



## Change Agility

Catherine Daw, MBA, CMC, Hudson Certified Coach

### **Combining agile practices with change management improves chances for success and sustainment.**

You know when *Harvard Business Review* publishes articles on agile in their magazine two issues in a row that it is a topic moving mainstream; and we're not talking the agile many of us know. It is mainstream through the lens of topics such as HR and scaling agile to create flexible organizations.

Many newer companies like Spotify were born agile and continue to develop that style as they've grown. More traditional hierarchies are making a transition to more agile-like environments – not without challenge, pain and opportunity. It requires facing challenges of scale – how to introduce agile, what kind of agile, and how it fits within the context of the business and what a VUCA world is creating.

Within the frame of this year's Change Leadership conference theme – 'Change in the face of AI and Robotics' the concept of Change Agility deserves time, attention and deliberate intent. Most of us are familiar with agile as implemented on projects. These agile teams designed to stay close to customer and adapt quickly to changing conditions will result in higher team productivity, faster time to market and lower risk when implemented correctly. And yet the majority of leaders, teams and organizations are agility deprived. They often don't understand it let alone how to effectively implement or instill the discipline required to make it work. In other words – becoming focused, fast and flexible.

Dr. Nick Horney has been a leader in the field of both change and agile. He has recognized the

need to create agility advantage within corporate culture, leadership and teams. In other words when implemented well, strategically and with deliberate intent it will provide a Return on Agility (ROA).

Research conducted the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) demonstrated that agile firms grow revenue 37% faster and generate 30% higher profits than non-agile companies. A compelling reason to sit up and take notice.

The practice of change management has been impacted by the continuing turbulent business environment. In fact, this turbulence has overwhelmed its current methods and models – causing continued challenges to successfully deliver on significant change initiatives intended to rapidly transform business performance. Thus, the concept of using agility practices in change management became a natural shift in capability and application. However, most of the current change agility approaches have focused on process elements borrowing pages from the large A style of agile – like scrums and sprints. And to a degree ignored or paid little attention to the organization, leadership and team agility requirements. In other words, the people side of agile.

With the premise that change is for people, about people and executed by people means we need to ensure agile practices contemplate the management of talent, building the right levels of leadership and team agility along with shifts in organizational culture. To emphasize the urgency

of this level of agility just look to the “gig economy” where temporary, flexible jobs are commonplace and companies tend toward hiring independent contractors and freelancers instead of full-time employee. In fact, Intuit has predicted by 2020 that 40% of American jobs will fit this description. There is no turning back as the makeup of the talent available to work on initiatives becomes much more dynamic and fragmented.

In Horney's book, *Focused, Fast and Flexible: Creating Agility Advantage in a VUCA World* he presents not only a compelling case but a way forward in implementing effective, simple and rapid practices and processes. The Agile Model® developed in 2002 is based on multi-disciplinary surveys and applied research on organizational change demands. It represents one of the new breed of change frameworks focused on creating organizations, leaders, teams and individuals that are more than just change ready. In other words, agile.

This Agile Model® leverages five critical drivers:

#### **Anticipate Change**

Interpret the potential impact of business turbulence and trends along with the implications to the enterprise.

#### **Generate Confidence**

Create a culture of confidence and engagement of all associates into effective and collaborative teams.

#### **Initiate Action**

Provide the fuel and systems to make things happen proactively and responsively at all levels of the organization.

#### **Liberate Thinking**

Create the climate and conditions for fresh solutions by empowering, encouraging and teaching others to be innovative.

#### **Evaluate Results**

Keeping the focus and managing the knowledge to learn and improve from actions.

The Agile Model® provides a directional instrument for the future and helping organizations stay true to agile and its benefits. Getting the people part right is the foundation for making it work. From there change has a higher chance for success and sustainment. I encourage those who wish to follow this approach to consider as a first step reading Horney's book.

The Agile Model® is a registered trademark of Agility Consulting & Training LLC.

---

#### **TidalShift**

250 Yonge Street, Suite 2201-49, Toronto, ON M5B 2L7  
Toll-Free +1 877 776 3886 | 416 485 1584 [tidalshift.ca](http://tidalshift.ca)

