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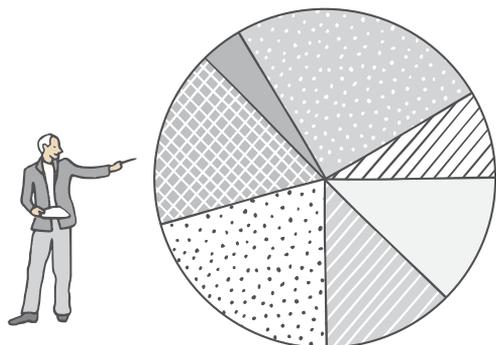
On Mar 23 & 24, Business Agility Conference will return to New York after two years with an apt theme - Moments of Connection. The focus this year is to reconnect the business agility community and re-create moments for collective intelligence and understanding through the conference. From the beginning, the fundamental premise of the conference has been such that anyone who is part of the conference should be able to get on stage and share their thoughts on what they have learned from their experience so that attendees should be able to draw inspiration from it. With this year's conference being in a hybrid state, I hope you're as excited as I am about what's in store for all of us. This special conference edition is curated as a testament to you and shares a rich and worthy combined knowledge and experience of our contributors - Shannon Ewan (1), Todd Rebella (2), Aimee Palmer (3), Pia-Maria Thorén (4), Jeev Chugh (5), Sally Elatta (6), Trisha Hall (7), Rakesh Kondvilkar (8), Amol Pradhan (9), Pete Behrens (10), Nizar Khoja (11), Hendrik Esser (12), Marcin Floryan (13), Darja Smite (14), Jens Coldewey (15), Ram Bathija (16), Carol McEwan (17), Kemmy Raji (18), Howard Sublett (19). As the business world is reshaping with the COVID era, we look at the dimensions of organizational resilience through community robustness and creative agility. Organizational resilience is an important driver for gaining a competitive advantage. We have some deeper conversations on organizational resilience, organizational ambidexterity, dynamic capabilities, and transformational leadership. We build on these insights to advance a more comprehensive and complex approach to resilience dynamics in organizations. Organizational resilience is an ambidextrous dynamic capability that allows firms to take competitive advantage by rapidly and efficiently coping with adversity. The strategic consequences are borne by organizations, which are the result of a combination of competing exploration and exploitation measures taken in the face of adversity. There's an articulated fundamental contradiction between robustness and agility. Attaining organizational resilience is possible by structurally separating robustness and agility, and shifting attention from and to inversely. And, recognizing the usefulness of organizational context which enables and encourages leaders to engage in a robust and agile behavior. Organizational resilience, it is a dynamic capability of firms that is built with sensing, seizing, and transforming opportunities.

I hope you connect, enjoy and cherish the experience of this conference with fellow leaders, and will share and expand on the collective knowledge and learning beyond the conference after these two days. We couldn't have been successful without your support, so thank you. Have fun!

Manoj Khanna,
 Managing Editor & Publisher



Contributors



Focus on the outcome of the work, not the framework

Nizar Khoja

In my time as a transformation leader, I have watched many organizations try to create or enable agility through transformation at the execution level—where most of the focus is on the delivery of work. While not necessarily incorrect, however, this focus sometimes misses the purpose and value of the work. We also miss the connection between strategy and execution by not properly understanding business outcomes.

This challenge is often compounded when organizations rely on specific frameworks (such as Scrum, Kanban, or SAFe) and try to work within these rather than understanding whether the frameworks are appropriate for their type of work.

A better approach is to focus on outcomes so that the ways of working are secondary. In other words, the goal should be to bring agility in at the outcome level, not at the execution level. It is essential for organizations to understand how the implementation of the transformational approach can help an organization to have positive change with the right purpose and goals, without becoming rigidly focused on new ways of working.

In 2017, one of North America's top financial institutions, with more than 80,000+ employees and customers in over 40+ countries, decided to revitalize one of its key business units using Business Agility. This unit was responsible for bringing in the majority of company revenue and was so large that the transformation would directly impact almost 4,000 employees and indirectly impact 20,000+ employees. This was no small task: after all, it's never easy to create inertia in a large organization with almost 100 years of entrenched history and practices.

However, with the right leadership, defined outcomes, and engagement at all levels, the organization was able to successfully transition to a new way of working. The leadership group was on-boarded and willing to both learn and pivot in their approaches. They took readily to supporting and fostering the culture of continuous learning which was key to a new way of working. In other words, they were “not only singing the song but trying to understand the lyrics” at the same time.

SO, WHY TRANSFORM?

