Agile Business
Consortium

Insights Report 2025: Shaping the Future of Change
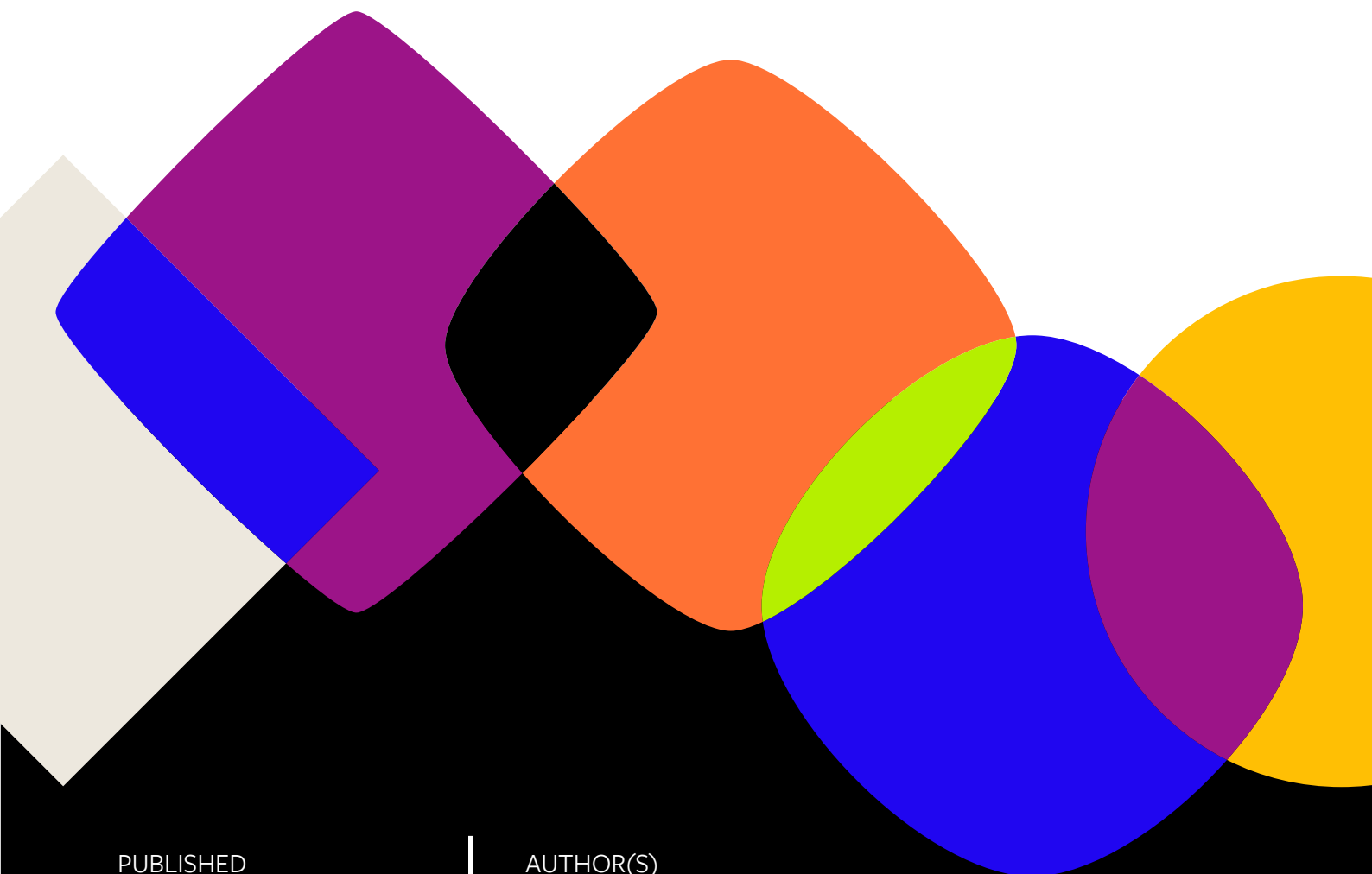
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Executive Summary

Organizations in 2025 face unprecedented disruption. Geopolitical tensions, AI-driven change, and sustainability imperatives are reshaping the business landscape. Traditional change management frameworks are no longer sufficient without agility.

Agility must be understood not as a methodology but as a core organizational competence: the ability to adapt continuously and create sustainable value in complex, uncertain environments.

This report, *Insights Report 2025: Shaping the Future of Change*, synthesizes insights from the Agile Business Awards 2025 and broader research through the lens of the Framework for Business Agility.

It highlights three critical shifts for change leaders:

1. From frameworks to competencies,
2. From outputs to outcomes and impacts,
3. From organization-centric change to ecosystem-level adaptation.

The central challenge is managing a number of paradoxes: the need to balance autonomy with accountability, speed with stability, and short-term gains with long-term organizational goals and societal and ecological responsibilities.

The imperative is clear: **to ensure agility is embedded as a strategic capability, enabling the delivery of sustainable value in an age of disruption.**
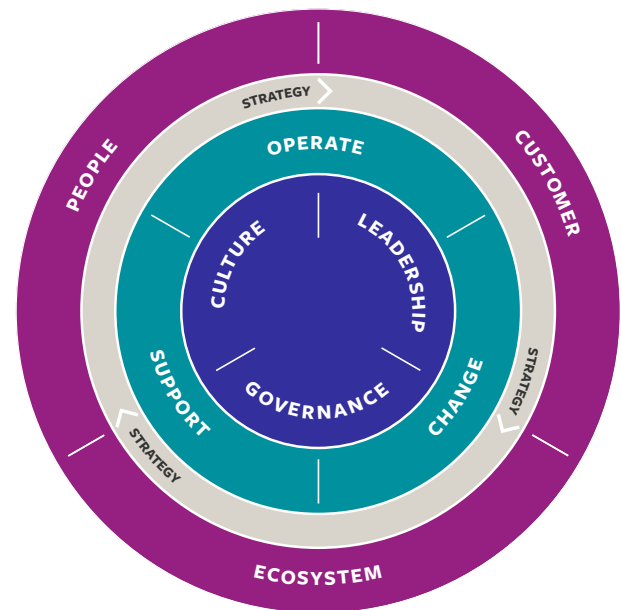
Introduction

This report uses the Framework for Business Agility to offer a zone-by-zone exploration of the challenges, paradoxes, and opportunities that have emerged through the study of organizational agility, drawing extensively on the experiences shared through the Agile Business Awards. These awards provide a unique vantage point: they capture the lived experiences of organizations experimenting, adapting, and learning in real time across diverse sectors and geographies. Unlike broad surveys, the awards offer qualitative depth, revealing not just what organizations are doing, but the dilemmas they are facing and the innovations they are trialing.

Change management in 2025 is marked by unprecedented complexity, speed, and uncertainty. Organizations are operating in an environment shaped by disruptive technologies, evolving workforce expectations, ecological imperatives, and geopolitical volatility. The pace of technological progress, especially the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning, has accelerated the need for agility, prompting businesses to reconsider not only their strategies but also their core operating models. Meanwhile, pressures for sustainability and social responsibility have made it clear that successful change cannot be limited to internal efficiencies alone; it must also balance customer value with environmental and societal impacts.

The scale of these challenges is not incremental but systemic. Traditional approaches to change management, which relied heavily on codified methodologies, stage gates, and prescriptive frameworks, are increasingly inadequate in this context. They provide structure but often fail to account for the fluid, adaptive responses required in a volatile world. Organizations that continue to see frameworks as an end in themselves risk falling into the trap of "doing agile" rather than "being agile," performing ceremonies and implementing processes without embedding the underlying competencies that generate resilience.

As leading research from the Business Agility Institute (2023), the Project Management Institute (2024), and others has indicated, agility as competence is now the differentiator, rather than adherence to a particular method or brand of framework [Medini, 2023].

