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Agilizing the Enterprise
Author: Joseph Raynus
Reviewer: Carolyn Hue

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW

Book Title: **Agilizing the Enterprise: Collaborative Leadership, Dynamic Strategy and Organizational Flexibility**

Author: **Joseph Raynus**

Publisher: CRC Press

List Price: $79.95   Format: Hardcover, 240 pages

Publication Date: June 2018   ISBN: 978-1-138-19797-8

Reviewer: **Carolyn Hue, PMP**   Review Date: March 2019

Introduction

The book "Agilizing the Enterprise" provides a conceptual insight into how strategic innovation enables businesses, companies and organizations to adapt to changes. The author talks about the inevitability of an organization to respond to change in order to survive the competition, and likens its failure to do so to the fall of civilization. Agility is depicted as a character or mindset to be responsive to change whether to external environment or within the organization. A successful response requires a planned effective solution.

Overview of Book's Structure

The author adopts a narrative approach using several classroom scenarios, and through conversations between a professor and a former student who experiences frustration at his existing job through his job changes and identifying an agile organization. Discussion topics include volatility, uncertainty, complex ambiguity (VUCA) environment in chapter 3, agility mindset, problem solving, innovation, and strategy through the rest of the chapters in the book.

Highlights

In chapter 5, the author pointed out that "failure to adapt to change is deeply rooted in the processes and techniques" (pg. 52). However, organizational responses can be distinguished as unplanned or planned changes. Unplanned changes are unanticipated, while planned changes are always strategic (pg. 60- 61). For strategic change implementation to be successful, the organization need to do gap analysis of its current state and respond effectively to VUCA driven changes. These strategic changes can be implemented progressively or it could be revolutionary, and should be managed with good communication.

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Page 1 of 4
PM World Library – www.pmworldlibrary.net

PM World *Journal*
Vol. VIII, Issue IV – May 2019
www.pmworldjournal.net

Book Review

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In chapter 7, the author identified the biggest problems faced by businesses and organizations are their lack of agility, leadership resisting change, and the falsehood of using the same formula, i.e. the same processes or ideas that yielded success will continue in future. Instead, leaders and managers should adopt an agile mindset, be open to ideas, views and that professionals besides themselves, may have valuable contributions to organizational transformation. The idea of establishing innovation hubs to foster creativity and innovation to promote buy-in from everyone in the organization as a way to elicit collaboration and behavioral changes. To breathe life into innovation hubs, it is insufficient for the leadership to just acts as sponsor of the hubs, but also necessary for them to be actively involved with the implementation and decision-making processes. The author further suggested that hubs should have open space, natural lightings, high ceilings, and color furniture to encourage spontaneity, interaction and creativity among participants. I was surprised to learn that "millennials are fonder of talking and conversing with other people, and sharing ideas in person instead of digital platforms and forum" (pg. 150), and as such face to face interactions should be emphasized in organizations.

In chapter 8, the author stressed on open innovation strategies, using right tools, principles of bottom up approach, getting stakeholders engagement and ownership, and using problem solving process. The author then discussed how emergent technologies along with globalization and consumer adoption can lead to business disruption. Business organizations can respond by either introducing new products and services, or gradual enhancements. However, adoption of either one or the other is risky and may cause the business organization to lose its competitiveness. Instead strategic innovation should be adopted since it utilizes both disruptive and incremental approaches (pg. 194). The organization also should increase its internal agility and innovate and execute quickly. It has to build up its core, combine discipline and creativity, focus on needs and requirements of its customers and potential customers.

Highlights: What I liked!

The highlights in the book for me were the discussions on problem solving, differences between disruptive and incremental innovation, strategic innovation, and the enterprise agility model.

I liked the tangible description of the 7 phases of problem solving in Chapter 8, as these phases are very relatable to project management processes and knowledge areas.

1. Problem solving phase: create an outline to identify the problem and to solve it.
2. Fact finding phase: find all the facts related to the problem.
3. Problem phase: discover more about the problem and describe in greater detail.
4. Idea phase: develop alternative solutions, and contingency plans.
5. Solution phase: refine the chosen solution for implementation, ensure solution fits the problem.

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Page 2 of 4
PM World Library – www.pmworldlibrary.net

PM World Journal
Vol. VIII, Issue IV – May 2019
www.pmworldjournal.net   Book Review

Agilizing the Enterprise
Author: Joseph Raynus
Reviewer: Carolyn Hue

6. Approval phase: ensure all the stakeholders and resources are available at execution at the right time and place.
7. Realization phase: realizing new problems that arose or identify parts of problem which was not initially considered.

I also liked the introduction to the "Enterprise Agility Model" in Chapter 10, regarding the matrix of Dynamic Strategy against Organizational Flexibility. The balance between Dynamic Strategy supported by leadership and innovation components, and Organization Flexibility driven through flexibility in the business model, and the ability to be adaptive are critical for an enterprise to respond successfully to VUCA changes. This defines the big picture agile enterprise mindset.

Who might benefit from the Book?

This book is suitable for those who are curious about agile adoption at the executive and organization level. If the reader wants a high-level insight into agile adoption and how innovation and strategy enable agility then this is the book to read.

Conclusion

The first takeaway from this book is that it is possible for someone to learn and develop agility, if the person works in a true agile organization with a culture that foster innovation and creativity, and if it is able to attract and retain the younger workforce. Critically, it is important that you know what you want, and to find the job in the right agile organization which are the necessary ingredients for job satisfaction.

Second takeaway, is that in order for an organization or enterprise to survive in current VUCA environment, it cannot continue to rely on past practices or processes, instead it has to use strategic innovation processes to respond to change so that it can compete effectively and successfully.

For more about this book, go to: https://www.crcpress.com/Agilizing-the-Enterprise/Raynus/p/book/9781138197978

Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the PMI Silver Spring Chapter. Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Silver Spring Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Silver Spring Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published. If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact editor@pmworldjournal.net.

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Page 3 of 4
PM World Library – www.pmworldlibrary.net

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www.pmworldjournal.net

Agilizing the Enterprise
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About the Reviewer

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Carolyn Hue is currently an Independent PM consultant, with ten years of experience in project and program management. She has worked mostly in the IT public sector environment, engaging in a wide range of technology projects, process improvement initiatives, and managing IT cloud services operation. She has been PMP certified since 2012, and also holds ITIL Foundation v3 and Service Strategy certifications. Her other passions are travelling, and volunteering in PMI and other non-profit organizations.

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Page 4 of 4
PM World Library – www.pmworldlibrary.net