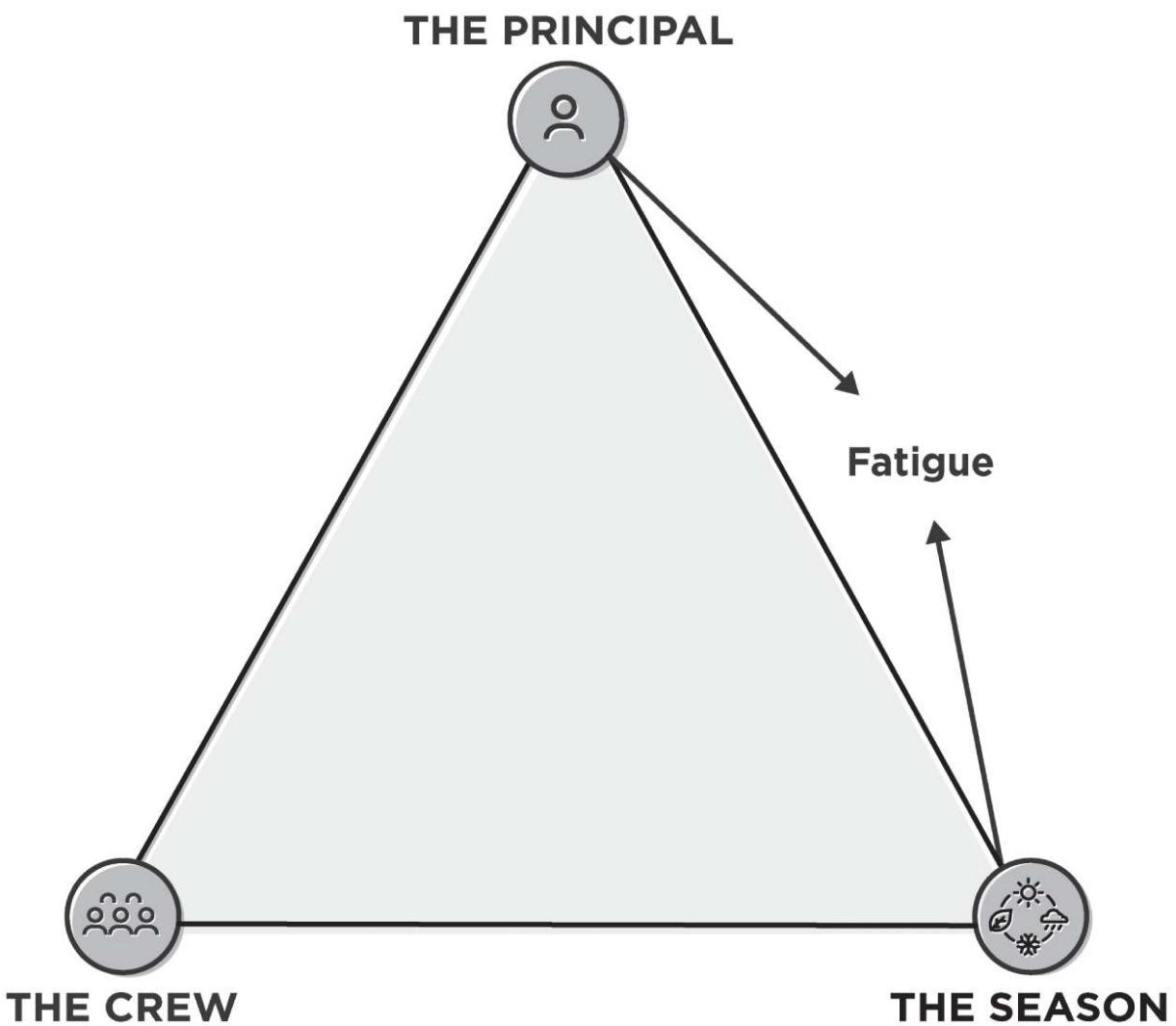


Figure i.2

If you have the principal setting a clear direction of travel and the crew aligned behind them, but no awareness of the season and external environment, this leads to obsolescence. You won't be creating and delivering the products or services the market, and your customers, need.

