



› THE CHANGING FACE OF CHANGE AND THE INCREASING NEED FOR AGILITY

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Change – whether personal or professional – is difficult enough to handle. But what about when the nature of change is changing?

FT Longitude – part of the FT media group – recently undertook research into **how the world's most prominent business consultancies** (Deloitte, EY, KPMG, Bain & Company included) are talking about transformation.

The results showed a “shift in how change is told”: for example, less of an explicit focus on digital transformation but a greater emphasis on the “transformative force of AI”.

And this was just one area where consultancies were advising on reactive rather than proactive change. This means a reduction in longer-term change considerations – such as embedding sustainability – and more about short-term shocks such as transformation in costs, skills, finance, culture, supply chain resilience and business models.

CONTINUOUS AND MULTIPLE TRANSFORMATIONS

According to the research, there has been a **“rise of constant evolution”** in which an emphasis on continuous and multiple transformations has “doubled over the last five years”. Coverage of this in tier one media examined by FT Longitude – such as the BBC, Bloomberg, FT, The Economist and the New York Times – points to **certain drivers** of this, including **regulation, cost efficiency, technological disruption, competitive advantage and business growth**.

The increase in coverage for particular technology areas is significant: Agentic AI (304%), open-source AI (265%), Quantum (106%), AI governance (85%), AI resource efficiency (82%), AI and automation (63%), etc.

And, in the wake of multiple transformations in organisations, the research referenced the issue of **“transformation fatigue”** which **“eroded employee support for change”** and created **“lower levels of engagement, intentions to stay and psychological safety”**.

Amid these challenges of change, what is the relevance and value of agile working approaches?

Imran Ahmad - Senior Adviser, Agile at PeopleCert - feels that the “agile DNA” is about responding to change: “Seeing what’s happening, making a best-guess plan and pivoting as things change.” For example, the tool known as objectives and key results (OKRs) creates a mid-term strategy with goals which are broken down into work packages for delivery.

Regarding the increasing preoccupation with AI, he considers agile as adept at managing this velocity of change, especially when something new is launched every few weeks. Having an agile method such as Scrum – with so-called sprints and checkpoints every two weeks – means organisations can stop, assess and change tack if necessary.

"Ahead of deploying tools or methods, organisations need to develop an “agile mindset” which goes beyond any one team to encompass the wider enterprise"

Imran Ahmad - Senior Adviser, Agile at PeopleCert

AGILE – WIDE ADOPTION, BUT ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

In his blog article introducing the latest Forrester report on the “global state of agile adoption”, **Diego Lo Giudice – VP and Principal Analyst**, calls agile “an unshakable foundation, guiding teams towards success in the age of AI and beyond”.

As reflected in FT Longitude’s findings about the short-term shocks delivered by technology advances, Giudice describes **how the “breakneck pace” of tech evolution aligns with “agile values, principles and practices” and the “enduring need for adaptability, collaboration, transparency and speed”**.

However, he cautions that – despite 95% of professionals calling agile critical to their operations – only 7% are fully proficient in agile practices. He goes on to say that “Overcoming these hurdles **requires a strategic blend of agile ways of working tailored to each organisation’s unique needs**, coupled with **a commitment to modernising all angles of the organisation with continuous learning and adaptation**”.

TAKING A LONG-TERM VIEW WITH AGILE

Imran Ahmad is cautious about the notionally low level of agile proficiency identified in Forrester’s report: “Organisations that embrace agile are more hesitant to describe themselves as fully proficient, as there is no end to agile evolution – they are constantly striving to be better.”

However, he added, less agile organisations may offer a more accurate reflection of the research, with their varying levels of investment and commitment. This can mean agile approaches and training being adopted by one or a few, small teams but not implemented more widely.

“As an agile coach, I often hear people say that ‘agile won’t work in our company’. This stance already hinders any possible implementation in the organisation and can end up being diluted with a hybrid approach or even given an artificial end point, when agile is a continuum.”

Agile ways of working are, Ahmad said, a long-term investment which elevates the concepts used in single teams to other business units and eventually the organisation as a whole: “It’s like planting a seed to grow a tree with a stable trunk, but with flexible branches.”

Forrester’s Giudice emphasises the importance of leadership in enabling organisations to fully embrace “agile’s collaborative ethos, values and principles”.

Indeed, leading by example is what Ahmad recommends: “When agile leaders show their organisation how they are shifting strategies themselves, others are keener to follow and this normalises it.

“When employees are confronted with constant change, they need to understand the benefits of agile and have an environment of psychological safety where experimentation and failure is not just accepted but welcomed.”

"Leaders have to do more than just commit to agile; they must lead the change!"

Diego Lo Giudice - VP and Principal Analyst, Forrester

OPENING THE DOOR TO “STAGILITY”

Leaders are certainly – according to Deloitte’s 2025 Global Human Capital Trends report – enthusiastic about greater agile adoption, with **85%** saying **organisations** “need to create **more agile ways** of organising work to swiftly adapt to market changes”.

However, this appears at odds with the experience of **workers**, 49% of whom are “worried the pace of change will leave them behind” and **75% “hoping for greater stability in work”**. Deloitte refers to achieving balance between leaders’ and workers’ aspirations for the workplace as “**stagility**”.

The importance of reaching a level of equilibrium between agility and stability is, according to the report, recognised by 72% of organisations, though the proportion of those “making great progress” with it totals only 6%. The answer to this, Deloitte says, is “reimagined organisation structures, greater intentionality in the design and resourcing of work, a better understanding of workers as individuals and stronger networks” inside and outside the organisation.

In practice, this could mean organisations “moving away from hardwired jobs towards soft-wired networks of multidisciplinary teams, each aligned to specific business outcomes,” Deloitte suggests.

The so-called “**anchors for “stagility”**” include people working in skilled, cross-functional teams, powered by AI, working towards value and outcome creation in the service of customers. It is, the report concludes, **not about “stability or agility” but “enabling both”**.



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