

## **Agility and Anticipation, a Tale of Two Business Strategies**

When the competition launches a new product, how do you react? Chances are, you act quickly and decisively to address the changing factors and conditions.

In short, you use agility to change directions and head the competition off at the pass. But what if you could skip that pivot altogether?

Think about some of the most powerful, most industry-disruptive products and services that have become well-known of late. Put them in context with the concept of agility.

Did Kickstarter become a dominant force in the growing crowdsourcing industry because it was agile? Was agility the driving force behind Facebook's dominance in social media? Of course not. The reason is that agility is a form of reaction to an outside force.

### **Agility Is Reactionary, Not Proactive**

Your organization may be the fastest around at being agile, but it's still a form of reaction, something of an after-the-fact event. You're taking on problems as they happen, putting out fires here and there.

### **Agility Is a Lateral Move, Not a Forward One**

Moreover, agility doesn't allow you to innovate and jump ahead of the competition. As examples such as Kickstarter and Facebook illustrate, game-changing products and services don't happen because of agility; they happen because of anticipation.

### **Agility Is Outside-In, Which Is Limiting**

The level of pervasive disruption that you need comes from the inside out (making the first move) rather than the outside in (moving in response to something).

By using strategies such as Hard Trends (those things we know for certain are going to occur) and Soft Trends (those that may occur but are open to influence), you can anticipate the future and, from there, plan accordingly. That's a dynamic force that moves from the inside out, rather than the outside in.

### **Agility and Anticipation: Better Together**

Although my Anticipatory Organization Model is geared to showing both organizations and individuals how to anticipate the future and to make decisions with the utmost confidence, it would be unreasonable to suggest that agility is utterly obsolete. Not at all.

No matter how adept we are at anticipating the future, there will inevitably be problems and events that call for some form of response. Given that, my question is: Would the ability to effectively anticipate the future make you and your organization more agile?

The answer is a resounding yes. Let's paint a scenario to illustrate that point.

### **Being a Company That Anticipates**

Your organization is highly regulated by the government. Being anticipatory, you're constantly on the lookout for new laws that will impact your activities. In monitoring new legislation, you spot a bill that will affect your organization's tax structure. It seems likely to pass, so you notify your attorneys to begin work on restructuring your employee benefits plan to take advantage of the new guidelines.

The bill becomes law, and your organization is already set to leverage the new rules. By contrast, other organizations also affected by the legislation are forced to scramble after the fact.

That illustrates how being anticipatory makes an organization much more agile—a trait valued by many leaders. Even better, by anticipating what may occur in the future, an anticipatory organization is effectively positioned to act in advance—to pre-solve a problem before it really becomes a major headache.

What events and developments can you anticipate to become that much more agile? Let's start a discussion, comment below.



#### **About the Author:**

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