

Cruise from Personal Agility to Organizational Agility

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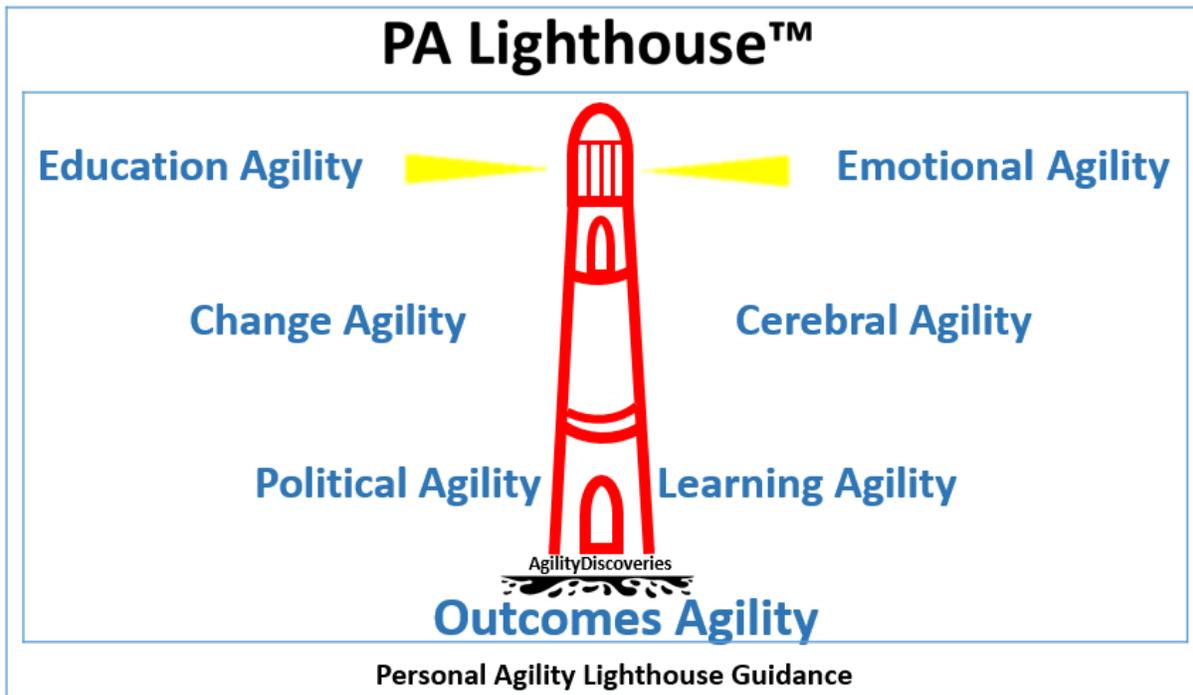
Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show how the authors' Personal Agility (PA) Lighthouse model; PA Lighthouse™ is most germane in terms of the entrepreneurial and organizational element. Specialist focus on practice regimes, planning and psychology of effective skills development relevant to self-evaluation and self-reflection alter courses as and when appropriate. Techniques relevant to resolution, negotiation and identity expansion for growth into the organizational agility space are touched in this paper. From a philosophical and practical perspective, the authors' explore how the PA Lighthouse™ might foster an approach to the idea and practice of professionalism. Whilst drawing from the agile mindset to inform aspects of preparation and practical skills development, the authors cruise through general extensions of motivation and building flexibility as the voyage travels from Personal Agility (PA) to Organizational Agility (OA). The authors' journey implies the methods and approaches to go from where you are to where you want to be as the deliverable.

Keywords: Personal Agility, Organizational Agility, Cruise, OKR, R&D, IDL

Introduction

The authors are going to attempt to guide the readers through a cruise from Personal Agility (PA) to Organizational Agility (OA). The business imperatives to attain organizational goals in the authors' mind is when multi-faceted competencies are instituted. These alone according to the authors may not suffice. Exhibit 1 from the 2017 Baltic Project Management conference (Raji and Michal, 2017)ⁱ shown below illustrates the seven agility flavors to gain competitive advantage.



The authors have pondered over the ‘whys’ for the bumpy ride of the transformations in the agile/digital paradigm shift. McKinsey’s Aaron De Smet and Chris Gagnon (McKinsey & Company, 2017)ⁱⁱ explain what is driving organizational agility, why it matters, and what to do in their article “Going from fragile to agile”. They talk about value, integrity, collaboration and excellence. All of these are true indicators for convergence of markets as is a well-designed personal agility that needs to flow through to organizational agility. Therefore, if you want to make any kind of transformation in your company it is a good idea to reach a state of organizational agility and this can be made possible through the honing of the seven Personal Agility model at all levels.