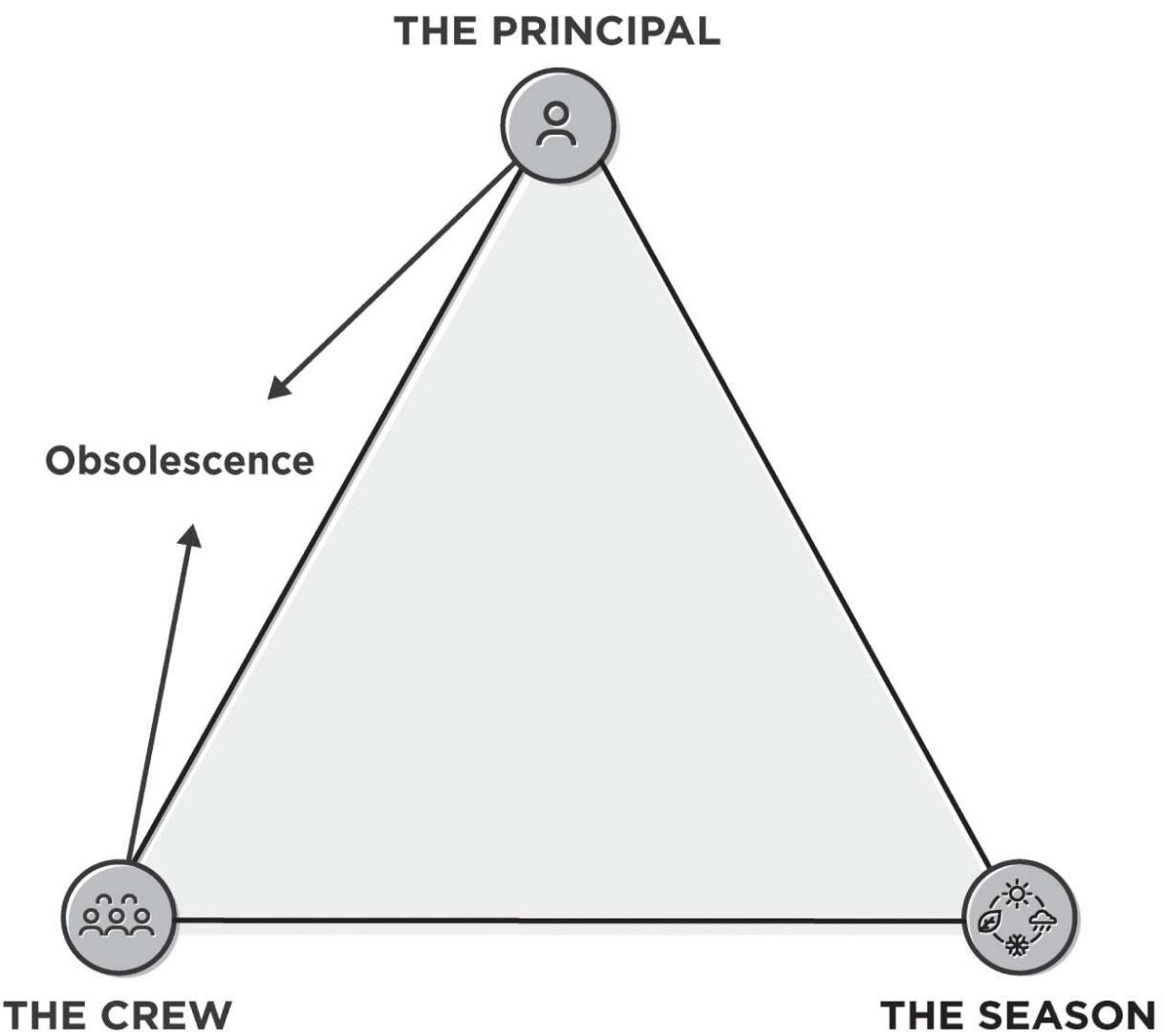


Figure i.3

Finally, if the crew is responding to the season and working within the external environment, but is doing so without any leadership or direction from the principal, what you are left with is chaos. There won't be any coherence in your activities and progress will stall.