The limitations of frameworks should not be misunderstood. Methods such as AgilePM, Scrum, SAFe, or Kanban remain valuable, but their role is no longer to confer a competitive advantage. Instead, they serve as enablers within a broader organizational competence. Just as literacy is necessary but not sufficient for knowledge creation, agile frameworks provide the grammar of delivery but not the meaning of adaptation. What matters is the development of organizational muscles: the ability to sense, respond, and learn across all areas of the enterprise. This requires deliberate investment in culture, leadership, governance, and strategy, all interconnected within a system of value creation.

In this environment, the role of thought leaders is not merely to codify good practices but to shape the narratives and paradigms through which organizations interpret change. Leadership in organizational agility involves engaging with paradoxes, exploring systemic risks, and providing frameworks for meaning rather than strict processes. Thought leaders must hold agility accountable for more than speed or efficiency; they need to ask whether agility benefits long-term societal good, whether it sustains people as well as performance, and whether it prepares organizations to handle the ethical dilemmas of a technology-driven world. This involves not only guiding organizations but also challenging them: surfacing tensions, questioning assumptions, and framing new possibilities.

This evidence-based report uses the Framework for Business Agility (FBA) as its organizing structure. The FBA has established itself as an effective lens for assessing and understanding agility across organizations. The framework is not prescriptive but descriptive, mapping the domains in which agility must be cultivated for sustained value delivery. It comprises four interconnected zones of competence:

🔵 **The Blue Zone:** *Enabling Empowerment*
Emphasizing leadership as a collective competence, culture by intentional design, and governance as principle-based rather than rule-driven.

🟢 **The Teal Zone:** *Ways of Working and Enabling Structure*
Exploring operational agility, the adaptation of frameworks, and the transformation of support functions into strategic enablers.

🟣 *The Purple Zone: Value Creation in a Complex World*
Focusing on how organizations deliver value not only to customers but also to their people and their wider ecosystems.

⚪ *The Grey Zone: Strategy and Measurement*
Examining strategy as a living, adaptive process and measurement as a driver of learning and adaptation.

Through the lens of these zones, real-life case studies submitted by Awards participants have been analyzed. The findings in this report seek to highlight not only emerging practices but also the deeper paradoxes at play. For example, how can organizations balance distributed leadership with accountability? How do they prevent agility itself from becoming a bureaucratic cage? How can customer-centricity be reconciled with the ecological limits of the planet? These are not questions with simple answers, but they are precisely the questions that determine whether agility will serve as a force for resilience or as another management fashion.

The report is written for thought leaders, change agents, organizational leaders, and policy-makers who recognize that agility must be understood as both a practical capability and a philosophical perspective.
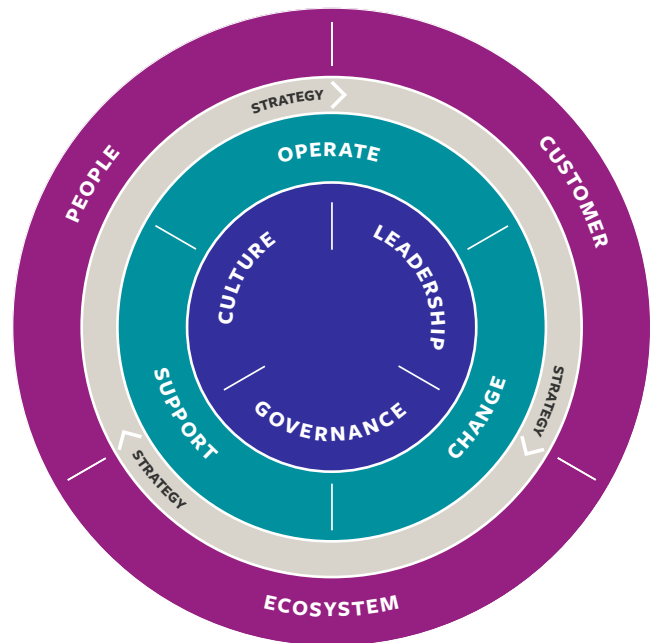
It assumes that the readers themselves are shaping narratives and influencing systems, and therefore focuses on equipping them with critical insights, reflective provocations, and questions for deeper consideration.

Ultimately, the aim is to shift the conversation about change management away from checklists and towards competencies. From outputs towards outcomes and impacts. From organization-centric adaptation towards ecosystem-centric resilience.

By doing so, this report contributes to the ongoing effort to shape a future where organizational agility is not merely a response to disruption but a proactive capability for creating sustainable value in an increasingly uncertain world.

The Blue Zone:
Enabling Empowerment

Agile Leadership

The evolution of leadership is one of the most profound shifts in organizational agility. Historically, leadership has been synonymous with hierarchical control: the ability to command, allocate resources, and enforce compliance. In agile organizations, this model is increasingly untenable. The complexity of modern systems requires a more distributed, emergent form of leadership, where authority is less about position and more about competence, trust, and contextual relevance.

This shift raises the central paradox for thought leaders: how can autonomy and accountability coexist in complex systems? On the one hand, distributed leadership empowers individuals and teams to act decisively in their domains, responding to change with speed and relevance. On the other hand, organizations must still ensure coherence, ethical standards, and strategic alignment. Too much autonomy risks fragmentation; too much centralization risks inertia. Navigating this paradox is at the heart of leadership in the Blue Zone.

The trends

- Organizations are investing in leadership training coaching and mentoring in feedback and feed forward mechanisms. Some are developing networks of peer learning, shadowing arrangements, and experimental leadership "labs" where individuals across the organization practise and refine leadership behaviors.
- A movement continues away from authority based on hierarchy towards recognition based on demonstrated ability to achieve impact and enable value delivery, psychological safety, and adaptation.
- Distributed and Servant Leadership, including "go to Gemba", is now more commonplace, however some older and larger organizations struggle to implement new ways. This produces uneven landscapes where "old" and "new" leadership paradigms co-exist, sometimes uneasily, within the same organization.
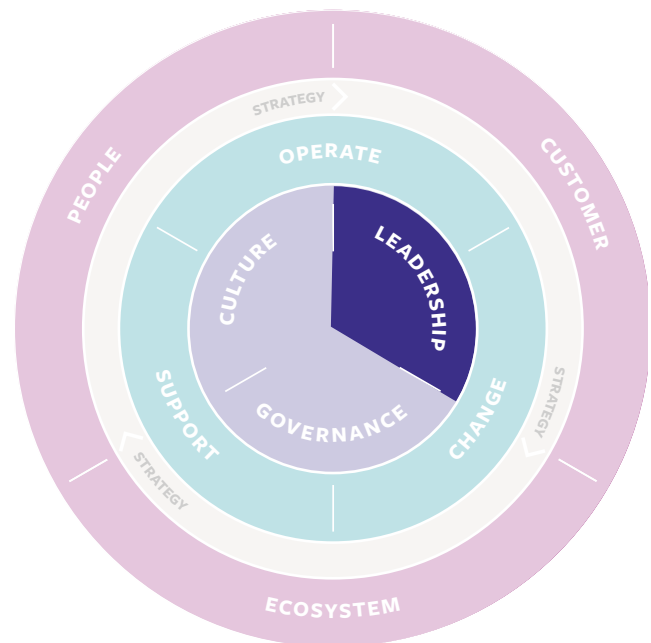
> **"** *Shared leadership models empower decision-making across the whole organization.* **"**
>
> - Reviewer Quote

The issues

Several critical issues emerge. The first is how to cultivate leadership not as a trait of individuals, but as a collective organizational muscle. Leadership must become a competence embedded across roles, functions, and levels, accessible to all who demonstrate capability and aspiration.

The second is governance: how can distributed leadership be held accountable without reverting to hierarchical control? Principle-based governance provides part of the answer, but the mechanisms for reconciling distributed authority with shared accountability remain underdeveloped.

Third, organizations need to sustain what they've built, to ensure that in adverse times, or through changes in management, the old culture doesn't return.