At the beginning, the organization identified the following key problems which they aimed to solve through their transformation:

1. Being busier and working harder than ever, but still struggling to deliver more value [employee engagement]
2. Being slow to respond to market opportunities and threats [speed to market]
3. Their execution not meeting their strategy [misaligned between outcome and output]
4. Competing business priorities across silos [lack of alignment and transparency on priorities between different groups and teams]

And how did it start?

As the transformation executive responsible, I had a first-hand role in initiating the transformation journey. With the problems clearly articulated, it was necessary for us to have alignment with senior leaders on the purpose and outcomes of the transformation. First, we brought all relevant parties together to agree on the guardrails for how to work through the transformation. They were:

1. Outcomes must be clear
2. Effort must be aligned to outcomes
3. Constantly learn
4. Pivot as needed

Next, we initiated the transformation journey with the following steps:

1. Create a common alignment on purpose
2. Introduce the guiding principles to support overall transformation
3. Understand the outcomes through OKRs and Transformation OKRs
4. Identify the key roles to support transformation
5. Define the path to Agility and Assessment
6. Develop the Change Management and Business Agility Transformation Roadmap
7. Provide simplified and unified Business Agility processes and practices that focus on outcomes for any group or team
8. Introducing measures and sustainment

1. Create a common alignment on purpose:

We our journey of change by bringing all the leaders together and aligning on purpose. This was necessary in order to enable New Ways of Working, by organizing teams to maximize agility in the form of efficiency and productivity. In turn, this accelerated the delivery of measurable outcomes. Furthermore, we explored how to manage unlimited demand with limited supply or capacity through prioritization on value delivery based on data. All of this was in service to achieving business outcomes.

As we pursued alignment, we used a top-down and bottom-up approach (AKA a sandwich approach) where direction and priorities (with the focus on ‘what/why’) was top-down and delivery progression and impediments that required support (with the focus on ‘how’) was bottom-up.



2. Introduce the guiding principles to support overall transformation:

To ensure alignment of outcome across the transformation, we developed the following guiding principles:

1. Implement customer-centricity at every level of the organization.
2. Maintain an outcome-focused mindset (connection of strategy with work)
3. Employee engagement is the key
4. Change must impact the overall business ecosystem end to end
5. Foster a growth mindset and continuous-learning culture
6. Use Lean Change Management to make the transformation stick
7. Support outcome delivery through purposeful team design
8. Apply new Ways of Working appropriately to the type of work the teams are engaged in and outcomes they were trying to achieve. These Ways of Working should be guided and supported by BAI, EBA, Lean Startup, Management 3.0 and SAFe 5.0 (Business Agility track) as 'Fit for Purpose' Frameworks.
9. Ensure transparency and alignment across teams

3. Understand the outcomes through OKRs and Transformation OKRs

Once we identified our guiding principles, we introduced the concept of OKRs to the leadership team. OKRs (Objective and Key Results) are a lightweight strategy and alignment framework used to achieve an organization's desired outcomes through common goals, shared commitments, and clear accountability.

After introducing the concept, we worked with senior leaders to build a series of transformational OKRs and gain alignment on what we intended to achieve and how we would know we were successful in achieving it. We focused on three key themes that supported business outcomes:

1. Client/Partner Satisfaction
2. Employee Engagement
3. Operational Excellence/Continuous Improvement

We partnered with senior leaders to adopt and implement OKRs in their respective groups and use them as conversation points with colleagues.

4. Identify the key roles to support transformation

We identified four key roles required to support the transformation of this size: Transformation Strategists, Coaches, Enablement Leads and Change Managers. These roles are critical to support overall transformation and enable leaders to apply business agility practices and behaviours effectively.

Transformation Strategist: This seasoned role helps groups to strategize, organize and plan a business unit's transformation journey. They also act as a Leadership coach and work closely with senior leaders to explore new ways of tackling business problems, provide situational guidance for resolving long-standing problems in novel ways, and assist leaders in having a positive impact on downstream work. They make sure that each specific group transformation plan is aligned to overall business unit strategy. Usually, two or three individuals with specific skills were required to support this role.

Coaches: Provide overall support for specific groups to guide them through the transformation i.e., leadership support, coaching, and building capabilities. Usually, one or two individuals were required per group depending on the number of teams requiring support.