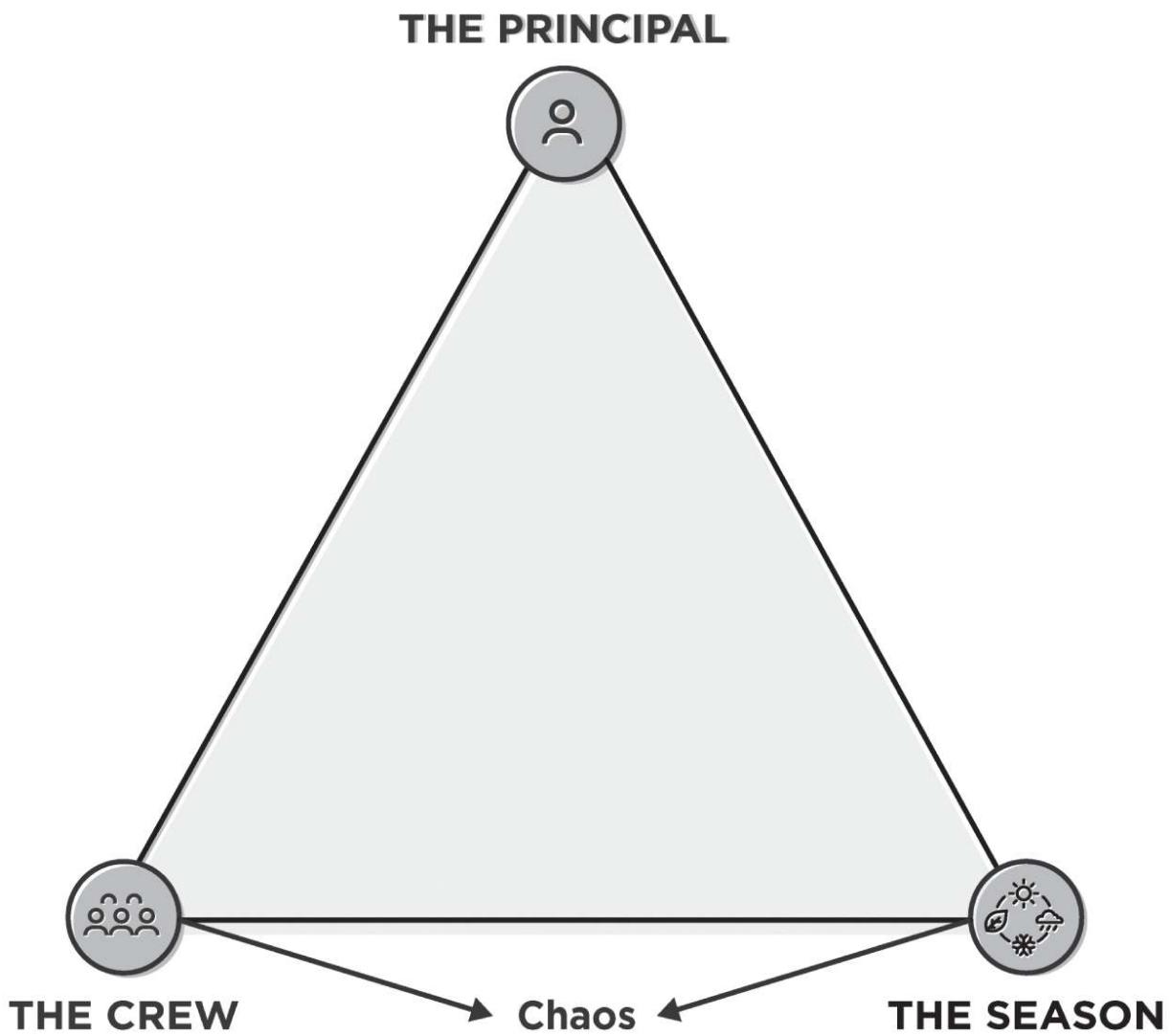


Figure i.4

What many organisations are aiming for is what we discussed at the beginning: the principal setting a clear direction and communicating the big-picture vision; the crew aligning with this vision, buying into it and being given autonomy to work toward that goal; and the organisation as a whole being aware of and having the ability to adapt to an ever-changing environment. The ideal state is to find a balance among all three themes.