Agile Culture

If leadership provides the compass, culture provides the soil in which agility grows. It is tempting to view culture as an organic by-product of systems and processes. Agile organizations demonstrate the opposite: culture must be intentionally designed, curated, and reinforced if it is to support adaptability and resilience.

> ❝ *Love that you start with "why"!* ❞
>
> - Reviewer Quote

The challenge, however, lies in the question: can culture truly be engineered? While values can be articulated and rituals encouraged, culture resists top-down manipulation. It emerges from lived experience and is sustained by collective reinforcement. This creates a second paradox for change leaders: how to design culture deliberately without reducing it to performative slogans or "window-dressing values."

The trends

- "Museums of failure" showcase past missteps as a badge of learning rather than shame.
- Customer inclusion in cultural design. Bringing external perspectives into values conversations.
- These practices emphasize that culture cannot simply be stated; it must be embodied, experienced, and reinforced in daily interactions.
- Cultural maturity models can provide useful diagnostics, but they risk distorting risk measurement.
- Employees may optimize behaviors for assessment rather than authenticity.
- The lesson: while measurement has its place, culture thrives best when supported by trust, narrative, and lived practice rather than compliance.

> ❝ *The bottom-up approach with Purpose Ambassadors ensures enterprise-wide engagement and sustainability of cultural change.* ❞
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> - Reviewer Quote
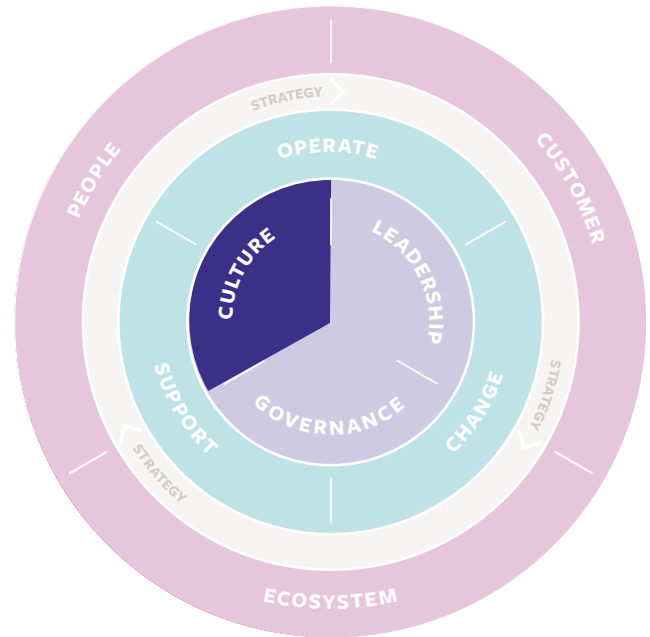
The issues

Three issues deserve attention. The first is institutionalizing psychological safety in high-pressure environments. While often celebrated in theory, psychological safety is difficult to sustain in contexts where mistakes have high costs (e.g. healthcare or financial regulation).

The second is balancing agility with well-being in hybrid work environments. Remote and flexible arrangements offer autonomy but can blur boundaries and erode cohesion.

The third is counter-cultures in legacy organizations. Deeply embedded habits and resistant groups can undermine cultural change, whereby different departments operate at different speeds, resulting in pockets of agility coexisting with entrenched bureaucracy.

Recent studies in organizational psychology (Edmondson, 2019; Schein & Schein, 2021) reinforce these insights, highlighting the importance of trust, storytelling, and shared learning as mechanisms for cultural resilience. Yet these same scholars warn of the dangers of superficial cultural initiatives that ignore systemic incentives and power dynamics.

It seems the invitation is to move beyond celebratory rhetoric and engage with the messy, contested realities of cultural transformation.

Agile Governance

If leadership is about direction and culture about values, governance is about decision-making clarity and empowerment. Yet of all the zones within the FBA, governance is arguably the least mature and the most neglected within many organizations.

Many organizations continue to equate governance with control, rules, and compliance. Agile organizations demonstrate that governance can, instead, be an enabler: a set of principle-based guardrails that provide alignment while empowering local decision-making.

The paradox for change agents is clear: how can organizations balance compliance with agility? Heavily regulated sectors such as finance and healthcare cannot dispense with oversight. Yet excessive reliance on rigid controls undermines the responsiveness and agility promises.

The question is not whether to regulate, but how to do so in ways that preserve both integrity and adaptability.

The trends

- Rise of principle-based governance, with a shifting away from detailed rulebooks towards broad principles that guide decision-making.
- Minimum viable governance, providing just enough structure to ensure risk management and accountability, while leaving flexibility for context-specific judgement.
- Use of Wardley mapping, visualizing decision-making landscapes to ensure governance structures evolve in line with organizational strategy.

> " *Openness is key to governance and learning.* "
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> - Reviewer Quote
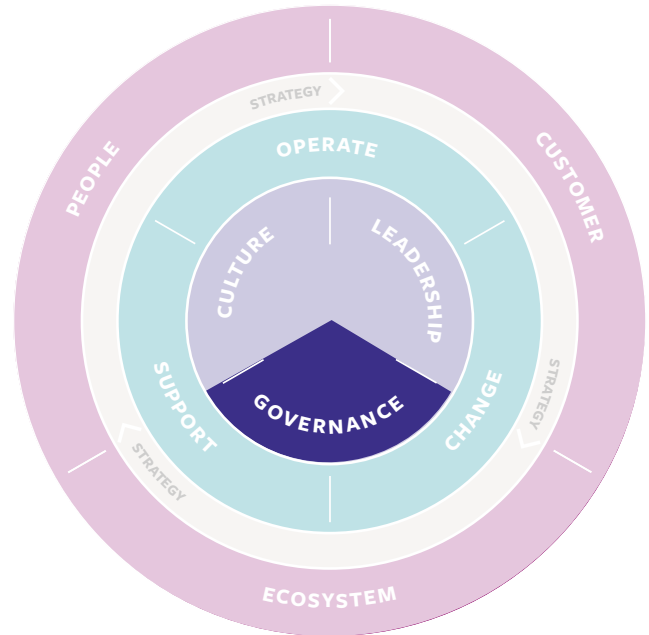
The issues

Key issues emerge here. One is the need for speed when it comes to decision making. Some organizations created alternative governance layers, and while this worked well in certain instances, it can also complicate things further.

In addition, in multi-organizational collaborations, such as public–private partnerships or supply chain networks, governance must coordinate across institutional boundaries, raising questions of trust, transparency, and shared responsibility.

Lastly, there is the ethical aspect: who determines what "value" is? As organizations balance customer satisfaction, societal needs, and planetary boundaries, governance must provide both ethical grounding and procedural oversight.

Theorists offer a limited but growing exploration of agile governance. Works such as De Haes et al. (2020) on IT governance and Rigby et al. (2020) in Harvard Business Review suggest the importance of lightweight, principle-based approaches. Yet empirical examples remain scarce, particularly outside the technology sector.

This is a field ripe for investigation: developing models of governance that integrate ethical accountability, distributed leadership, and ecosystem collaboration.
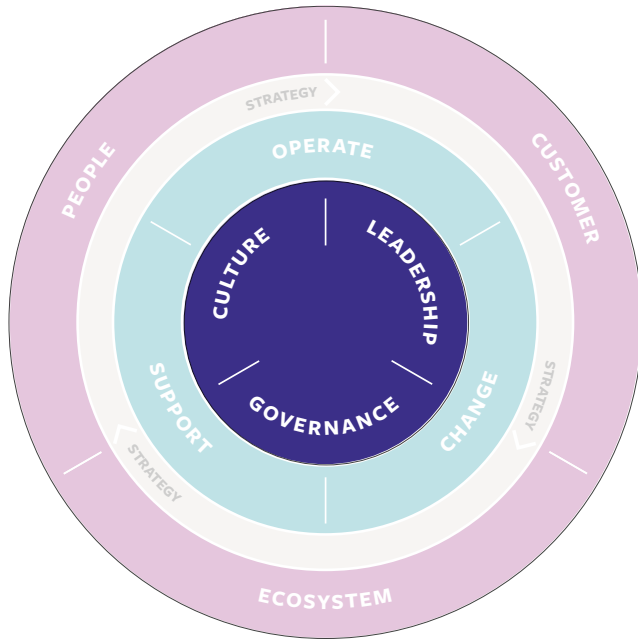
Conclusion

The Blue Zone emphasizes that agility relies on people and values, not just systems. This year's evidence demonstrates that "being agile" supports "doing agile." This is a crucial element of a successful business agility journey.