Education Agility

In the authors’ context, education agility is to do ‘role-playing in companies’ (Etu.ie, 2017)ⁱⁱⁱ, getting the feel of the pain points of the person sitting in a different chair and doing the roles that does not necessarily fall into your daily routine. Organizations learn and feel the new trends of business models in order to disrupt themselves. The question then is; what your core business (daily routine) is, and what could disrupt your core business? Does an organization have the ability to adapt? Put your organization into a disruptor’s shoes. Does an organization have the ability to experiment with new business models or innovate them? Thus when simple questions such as these get answered, then organizational agility is originated from the ability to adapt to changing environments or the ability to disrupt businesses. Especially now that it is very valid

when the “digital era,” will soon replace the information age as quoted in the Disrupt or get disrupted by the “digital era”! (Forbes.com, 2017)^{iv}

All industries are affected. Innovative breakthroughs in technology, medicine, transportation, machine learning are transforming, will all continue to transform the world we live and work in. Organizations and leaders when prepared can easily adapt to the “digital era”. Getting the feel of the pain points on a personal level can be achieved through mentoring with people who already exist where we want to be. On an organizational level this can be achieved using benchmarking with already disrupted industries in the current playing field. At another personal level we should also be aware of T-shaped_(Wladawsky-Berger, 2017)^v people. At an organizational level it can be achieved through networking with other industries or creating subsidiaries to learn the new business models. We could call it the T shaped Organization!

Change Agility

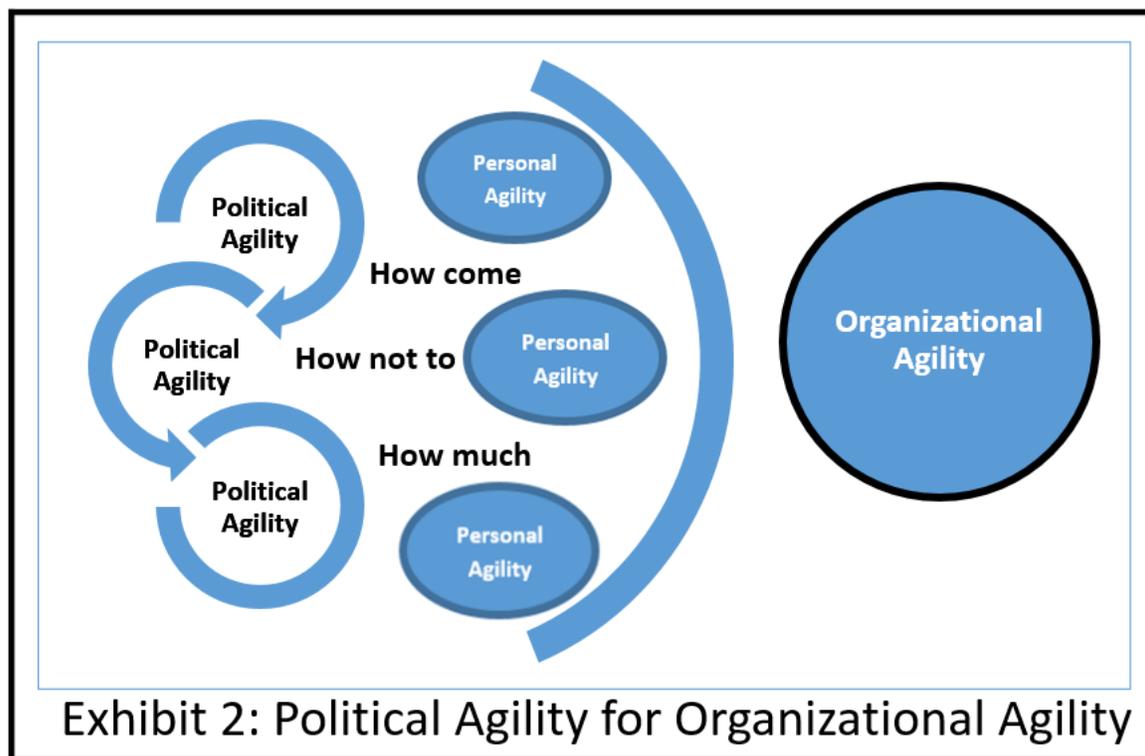
Taking the Last Responsible Moment (LRM) (dzone.com, 2017)^{vi} concept borrowed from lean thinking, as an example, the authors think that reaching the PA Lighthouse TMcan be realized without much turbulence if one keeps in mind that commitment can be deferred to the point where non-decision moments will have a negative impact. Having options is a luxury, but at some point, we need to take a decision and choose one. Organizational agility can be accomplished when a company has a strong and meaningful vision and the purpose, which in our paper symbolizes reaching the lighthouse safely and the ways and means by which one can reach the PA Lighthouse TM.