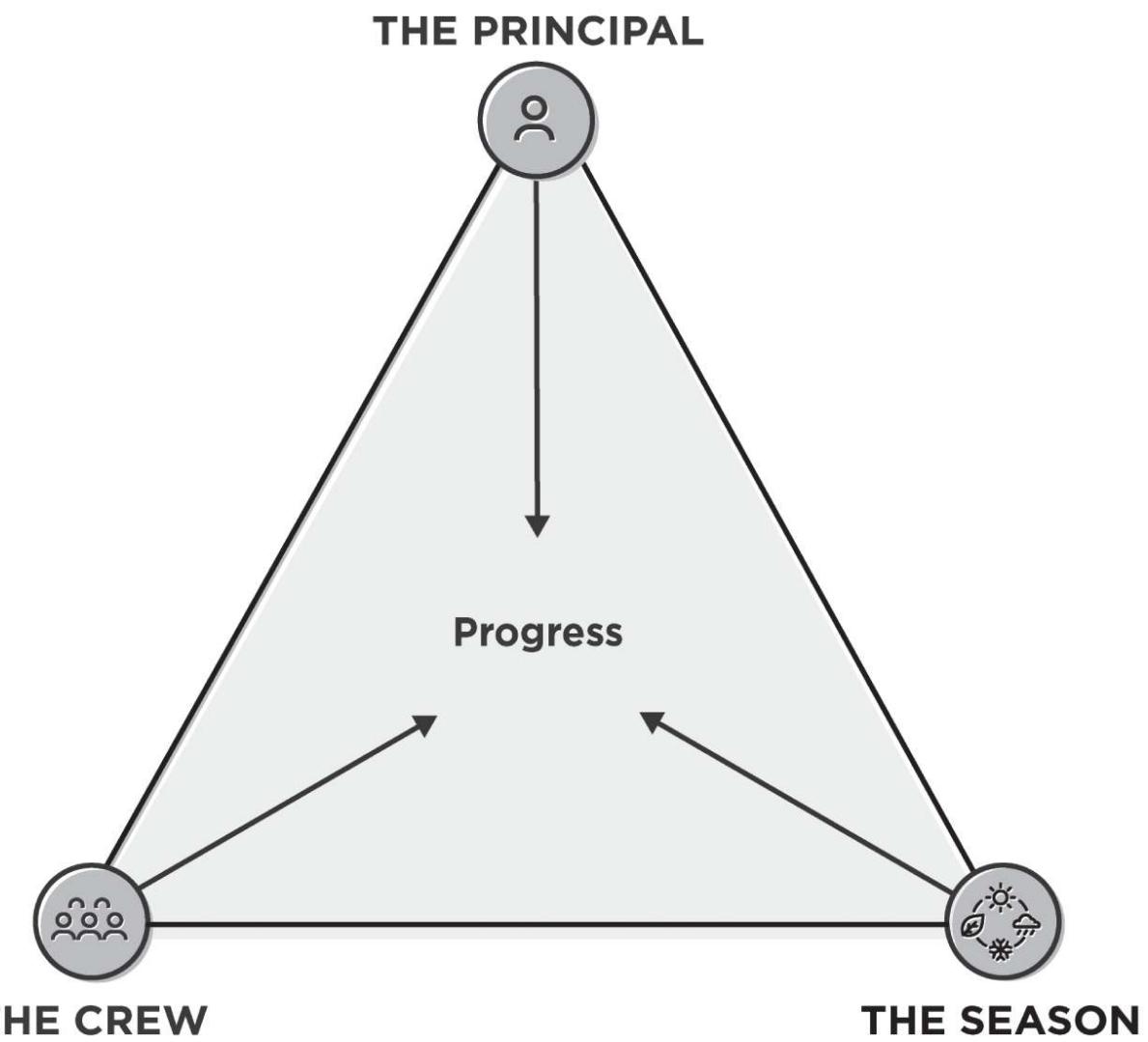


Figure i.5

*"The economy has fundamentally changed. We've moved from a world with digital to a digital-first world; and there's no going back. Digital has become **the way** for people to connect, work, learn, and be entertained and the imperative for digital customer engagement has never been greater. Every business must understand their customers to deliver personalized digital experiences.*

"The brands that win this race will have hands-on leaders who are open to change, a culture built around trust, rapid decision making and action, as well as a dedication to innovation and learning. Most of the evolution we have seen through COVID-19 has centred on transactional needs, be it the global pivot to online shopping or the rise of digital finance. However, brands must also consider how these unprecedented times affect people at the cultural and emotional level."