Governance needs clarity and alignment, supporting empowerment without hindrance. The challenge is managing paradoxes like autonomy versus accountability, and compliance versus agility, continually and humbly.

Thought leaders can guide organizations where leadership is everywhere, culture fosters learning and resilience, and governance empowers. This shift is philosophical, viewing people as co-creators of adaptable, value-driven enterprises, not just human resources.

The Teal Zone:
Ways of Working and Enabling Structures

Operational Agility

Operational agility is where frameworks, methods, and tools such as AgilePM, Scrum, SAFe, and Kanban typically reside. While these approaches remain useful, they have become commoditized: table stakes rather than differentiators.

Most organizations now employ some form of agile framework, but their presence alone no longer signals maturity. True operational agility is demonstrated in how organizations adapt frameworks to context, integrate them with culture and leadership, and sustain them over time.

This raises a central paradox: are frameworks enablers or cages? At their best, frameworks provide rhythm, common language, and scaffolding for learning. At their worst, they harden into rituals that stifle creativity and responsiveness.

Agile organizations are learning that success lies not in rigid adherence to prescribed methods but in tailoring, experimenting, and evolving practices to suit their unique context.

The trends

- Agile ways of working have become the regular way of working, with organizations arranging work around continuous value delivery for customers.
- All applicants report positive effects, including improved customer engagement and bottom line success.
- Organizations are simulating operations through experiments and Proof of Concept before implementing them.
- Organizations are shifting from command-and-control oversight to lightweight structures that enable value delivery.
- Digitalization and AI are drivers for agility in operations.

> ❝ *Operational agility is about giving value to customers – not just speed.* ❞
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> - Reviewer Quote
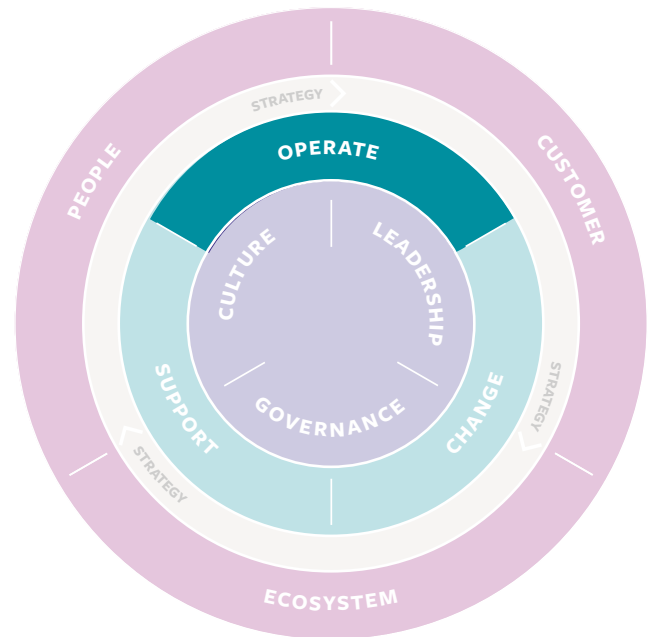
The issues

Despite these advances, significant issues remain. A persistent challenge is how to reframe agility as the organization's default operating logic rather than a temporary initiative. In many cases, there is a growing risk of "agile fatigue," where frameworks that were intended to liberate teams calcify into bureaucracy and rituals.

Finally, breaking down siloes within and between organizations, creating cross-functionality and customer-value driven teams is something several businesses still struggle with. But when this is achieved, it can result in significant business success.

Almost ten years ago, research such as Rigby, Sutherland and Takeuchi's Embracing Agile (2016) in Harvard Business Review documented the commoditization of agile practices. More recent studies (Business Agility Institute, 2023; PMI, 2024) emphasize the shift towards agility as competence rather than framework adoption. Our findings bear this out. Yet the operational paradox, enabler versus cage, remains unresolved, and is a rich domain for further inquiry.

Business Support & Change Agility

If operational agility is about delivery, business support and change agility are about enabling. Organizations are recognizing that, for example, HR, Finance, and Procurement, once viewed as bottlenecks, must themselves become agile if transformation is to take hold.

Increasingly, organizations identify Change as a core competence, many introducing centers of excellence to support their Change Agility journey.

The paradox here is sharp: how do you bring agility into inherently rigid Business Support systems? These functions have their own accountabilities, yet if not aligned with the transformation, can stall progress. The challenge is to retain necessary discipline while embedding adaptability.

The trends

- Rolling forecasts and Beyond Budgeting approaches are replacing rigid annual cycles.
- Competency-based recruitment and development are becoming more prevalent, moving beyond static job descriptions.
- There is increasing adoption of agile procurement models to support iterative delivery and flexible partnerships.
- Centers of Excellence (CoEs) for Change Agility are pivoting repeatedly as organizational maturity evolves, shifting from external consultants to internal capability-building.
- Organizations are moving to predictive hiring, autonomous financial modelling, and data-driven procurement decision-making.

> " *Rolling quarterly budgets are a landmark step toward agility.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote
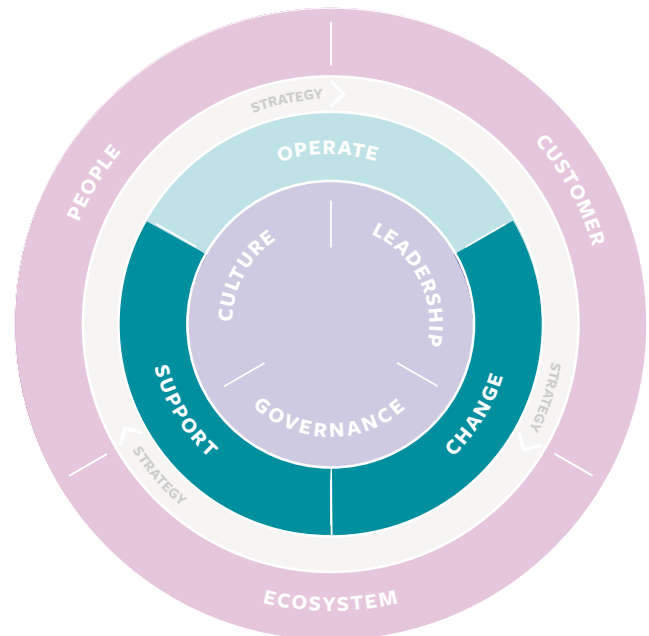
The issues

Here too, deep issues remain unresolved. In the Change context, organizations need to pivot their support approach, since the support needed at the start of a journey is different from the support needed when the organization becomes more mature.

In the Support context, organizations must consider how to balance agility with fiduciary responsibility. Finance and Procurement must fulfil their compliance duties, yet excessive caution risks constraining innovation.

There is also the paradox of how to apply agility to functions such as audit and compliance. These systems exist to minimize risk, yet if they remain static, they can undermine broader transformation efforts.

Experienced practitioners such as Bogsnes (2016) on Beyond Budgeting and more recent work in Agile HR (CIPD, 2022) provide guidance, but practice is still catching up. AI is creating both opportunities and ethical dilemmas, particularly around bias in recruitment and transparency in financial modelling.