The challenge here is to orchestrate all of the employees and teams to reach the lighthouse. For example, one needs to be focused on the lighthouse and still be nimble enough to reach the lighthouse through various challenges. In order to do so organizations can implement Objective and Key Results (OKR)_(Weekdone, 2017)^{vii}. OKR is a popular leadership process for setting, communicating and monitoring quarterly goals and results in organizations. The goal of OKRs is to connect a company, a team and personal objectives in a hierarchical way towards measurable results, making all the employees work together in one unified direction. It could be envisioned as not pushing for fixed Key Results, but communicating clearly the next steps (Objectives). This can give teams the power and knowledge to make the appropriate decisions (Key Results) and to figure out if the decisions should be deferred, or left open for further dialogue.

Change agility is also about the speed of change (Actionable Conversations, 2017)^{viii}. Here taking into account an inertia inside a typical large enterprise, where the rate of change outside is usually much greater than the rate of change inside could be of great advantage. Keeping in mind, leaders may need to keep an eye on the business environment radar and may have to constantly measure the speed of change outside. Based on this gathered data, implementing new business and operational models in order to catch up with the speed and strive for much higher speed of change will help organizations wholistically.

Political Agility

The industry of analyzing an organization may require establishing solid relationships from the get go. Creative solutions to political dilemmas, getting the buy-in may require individuals to be involved with an agile mindset. This may be attained when individuals work independent of politics at every single strata, situation, project, team so on and so forth. So the queries here for the personal agility of an individual to reach up to organizational agility will be ‘How come’, ‘How much’ and ‘How not to’ as shown in the Exhibit 2 below.



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Exhibit 2 above highlights the essential questions to ask oneself: - How come the situation came to this point? How much damage is already done and how much can be avoided so that one can find out, how not to damage even more and how not to have a repeat performance. Extrapolating some of the points from ‘Rebecca Knight’ (Harvard Business Review, 2017)^{ix} these queries when answered by each individual to full satisfaction pave the path from personal agility to organizational agility

Emotional Agility

Hidden within politics and shrouded among the vast clouds of politics lay the sea of emotions which drive the ship to perilous seas. Once an individual has come to terms with one’s errors and

emotions to become useful, supportive, and congregant, the overall organization becomes fruitful. The ladder of the individual emotion often climbs the steps right up to the bridge of a ship where the Captain is also affected thus affecting the whole ship. Similarly, an organization has the same effect.

IDL (Impact Driven Leadership) (User, 2017)^x is in this manner reinforced in various individual work and business settings. Application of this agility skill helps to manage the expectations of difficult business vendors and customers by incorporating teams comprising of diverse individual skill sets. This ecosystem in an individual's agility accentuates organizational agility. ILT (Implicit Leadership theories) (Journals.sagepub.com, 2017)^{xi} explains in depth the attributes of effective leadership. The authors go a mile further in this paper to show how important the various emotions of an individual lead to an organization's success or failure.

To quote a simple example of how emotional agility and personal agility is of utmost importance for organizational agility spanning across multiple industries, here is an instance from the healthcare business research; Personal and Organizational Quality Assessment-Revised (POQA-R) (Pipe et al., 2017)^{xii}. They explored and evaluated the positive coping approaches on Personal and Organizational impact of an educational intervention on the stress levels. It significantly reduced the high measures of anxiety and the problems related to it in that healthcare study which used Personal and Organizational (POQA-R) scores. It was further found that the effective promotion of positive strategies for coping enhanced the well-being, personally and organizationally. Therefore, in the authors' minds we feel that emotional agility is to be honed at all altitudes.

