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— ASSESSING — ORGANIZATION AGILITY



CREATING DIAGNOSTIC PROFILES TO
GUIDE TRANSFORMATION



ASSESSING ORGANIZATION AGILITY

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TRANSFORMATION**

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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 volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. Under these conditions, no one should be surprised when organizations that worship at the altar of efficiency and reliability are a little slow in developing a response to significant business and environmental challenges. Nor should anyone be surprised when a context change happens that renders pointless all the hard work on the original response.

An organization's lack of success in a turbulent environment can be explained in many ways. The two most common explanations are poor, slow, and ineffective change processes and ineffective leadership. Unfortunately, neither of them addresses the real problem.

When the finger-pointing begins over why a change failed, the most common target is how the change was managed. Organization development and change management practices are described as too slow, too concerned with people's feelings, and ineffective at onboarding, communicating, readying, and pulling people through a transition. The common prescription: Use more efficient organization and culture change processes.

However, it is hardly fair to say that change management processes are ineffective when the environment is changing faster than the organization can adapt. Under VUCA