This is an area requiring active dialogue: how to ensure support agility complements, rather than constrains, the wider organizational system.
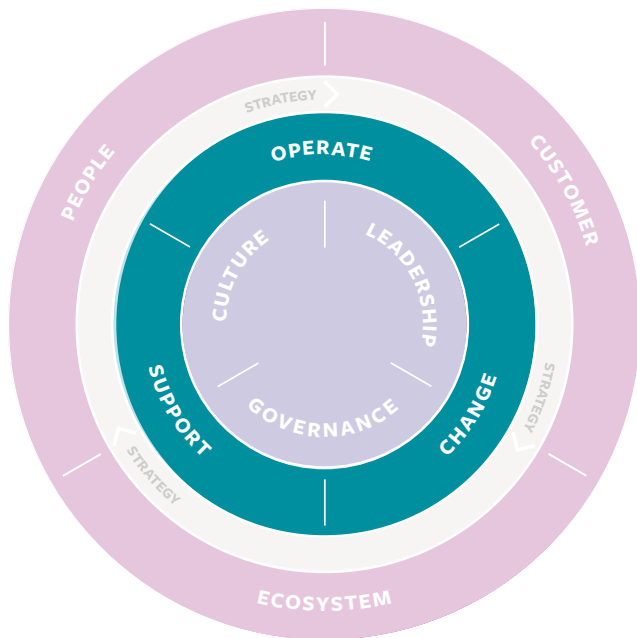
Conclusion

The Teal Zone reminds us that ways of working are necessary but insufficient. Frameworks are useful, but they are no longer differentiators; the differentiator lies in how they are adapted, evolved, and sustained. Support functions and change structures must also become agile, or else risk undermining transformation

The opportunity for thought leaders is to challenge assumptions: frameworks as enablers instead of cages; support functions as accelerators instead of anchors. These paradoxes must be managed with nuance, experimentation, and reflection. The goal is to embed agility not as a method but as an operating logic: one that integrates delivery, support, and change as interconnected skills.

> **"** *It's fantastic to see that [the organisation] is open to pivoting and changing internally through maturity assessments, agile coaching, the 5 step Approach, transformation roadmaps and a [Change] chapter to refine the framework.* **"**
>
> - Reviewer Quote

The Purple Zone:
Value Creation in a Complex World

Value for Customers

Delivering value for customers is one of the most visible and widely accepted measures of organizational agility. For many organizations, it is the primary reason for embarking on a transformation journey. Yet defining what constitutes "value" is becoming increasingly complex. Customers expect not only products and services that meet their immediate needs but also experiences that align with their ethical, social, and environmental values.

> " *Customer feedback drives innovation and enhances the experience.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote

The paradox here is that customer-centricity, while vital, can be both a driver of innovation and a source of short-termism. Organizations that listen only to immediate customer demands risk neglecting longer-term societal responsibilities, while those that focus exclusively on sustainability risk alienating customers in the short term. Balancing these tensions is central to the future of value creation.

The trends

- Customer co-creation is becoming a differentiator, with organizations embedding customers directly into design, prototyping, and testing.
- Advanced practices include customer labs, rapid prototyping supported by AI, and continuous feedback loops.
- Organizations are experimenting with A/B testing, design partnerships, and real-time data analysis to refine offerings.

> " *A value-first mindset transforms how the customer is prioritzed.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote
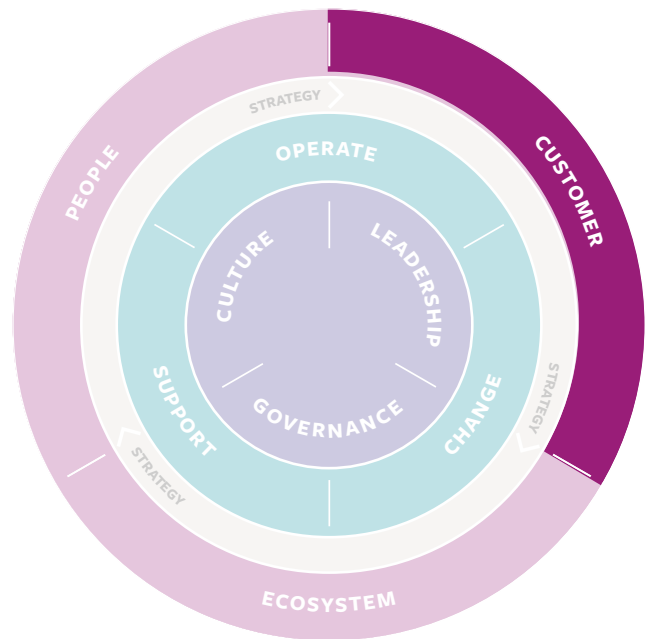
The issues

Despite these advances, challenges persist.

Customer impact is still not easy to measure, but more organizations are trying

Directly engaging with customers, for some organizations, is still difficult. But they are finding new ways to overcome that burden. Co-creation is still a golden standard.

Finally, getting the true voice of the customer deeply into the organization is still a challenge. Really engaging with customers, instead of thinking for them, remains difficult, especially for larger organizations.

Value for People

If customers sit at the heart of external value creation, employees are the foundation of internal value. People are the ultimate value creators, and sustainable agility depends on their engagement, resilience, and sense of purpose. Yet empowerment is not universally embraced, and the shift towards flatter, more autonomous structures can generate resistance as well as enthusiasm.

The paradox here is that empowerment, while liberating for some, can create anxiety and disengagement for others. Not every employee wishes to take on more responsibility or operate with high levels of autonomy. Managing this diversity of responses is a critical leadership challenge.

> **"** *Resilience coaches and diversity networks show deep commitment to well-being.* **"**
>
> - Reviewer Quote

The trends

- Shifts aware from traditional "career ladders" toward "squiggly careers," enabling lateral growth, skill diversity, and personalized development.
- Development of T- and M-shaped skillsets, supporting collaboration and flexibility across teams.
- Emphasis on diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) initiatives to unlock creativity and resilience.
- Growth of hybrid and distributed teams, supported by digital platforms.

> **"** *Employee satisfaction rose 50% – productivity by 300%.* **"**
>
> - Reviewer Quote
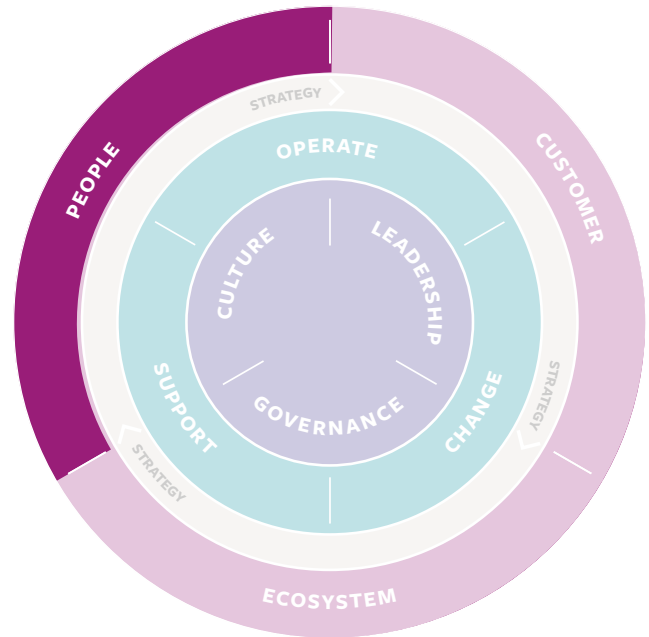
The issues

Three issues stand out:

1. First, managing resistance to empowerment requires sensitivity; not every individual will thrive in an environment of autonomy, and organizations must design supportive pathways for those who struggle.

2. Second, agility carries a "dark side"; the risk of burnout, "always on" expectations, and psychological strain. The very practices designed to create responsiveness can, if left unchecked, lead to exhaustion.