Cerebral Agility

Taking insights from 'Julian Birkinshaw'(Forbes.com, 2017)^{xiii} (Forbes.com, 2017) the authors further define and explore this agility as the 'action oriented organizations'. If one takes an organizational chart of any company, the structure shows various departments at the functional, departmental and C-levels being responsible for different areas of the company. In the same manner, the cerebrum has different duties taken care of by varied sections. If there is perfect 360 integration, meaning all of the moving parts are co-ordinated and the boat is rowed in perfect rhythm by all the individuals, the success level of an organization is bound to be high. If one of the sections is amiss, therein comes the cerebral agility to make things right as is the case for any organization where an outside consultant is called in or an in house remedy is sought and implemented.

The capability of being agile in the moment makes the personal agility expands itself to organizational agility. As is with individuals who are trend setters increasing globalization of business with their out-of-the-box thinking. The dynamic complexity of how the brain and the mind works is quite simply genius to put it mildly. So to cruise all the way from person agility to organizational agility, the thoughts need to be at pre-mortem, post mortem and the actual

exercise of adoption, adaption levels within an individual and the organization in itself. The authors feel that revisiting these thought processes when taking the strides for each implementation will lead to the adaption, adoption, adaption cycle to be sharpened.

Learning Agility

In the authors' mind, learning agility is the answer to the question 'how does one stay open to new discoveries and learning opportunities'. It also means that one of the prerequisites may be to have the courage to admit that we do not know everything. If we can be brave enough to accept the fact that we may be wrong about our assumptions, we are then open to new detections and learning opportunities. This when applied on an organizational level, brings success.

Learning opportunities sprout from continuous improvements. This can happen when leaders take care of their employees' safety and encourage them to pinpoint the failures and solutions for the same. This concept is borrowed from the TPS (Toyota Production System) named the "Andon Cord"_(Willis, 2017)^{xiv}. Toyota implemented the Andon Cord as a physical rope that followed the assembly line and could be pulled to stop the manufacturing line at any time. The "Andon" is used as a signal to highlight an anomaly or opportunity for improvement. Encouraged employees pull the Andon Cord when they see a failure. Leaders are responsible for building the culture of pushing organizational capabilities to the edge so failures are bound to happen. What is worth mentioning here is that when a failure is seen and not brought to light, then the organizational culture has failed. This means either we don't push to the edge or we are scared to do it. Companies at all levels have a duty to measure the number of pulls and act accordingly.

The authors feel that it is better for the structure of companies to reflect the business value flow similar to production lines. For example, in business lines if interdependencies are avoided and diversity is included faster learning occur. Organizations instead of creating an R&D department, which is typically responsible for innovations and experiments; if the leaders create and encourage the culture, and the mindset of R&D at all levels in the structure, diverse and interdisciplinary teams could accelerate the pace of learning. Independent business lines are then able to create and experiment with new products and also be able to kill products. The goal is to learn from it.

Outcomes Agility

Outcomes Agility means inspiring, and pushing to excel beyond one's limit. It is about the long-term outcomes and benefits. Not only are delivery and sales, goals; but long-term satisfaction visibility as well. Organizational agility can be achieved by understanding the customer and the competition. Organizations that care about delighting the customer and respecting the competitors have objectives that move in forward directions and inspire leaders, teams, companies etc. to be better, and excel to the next level.

To achieve more and be successful, if a purpose is created, progress for optimum delivery alone will not be the focus. So taking on meaningful projects is the first thing we can do to create an environment where employees have a sense of purpose. To reach the PA Lighthouse™ and be guided to the safe shores being the purpose will make outcomes well within one's reach. When people see and feel the purpose then they can make pronounced decisions about what to do next, and make sure what could be the best for any organization's wellbeing.

In this era we see more and more boundary-less organizations thrive exceedingly well. Classical decision making models such as the prescriptive approaches to making decisions (A, Bangal and D., 2012)^{xv} that assumes that the individual evaluates and identifies alternatives in all possible ways, their significances, concerns, magnitudes; rationally chart the direction of the next course. In essence, our seven-agility model guides an individual's agility towards organizational agility whether the career is steady-state, linear, spiral or transitory.

Results and Conclusion

As the critical link between opportunities to improve any business, the authors' endeavor to lead with great efficiency the Organizational Agility with their seven-flavored model. To preserve the organizational integrity, agility skills provides numerous benefits to organizations, thus rapidly setting up the alignment growth from Personal Agility (PA) to Organizational Agility (OA). As shown in Exhibit 3 below, the authors feel that leading yourself and your personal effectiveness to become politically, emotionally, educationally and cerebrally savvy helps to lead to the organizational effectiveness towards the desired outcome which can be made consistent by learning and change agility. Each individual is a contributor for organizational transformation and evolution by managing hurdles positionally and exerting powerful engagement.