Enablement Leads: This role sits within specific groups. Individuals are identified within that group to support and were mandated with the following responsibilities:

- Leading Transformation efforts with a specific group
- Identifying One-Year group level 'New Way of Working' Transformation Outcomes
- Facilitates development of Outcomes
- Co-creation and ownership of Transformation roadmap with group leaders
- Ongoing creation and prioritization of Transformation backlog for the group
- Regular measurement of Outcomes (OKRs)
- Providing transparency (reporting out) overall health of Transformation
- Change Leadership on strategic initiatives

Two or three individuals per group were required to work closely with group leaders and teams.

Change Manager: The Change Management role is key to the transformation. Change Managers usually had the following responsibilities:

- Analysis of operational changes and assessing the change impact
- Communication with the affected employees and leaders
- Information transfer and documentation of process changes
- Creation of communication channels
- Development of a change plan
- Documentation and creation of change management reports

One Change Manager per group was required to work closely with Enablement Leads and teams.

5. Define the path to Agility and Assessment

We understood from the beginning of the transformation process that we were taking the teams on a journey, and that every group within the business unit were starting at different levels. As per our agreement with Leadership, we defined a maturity assessment that aligned Business Agility assessments based on the following criteria:

Category	Assessment for Mindset & Practices
Pre-crawl 	Starting journey/awareness and understanding of agility
Crawl 	Adopting agile practices/processes and learning about agility within delivery.
Walk 	Applying agile practices and processes in delivery.
Run 	Deliver by applying business agility processes & practices; apply growth mindset.
Fly 	Living & fostering agility in the work environment.



On average, most of the groups were at the “Walk” state and some were heading towards the “Run” state in their journey. This was considered successful, considering the organization was only three years into their journey.

6. Develop the Change Management and Business Agility Transformation Roadmap

Once we had defined the path to agility, and OKRs were defined with appropriate Key Results to measure progression metrics, we created a change management plan along with a business agility roadmap to clarify how we could approach transformation within a certain time-frame. High-level activities included:

1. **Creating the climate for change:** Providing awareness through newsletters, town halls, sharing the path to agility and change plans.
2. **Mobilizing:** Providing training and coaching, identifying key enablement leads, and other on-boarding activities of the teams
3. **Beginning new way of working:** Identifying teams within groups to transition to applying business agility practices and behavioural coaching.
4. **Transitioning to self sufficiency:** Moving a matured team into the sustainment phase and applying agility practices and behaviours as per their needs.

7. Provide simplified and unified Business Agility processes and practices that focus on outcomes for any group or team

We started with a simple and tactical approach to apply Business Agility practices agnostic to any specific framework. However, we also empowered coaches to support teams and guide them with appropriate frameworks that complemented their work and purpose.

This approach requires teams to:

1. Have clear outcomes (OKRs) that align with the organizational OKRs so they can be achieved collectively
2. Understand the work that is required to achieve the outcomes (OKRs)
3. Prioritize what matters by focusing on value and the impact that has been made. Learn to make the tough decisions to more effectively deprioritize WIP
4. Have cadences and ceremonies to refine the OKRs, and to keep narrowing down to the Key Results that really measure success. Focus on alignment and collaboration through daily or weekly sync. Achieve effective planning through monthly or quarterly outcome check-ins
5. Maintain reflection and continuous improvement through retrospectives; monitor OKRs and adjust immediately based on what has been discovered

All in all, the Business Agility process ensured that:

- Outcomes defined the work
- Value was delivered frequently, and feedback is gained in response
- The teams took time to reflect on whether the work had the desired impact

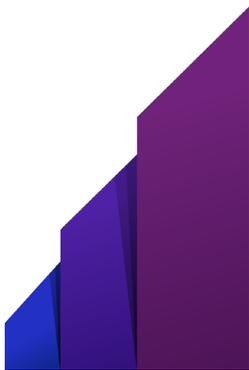
88% of groups adhere to Business Agility practices and behaviours at all levels	100% of groups connect their strategy with work through Outcomes (OKRs)	Major improvement in Efficiency and Productivity Ratios.
10% improvement in employee engagement and happiness metrics.	80% of employees feel that their work is supporting business unit Strategy (an increase of 5%)	The organization has won several customer satisfaction awards in the last two years.

8. Introducing measures and sustainment

Finally, we introduced measures that helped the organization understand the impact of these practices and behaviours through outcomes (OKRs) and benefits while applying processes and practices that supported these “New Way of Working”. These measures included:

- a. Measuring the impact of agility practices and behaviours on operational excellence in terms of speed (lead time), outcome achievement (throughput and OKRs), and predictability (velocity)
- b. Measuring the impact of a customer-centric and outcome-driven culture on client/partner satisfaction to achieve superior customer and partner values by simplifying delivery and optimising primarily for flow of outcomes.
- c. Measuring the impact on people’s engagement by determining the happiness and employee engagement pulses.