3. Finally, measuring employee happiness on a year-on-year basis, for many organizations, is not good enough. Instead, it requires regular intentional curation, and dedication.

Value for Ecosystem

No organization operates in isolation. Agility must extend beyond the organization's boundaries into its supply chains, regulatory frameworks, communities, and ecological contexts. The ecosystem perspective recognizes that an organization is only as agile as its least agile partner.

> " *Collaboration with regulators builds agility and trust.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote

The paradox here is that ecosystem collaboration often involves competitive cooperation: working alongside competitors or within regulatory frameworks that may constrain as well as enable. Organizations must learn to collaborate with stakeholders whose interests are not always aligned, while also recognizing that ecological limits impose boundaries that cannot be negotiated away.

The trends

- Ecosystem collaboration is becoming more visible, with partnerships between suppliers, regulators, universities, and NGOs.
- Sustainability and regulatory pressures are pushing organizations to reconfigure value chains around resilience and ethical responsibility.
- Disruptions from AI, new regulations, and geopolitical risk are highlighting the interdependence of organizations within their ecosystems.

> " *Open innovation with startups and universities accelerates breakthrough ideas.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote
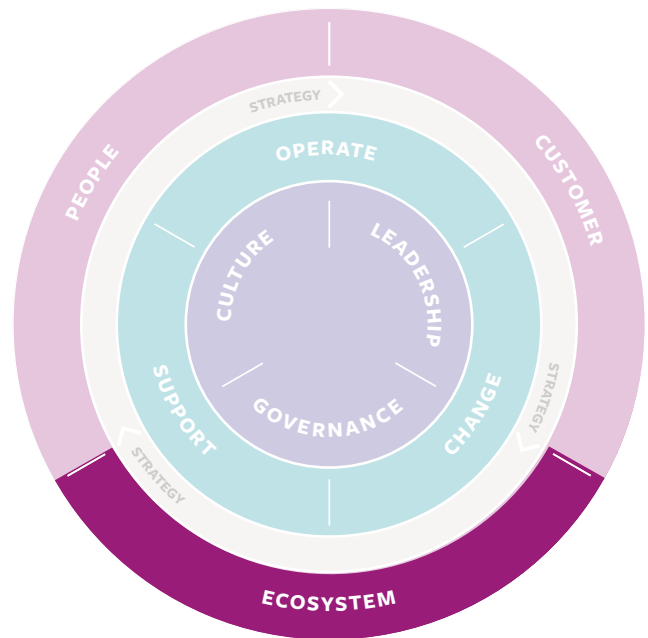
The issues

Key issues include how to design governance at the ecosystem level. Multi-organization collaborations raise profound questions about trust, transparency, and decision-making across boundaries.

There is also the paradox of competitive cooperation: when and how should competitors collaborate for shared resilience? Finally, the ecological dimension of agility is becoming unavoidable.

Organizations must align their operations with planetary boundaries, recognizing that true value creation cannot come at the expense of environmental sustainability.
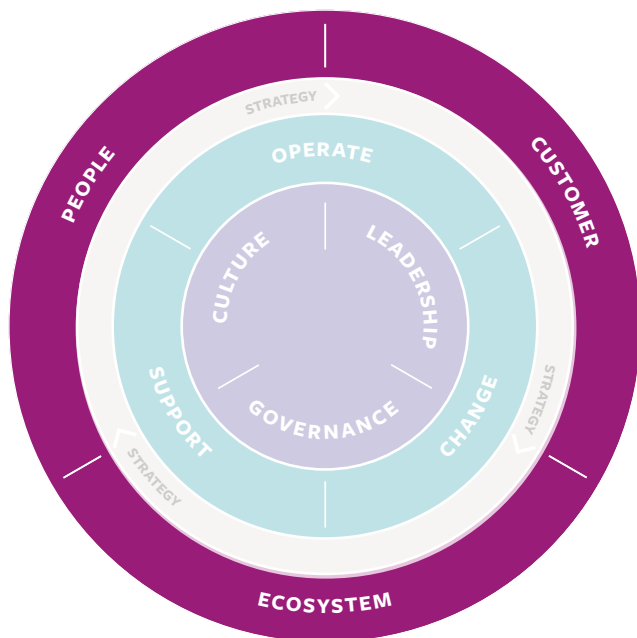
Conclusion

The Purple Zone demonstrates that value creation is no longer a straightforward exercise in serving customers. It requires a balanced perspective that embraces customers, employees, and ecosystems as interconnected domains of value.

> " *Supporting financial inclusion and green financing strengthens the ecosystem.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote

Customers demand speed and relevance, but long-term societal and ecological responsibilities cannot be ignored. Employees are empowered to innovate, but empowerment must be designed with care to avoid burnout and inequity. Ecosystems present opportunities for resilience, but can also cause tensions between collaboration and competition.

The task for organizations is to frame these paradoxes with honesty and to provoke dialogue about the trade-offs organizations face. The future of value creation depends on moving beyond narrow customer-centricity toward a holistic view of sustainable, human and ecosystem value.

> " *Agility now underpins ESG goals across the ecosystem.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote

The Grey Zone:
Strategy & Measurement

Agile Strategy

Strategy is the connective tissue of agility: it links purpose to practice and ensures that delivery and value creation are coherent. For many organizations, traditionally, strategy has often been treated as a fixed plan: a five-year vision translated into rigid programs.

In an environment shaped by technological disruption, ecological imperatives, and geopolitical volatility, such static approaches are increasingly unfit for purpose.

The paradox is clear: strategy must provide stability while enabling continuous adaptation. Too much fluidity and the organization risks losing coherence; too much rigidity and it becomes incapable of responding to shifting conditions.


> " *Strategy, tactics and operations are aligned through agile governance.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote

The challenge for change agents is to navigate between these extremes, ensuring that strategy functions as a living process rather than a static document.

The trends

- Strategy is increasingly treated as a flow of hypotheses to be tested, rather than assumptions to be implemented.
- Quarterly reviews and rolling plan cycles are replacing annual strategic planning.
- Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) are being used to connect strategic vision with team-level change initiatives.
- Big-room planning and visual management tools such as OBEYA are ensuring alignment and transparency across functions.
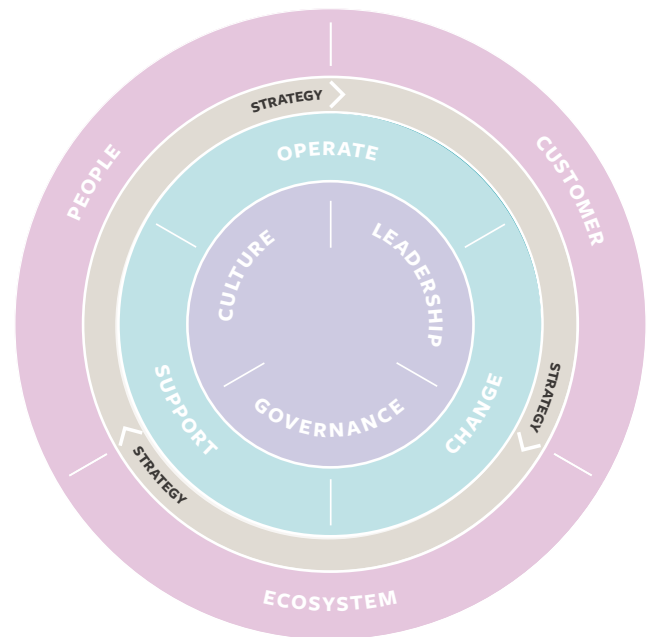
The issues

Even with these advances, significant challenges persist. One is how to maintain a clear long-term purpose while flexing short-term priorities.

Organizations must be able to pivot without losing sight of their North Star, a task that requires courage and clarity from leadership.

Another issue is the role of artificial intelligence in strategy: machines can generate and analyze options faster than humans, but decision-makers still bear responsibility for ethical judgement and long-term vision.