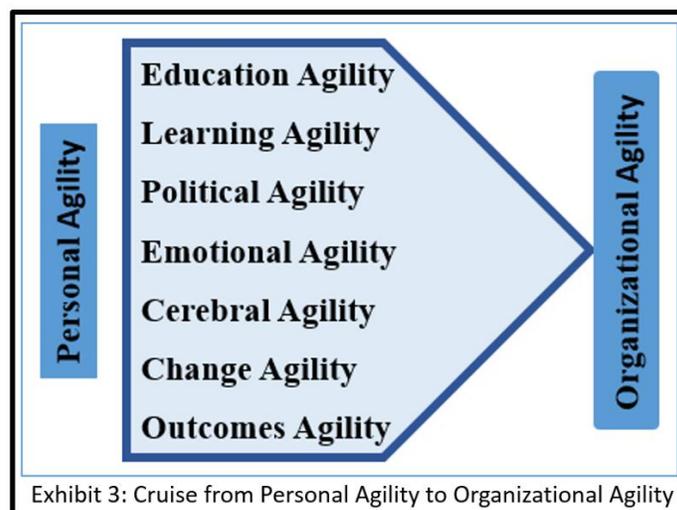


Exhibit 3: Cruise from Personal Agility to Organizational Agility

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Being well educated on all aspects of the organizational laws in every country and business vertical, having these duties and responsibilities deputized to the last individual in the totem pole of the organization would leave no ambiguity while taking the apt and appropriate company decisions. Therein lie the authors' Education Agility enabling the CEO to evaluate all of the options very quickly by putting himself/herself in the shoes of the others to choose the best course of actions. New trends whether it is 'digital' (Fintricity, 2017)^{xvi} or at a personal platform makes the transformation from personal to organizational agile and the agility boat sink-proof.

Organizations are helped to get much closer to the growing global marketplace by making use of the adequate and timely Emotional Agility skill sets with impact, drive, reinforcement and effective approaches. This knowledge intensive individuals and workforce help drive Personal agility towards Organizational agility.

If an organization is swimming against political currents there may be less commitment by individuals to the organization and loyalty is gone overboard without saying. For example, at some point in an individual's career in an organization, shifts occur in responsibility, onus may move from the individual to the organization. This tide whether it is extrinsic or intrinsic, lateral move or vertical move, if devoid of uncertainties makes the organizational highest performance. Political Agility plays a huge role in the crowning glory of a corporation.

In a catastrophe situation, extreme flexibility and addressing the inhibition (admitting that not everyone knows everything), is a core strongpoint. Adapting Business Rules in Decision Management (Solutions, 2017)^{xvii} from the software world, whether it is the CEO or a subordinate: gathering compound views before arriving at a decision creates value through strategy. External thinking may be overlooked by an emotional state at this juncture. So it is best to want to learn more and continuously learn. Therefore, Learning Agility, according to the authors in a situation like this may need many heads and being agile to adopt and adapt needs to be at the forefront.

Sometimes certain circumstance setting appears to have limited options, whereas a constant edge to assess and reassess the circumstance at hand with possible changes may change the status quo. Targeted objectives with successful results are the key to berthing safely at the destination port. The authors feel that probing for better options as and when they emerge remains the embodiment of Change Agility.

Digital Business Leadership (DBL) from the 'Leaders Edge Forum' (Leadingedgeforum.com, 2017)^{xviii} shows how peak levels of performance and maintaining productivity levels has to take center stage. This can be achieved by being prepared to accept and deal with any eventuality in any situation is what Outcomes Agility is all about. Directing the decisions, purpose, and progress makes an individual resilient, building the strong foundation for a buoyant organization.

More than often, there arises a compelling business roadblock where all of the options are laid down for detailed analysis, the concept of "thinking on your feet" (Inc.com, 2017)^{xix} sets in here meaning there is very little time and whatever decision is being made has to be credible,

powerful and persuasive. Individuals from all the business units have to rapidly evaluate and exhaust all available options before arriving at a decision to bring the organization and business to remove the roadblock. The authors' cruise from Personal Agility to Organizational Agility is dealt with in this case with Cerebral Agility by sharpening the mind and the brain, the two most powerful navigators of the cerebrum.

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