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— ASSESSING — ORGANIZATION AGILITY



CREATING DIAGNOSTIC PROFILES TO
GUIDE TRANSFORMATION



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The Agility Factor: Building Adaptable Organizations for Superior Performance, by Christopher G. Worley, Thomas Williams, and Edward E. Lawler III (coming fall 2014)

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Introduction

If you are like us, you are never stunned to see a book or article on organization change begin with the observation, “Research shows that 80 percent of large-scale organization changes fail to meet their objectives.” It’s become an annoying cliché.

There is nothing useful or new about hearing that organizations struggle to make effective responses in the face of constant marketplace, economic, and social changes. Organizations make decisions to change what they make and how they make it in a context that reflects what is happening today and a hopeful guess about what might happen tomorrow. However, the process of change planning and implementing takes time, and during that time, the context can change—and usually does.

If the change does not get implemented fast enough, a new context can emerge so quickly that the change becomes irrelevant. In the late 1990s, Toyota and General Motors faced the same context, the same changing demands in the same industry at the same time. They may have had different perspectives, but both firms had access to the same data about what was going on and what the future might hold. One chose to launch the Prius and one chose to purchase the Hummer brand. Both organizations made decisions that promised success, but when fuel prices and attitudes toward climate change shifted, one company looked brilliant and the other company looked foolish.

There is no denying that the current pace of technical, competitive, and environmental change is faster and the types of responses required are far more complex and sophisticated than they ever have been. We live in a