Finally, there is the question of what strategic leadership itself should look like in agile organizations. Leaders are shifting from being planners to orchestrators and sense makers: yet this role is still evolving and requires new skills, mindsets, and legitimacy.

> " *Agile strategy is strongest when built on experimentation, validation and scaling.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote

Measurement & Continuous Learning

If strategy provides direction, measurement provides feedback. In agile organizations, measurement has shifted away from counting outputs towards assessing outcomes and impacts. The emphasis is no longer on how much work has been completed but on whether that work has delivered value.

The paradox here is that measurement is both essential and potentially dangerous. Without measurement, organizations cannot learn. Yet if measures are poorly designed, they distort behavior and encourage gaming rather than genuine improvement. "What gets measured gets managed" remains true, but what gets measured also shapes culture.

> " *Real-time compliance dashboards and blockchain approvals show agility in action.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote

The trends

- Metrics are moving from activity-based (e.g. velocity, throughput) to impact-based (e.g. customer satisfaction, employee engagement, ecosystem resilience).
- Outcome-based governance indicators are being introduced to ensure accountability while avoiding micromanagement.
- Customer impact dashboards and well-being indicators are being developed alongside financial metrics.
- Health checks and learning reviews are replacing rigid performance audits.

The issues

Several challenges remain unresolved. Measuring intangibles such as trust, resilience, and cultural health is notoriously difficult, yet these are the very qualities that underpin sustainable agility.

Organizations also face the risk of "measurement gaming," where people optimize for the metric rather than the outcome.

> " *The golden thread from strategy to execution keeps teams aligned to vision.* "
>
> - Reviewer Quote

Another emerging challenge is the need to measure at the ecosystem level, not only within the boundaries of the organization. Supply chain resilience, ecological impact, and societal value are increasingly part of the measurement landscape, but few organizations have developed mature approaches to these domains.

Finally, there is the question of whether metrics are being used for compliance or for learning. If metrics are treated solely as levers of control, they undermine agility; if treated as tools for collective sensemaking, they can fuel continuous improvement.
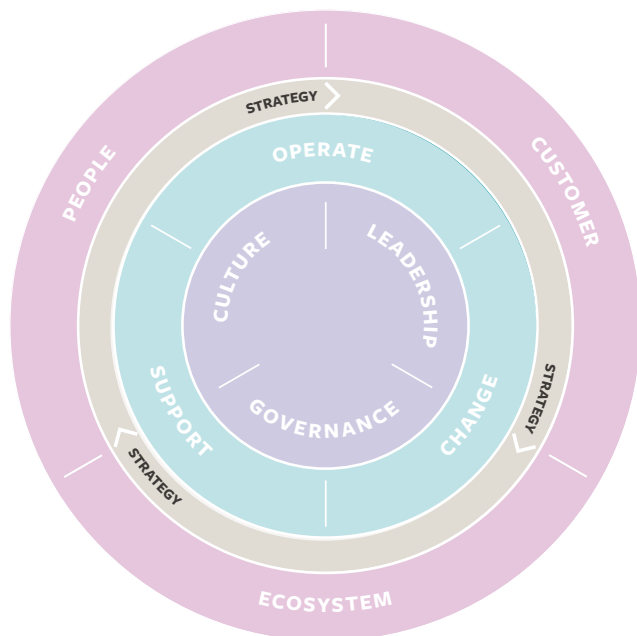
Conclusion

The Grey Zone underscores that agility cannot be sustained without adaptive strategy and meaningful measurement. Strategy must evolve into a continuous process that balances long-term purpose with short-term responsiveness. Measurement must shift from outputs to outcomes, from compliance to learning, and from organization-centric to ecosystem-aware indicators.

> **"** *Agile strategy must pivot and evolve – testing assumptions in real-world conditions.* **"**
>
> - Reviewer Quote

There are opportunities to influence the philosophy behind both strategy and measurement. The challenge is not only to encourage organizations to adopt new tools, but also to stimulate reflection on the paradoxes they represent:

- stability versus adaptability,
- learning versus compliance,
- individual performance versus collective resilience.

Navigating these tensions is key to ensuring that agility is not merely a delivery method, but a lasting organizational strength.

Sustaining Change Over Time

From the experiences of our award applicants over the years, and based on other research, we see that increasingly more organizations are understanding that business agility is an organizational competency needed to thrive and survive. It is a competency that needs to be developed, not a framework that can be implemented. Business agility, for many organizations, is a path to sustainable, ever improving business success.

In the opinion of the Agile Business Consortium, sustaining agility over time is one of the greatest challenges organizations face. While the early stages of a transformation often generate momentum and enthusiasm, the long run introduces a different set of risks. Initial energy can give way to fatigue, especially when employees feel that change has become endless and that the organization is in a constant state of flux. This phenomenon of "agility fatigue" is increasingly recognized: the very practices designed to create adaptability can, if left unchecked, exhaust systems and people.

The paradox here is that change must become both ordinary and extraordinary. It must be integrated into daily life as the normal way of working, while also retaining the ability to inspire, stretch, and refresh. When organizations treat every initiative as novelty, people burn out; when they treat change as mere maintenance, energy dissipates, and innovation slows. The challenge is to strike a balance between the two.

Several patterns are emerging as organizations confront this reality. Many are beginning to pivot their support structures as they mature, recognizing that Centers of Excellence, coaching teams, or transformation offices must evolve rather than remain static. The structures that serve well in the early stages of transformation may become redundant or obstructive in later stages, so organizations must deliberately redesign them to support renewal rather than perpetuate bureaucracy.

Others are learning the importance of celebrating milestones, ensuring that achievements are marked and shared in ways that restore energy and reinforce purpose. Narratives also play a central role: the story of change must be regularly refreshed so that employees understand not only what they are doing but why it still matters.

Yet challenges remain. One is how to maintain focus on delivering value while creating space for recovery. Without pause, organizations risk undermining the very resilience that agility is supposed to foster. Another is how to design systems that enable renewal without exhausting people or resources. There is also the philosophical question of "enough." In a culture driven by continuous optimization, when should organizations stop improving? At what point does the pursuit of agility itself become counterproductive, creating churn rather than sustainable impact?

Sustaining change is about more than operational design. It requires reframing agility as a capability for long-term renewal rather than as a perpetual revolution. It involves questioning the pace and scope of transformation, challenging organizations to discern when stability is as valuable as experimentation, and when conserving energy is as important as accelerating delivery. The future of agility will depend not only on how well organizations can adapt in the moment but on how well they can sustain that adaptability across years and decades without exhausting their people, eroding trust, or losing sight of their purpose.

Conclusion

The future of change management will not be defined by a single framework, methodology, or tool. Instead, it will depend on the ability of organizations to navigate paradoxes, embrace complexity, and build change as a core competence.

The lessons drawn from the Agile Business Awards and wider research suggest that agility is not merely a set of practices but a philosophy of organizing, leading, and sustaining value creation in an uncertain world.

Across the four zones, consistent themes emerge:

- **In the Blue Zone:** successful organizations are shifting from hierarchies to distributed competence models, culture must be intentionally designed without becoming performative, and governance must move from control to principle-based empowerment.

- **In the Teal Zone:** frameworks have become commoditized, and the differentiator now lies in how organizations adapt, sustain, and extend them across enabling functions.

- **In the Purple Zone:** value creation has expanded beyond customers to include employees and ecosystems, forcing organization to reconcile short-term gains with long-term societal and ecological responsibilities.

- **In the Grey Zone:** strategy has become a living process, and measurement must evolve beyond outputs and compliance toward outcomes, learning and ecosystem resilience.