Paul Robson, President of Adobe International, Adobe

There are no silver bullets

If you have picked up this book hoping to find a silver bullet that will solve your business' problems, we're afraid we are going to disappoint you. Harmonising these three themes takes time, effort, and a great deal of motion. What we are sharing in these chapters, however, is aimed at helping you uncover how to translate your motion into progress and become a more adaptive organisation in the process.

Each part of this book covers topics related to that component of the business ecosystem. We begin in [Part One](#) with leadership, which comes from the principal. Without a clear direction of travel, you may meander aimlessly or go in circles, so setting that North Star is an

important starting point. You also need to know how to measure your progress. Without clear measurement of the right metrics, you can't see how far (or not) you've gone and are therefore in danger of slipping back into a cycle of motion.

In [Part Two](#), we move to your team and organisational ecosystem, including its culture. This component involves not only aligning your crew behind your vision, but also how you can support your team members to contribute to that progress, deliver on your goals, and do so in a way that draws on their strengths. Autonomy is one of the key concepts here, but this has to come with clear guidelines and a definitive North Star.

Finally, we explore the enterprise environment in [Part Three](#), which is represented by the season. These are the events that you have to manage and adapt to as a business, but they are ones that are outside of your control. For example, the economy, political upheaval, global pandemics, and even the weather impact organisations of all sizes and in all sectors. This is not only about navigating challenges, but also about spotting opportunities and knowing when and how to take the shot that can significantly accelerate your progress.

Uncovering your starting point

You and your organisation are on your own personal journeys, with your own starting point. At the end of several of the chapters, we have provided a link to a series of online exercises that will help you to understand what stage you are at, what direction you may need to move in, what changes you may need to implement, and where you can find support.

Use these resources to help you apply the lessons from this book in your own business. Our aim is to help you understand how you can turn motion into progress, and to clear any rocking horses out of your boardroom.

Working towards meaningful transformation

We live in a world where competition really can come from anywhere, and businesses have to be able to rapidly respond to threats and adapt to change. Organisations must evolve multiple strategies and use these abilities to build and maintain persistent relationships with their customers. So, business transformation tends to be at the top of most large corporate agendas, to modernise businesses that have fallen behind in some way and need to rapidly play catchup.

In many cases, there is also a customer experience transformation (CXT) happening to meet the fast-shifting needs of customers, who today are empowered and in control. CXT is the combination of data transformation and digital transformation, which relates to a business' ability to respond in today's expectation economy. This is a world where customers are increasingly digitally savvy. They have choice. They are informed. They can and do vote with their feet (increasingly with their smartphones!). They expect service. They want quality. They are vocal when they don't get it.

If you are one of the many businesses that is transforming across multiple areas to make up lost ground, then this idea of building a business that can turn motion into meaningful progress will be very topical for you.

In our current work for Merkle and dentsu's Customer Experience Management service line, Rich as Chief

Strategy Officer, EMEA, and Az as Chief Marketing Officer, EMEA, this is a topic we've tackled time and again with our clients. Over many years, we have seen and been part of extraordinary transformational efforts as well as attempts to transform businesses that did not gain sufficient traction.

What we are sharing in this book is a set of themes that any organisation can follow on its journey to becoming an adaptive organisation. Turning motion into progress is a key part of that journey. After all, how else are you going to get off the starting grid? However, as we're sure you know, making progress requires far more than simply turning on the engine and putting your foot to the floor.

The principles we share in each chapter are based on our experiences where we pull together examples and analogies to illustrate what we have found to be most important to a business' ability to become an adaptive organisation, and will hopefully provide you the guidance you need to harness that adaptive behaviour and turn it into meaningful progress. It is highly likely you already embrace at least some of them. However, if you are reading this book, there are also likely some obstacles in your path, some of which you may not even be aware of. Our hope is that you will find some ideas that can help you navigate those obstacles and continue your journey toward adaptiveness in the most efficient way possible.

If we help you overcome even one obstacle on your journey, we have achieved our goal. If you're ready, let's join the principal; it's race day.