

LEADING AT THE EDGE OF CHAOS

How To Create The Nimble Organization

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MAIN IDEA

Ongoing and constant change is now so all-pervasive that it has become essential for organizations to become “nimble” – able to respond to change and stay aligned with the needs of the marketplace more effectively and more efficiently than their competition. Simply put, the nimbleness of any organization is now a key element of any sustainable competitive advantage it may attempt to secure and defend.

To be nimble, however, means more than mere flexibility or rapid adaptation to changing market conditions. It’s really all about execution. A nimble organization succeeds by implementing changes better and faster than any of its competitors – not just by recognizing when a change is required. Thus, the status of nimbleness is earned and then retained one battle at a time. It is never derived from historical successes or a proud track record. Instead, the title must be earned each and every time a change is needed.

The benefits of being nimble, however, are impressive. Nimble organizations:

- Attract and retain more competent employees – who are attracted to working for the market leader.
- Design and deliver more creative solutions to customers – often even before customers have requested these new products.
- Are well positioned to sell to the new companies which are entering the marketplace.
- Delight customers – by correctly anticipating their future needs and being in a position to fill their unstated requirements.

In all, the marketplace is now in a state of ceaseless turmoil, with what was at the cutting edge just a few years ago rapidly becoming irrelevant and out-of-touch. Success in this kind of environment is derived when organizations can execute changes in the way they do business quickly. If a business enterprise is to be able to respond and adapt quickly to changing market conditions, it must have built the internal corporate capability for reshaping and redefining itself continuously. That way, no matter how unpredictable or how chaotic the marketplace becomes, the organization will always be positioned to prosper.

In the final analysis, any leader understands its not what they know that counts but what they do. Results are generated by concrete actions, not by good intentions. Thus, leaders of nimble businesses put a high degree of emphasis on execution – on doing what needs to be done better than anyone else. Put changes into action faster than competitors and it won’t matter how chaotic the marketplace becomes – the nimble organization will always respond faster than anyone else.

1. Why Organizations Need To Become More Nimble. Page 2

In the unpredictable and constantly evolving environment of business, the ability to sense change and respond quickly is a competitive advantage. Nimble organizations excel, not only at seeing the need for change, but in actually executing whatever is required. Put simply, unless a business organization is nimble, it will get out of synch with the marketplace.

2. How To Create A Nimble Organization. Page 3

The best paradigm for nimbleness is that nimble organizations are like a professional sports team. They understand the rules of the game, have a good training regime, set high performance goals, employ good mental conditioning and then perform expertly in high-risk / high-reward situations. In short, to create a nimble organization, build a great team.

3. The Key Role of Human Due Diligence. Page 4

In most organizations, there is only a finite reservoir of resources which can be applied to any change process. Human due diligence is the process of measuring the depth and extent of this reservoir. It is the process of establishing just how much human capital is available for future use in implementing changes to the organization.

4. What It Takes To Become A Nimble Organization. Pages 5-6

Nimble organizations need capable and experienced leaders. Without the right kind of leadership, even the most well placed nimble organization will be swamped by the need for change. Good leaders are a prerequisite for nimbleness and an essential for enduring adaptability.

5. How To Fine-Tune A Nimble Organization. Page 7

Once you have a nimble organization in place, how do you keep pushing the edge of the envelope outwards? You can try a combination of several different things:

- Condition the organization for ongoing turbulence.
- Systemize and expand your change knowledge database.
- Try more genuine delegation and employee empowerment.
- Place a high value on structured flexibility.
- Set up a strong sponsor network.

6. The Future Belongs To Those Who Are Nimble. Page 8

No one doubts that the level of turbulence in the global, political and economic environment will increase rather than decrease in the future. Therefore, nimbleness is set to become even more critical for success in the future. Yet, in many ways, the ultimate objective of becoming and remaining nimble is less important than the fact the organization makes the attempt to become more nimble. For most, the journey is the destination.

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