Additionally, we addressed sustainability by establishing a Community of Practice (CoP) and identifying individuals within specific groups to serve as Enablement Leads or Champions for agility



OKR
COHORT

transformation. Encouraging a culture of learning and experimentation among groups also helped increase efficiency and value delivered to customers.

WHAT IMPACTS HAVE BEEN REALIZED?

To date, there have been significant impacts as a result of this transformation.

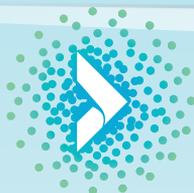
Throughout the transformation, it became clear that if senior leaders focused on the outcomes and enabled individuals and teams to define the ‘how’, not only would our transformation solve the identified problems, but our people would own how they work. Instead of focusing on frameworks, we provided the destination through outcomes, educated the workforce on the frameworks, and then allowed adoption to be driven by what worked best for the teams.

As other organizations navigate their next transformation, they can use outcome-focused goals in the form of OKRs to provide the clarity, alignment and direction needed for their people to thrive.



Nizar Khoja

is considered a thinker, leader, and coach, and is curious about New Ways of Working, Remote Work, and Digital Enablement! He is passionate about finding ways to make organizations awesome through building cultures of efficiency, empowerment, engagement, and empathy. Nizar has extensive experience working in different setups and industries (from start-ups to large organizations) that enable him to understand how to impact sustainable change. He is a firm believer in creating a culture of purposeful and high performing teams to focus on continuous value delivery.

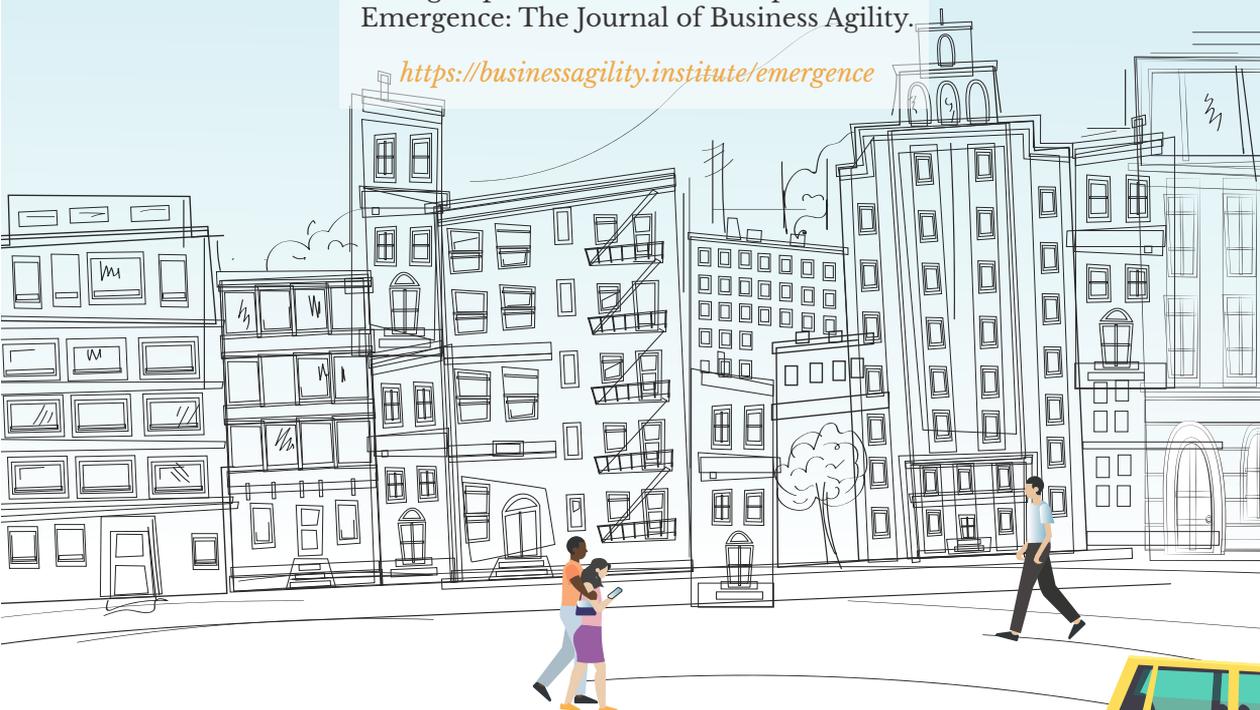


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