Together, these zones demonstrate that agility is not the exclusive domain of any single area but must be understood as an integrated capability. Three fundamental shifts can be discerned from this synthesis:

1. The first is a shift from frameworks to competences: agility cannot be reduced to a method but must be embodied as a skill that organizations continually develop.
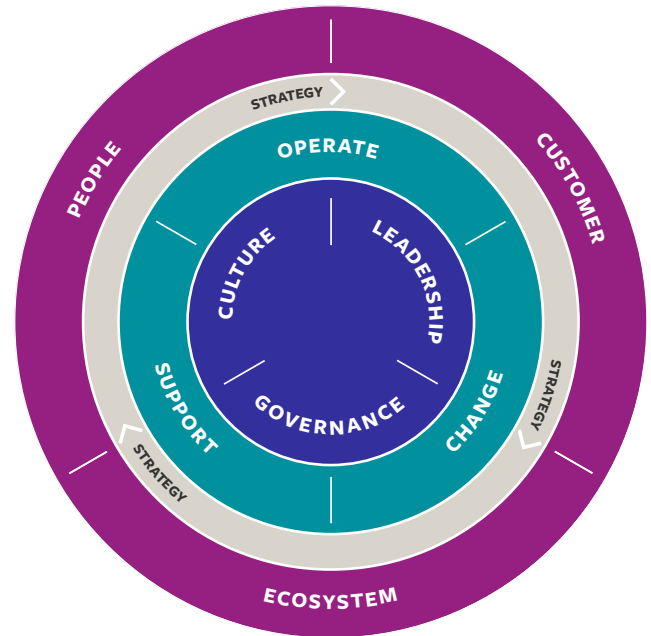
2. The second is a shift from outputs to outcomes and impacts: delivering more quickly or efficiently is meaningless unless it creates value that is sustainable, ethical, and measurable in human as well as financial terms.

3. The third is a shift from organization-centric change to ecosystem-centric adaptation: no enterprise can succeed in isolation, and resilience increasingly depends on networks of collaboration that extend beyond organizational boundaries.

The task ahead is not simply to refine methods but to shape the narratives that define agility. This means acknowledging the tensions and trade-offs inherent in complex systems, engaging with systemic risks such as AI disruption, climate change, and social inequity, and holding agility accountable not for perpetual churn but for the creation of sustainable value. The call is to move beyond celebrating agility as a fashionable label and to position it instead as a disciplined, ethical, and resilient response to the demands of our age.

Ultimately, agility is about learning how to live with paradox: to balance stability with adaptability, speed with reflection, autonomy with accountability, and ambition with responsibility. It is in the ability to navigate these paradoxes with humility, creativity, and courage that the future of change management will be shaped.

About the Author

Peter Coesmans is a Director and former Chief Agility Officer (CAO) of the Agile Business Consortium. He was the product owner of the Framework for Business Agility, the Process Owner for the Awards process and the Lead reviewer. He is a leader of the Business Agility Think Tank and regularly speaks at events. Drawing on a wide repertoire of management methods and practices, Peter applies agility pragmatically, always with sustainability as a central principle in the broadest sense of the word. He is adept at bridging the gap between formal and informal structures, helping organizations not only articulate strategy but also embed it effectively into daily practice.

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Appendix I: What Was the Application Process for the Awards 2025?

The application process for the 2025 Awards opened during Q3 2024 and was a year-long process. To ensure organizations could provide us with the appropriate information to give them meaningful feedback, the review criteria were fully transparent, and the process clearly explained.

Applications were open to organizations and parts of organizations, recognizing that many large enterprises develop their agility in different departments, in different countries, for different functions and at a different pace.

The process for assessment uses the agnostic Framework for Business Agility (FBA) as a basis. This framework is explained in more detail in Appendix II. Using this model for all categories ensures that what is being assessed is true business agility. Webinars were also organized to help applicants fully understand the model and criteria, allowing them to write a good application while ensuring the review process is rewarding.

Reviewers were selected based on their experience of business agility and agility journeys. Many of them are internationally recognized as experts in their field. They are specialists, reviewing applications in one distinct category. Each application is reviewed by a team of three independent reviewers; none of whom has any ties with the organization being reviewed. We also have different sets of reviewers per application. Reviewers are not allowed to share information on which applicants they have reviewed and what their comments were.

To ensure this, the Agile Business Consortium does not reveal who reviewed which application. All reviewers are trained specifically in the process by the lead reviewers and review process owner, Peter Coesmans.

Each reviewer reviews, at most, two applications, first assessing the application, without knowing its other reviewers. After the individual assessments, all information is gathered, and the scores, feedback and assessments shared. The reviewers review the application form only. Balancing meetings take place for each application, after which the reviewers indicate which organizations should be invited to present at the conference. These organizations will be informed and then supported in preparing their conference talk.

The feedback from the reviewers is used to create this Insights Report, which provides you with a balanced review and insights from independent experts.

The Application Process for 2026

The 2026 application process will open after the 2025 conference. To ensure organizations can engage in a valuable and meaningful way, the review criteria will be fully transparent, and the process explained clearly.

Appendix II: Applicants That Have Presented

Out of a much larger number of participants, the following organizations have presented their stories at the agile business awards conference. The videos of these presentations can be viewed for free at: www.agilebusiness.org

What you will see is that sometimes, these stories talk about an entire organization, sometimes, they only reflect a certain part of the organization. Sometimes, they are technology heavy, sometimes they are not. And you can always see that the stories cover all areas of the Framework for Business Agility, the world standard used for assessing these organizations.

Some of the stories presented at conference, will be reworked to white papers or case studies. We invite you to also access those on our website. And lastly, we have set up a virtual community with the participants of last year, the participants of this year and some other organizations, to learn with and from each other about the ongoing process of business agility. If your organization is on such a journey and feel they want to join the participative sharing and learning, please contact us.

Appendix III: The Agile Business Consortium

We are the independent, not-for-profit, body dedicated to advancing business agility worldwide in accordance with a defined set of standards, competencies, and a code of practice. We do this by:

- Supporting the development of individuals through formal and informal learning, recognizing knowledge, practice, and experience,
- Providing access to relevant, trustworthy content including a range of events and special interest communities and a network of like-minded professionals,
- Commissioning and engaging in research, thought leadership and market-wide collaborations to extend knowledge and develop good practice.

We encourage an inclusive, agnostic and people-centered approach to organizational agility, including the use of a wide variety of agile methods and frameworks.

We are the brains behind DSDM, AgilePM®, AgileBA®, AgilePgM™, AgilePfM, AgileDS™ and AgilePM for Scrum, as well as the originators of the Framework for Business Agility – including the Nine Principles of Agile Leadership and the Agile Culture Matrix.

What's Coming Up for Consortium Members?

As part of our work supporting business agility individuals, organizations, and communities, we're constantly gathering data to ensure the Framework for Business Agility (FBA) continues to reflect the latest thinking across the field.

The FBA proved to be an invaluable model for our Awards Reviewer Panels. You can familiarize yourself with the FBA to understand more about its value for you and your organization by clicking this link: https://www.agilebusiness.org/business-agility/framework-for-business-agility.html

Support for Business Agility

We see the FBA as the content holder for almost everything we do! Effective business agility needs an agile approach to governance, culture, people, strategy and leadership – and our work supports great thinking across all of these domains.

On our website you'll find business agility tools to do self-assessments in several areas of the framework; for example, leadership and culture. To learn more about these click this link: https://toolkit.agilebusiness.org/

In addition, if you would like advice or consultancy, you may like to check out our list of accredited delivery partners. These are organizations that meet the Consortium standards and will be able to supply you with business agility guidance you can trust. You'll find more information here: https://www.agilebusiness.org/partners/become-an-accredited-delivery-partner.html

Becoming a Member

Join the Agile Business Consortium community and gain the tools, learning, insights, and connections to work smarter, lead with confidence, and create real impact.

Discover more about our membership options here: https://www.agilebusiness.org/membership.html

Appendix IV: Acknowledgements

The awards 2025 was a year-long process. We have received tremendous support from the organizations listed here. They were NOT financial sponsors. They did the really important thing: collaborating for success. They have helped us find applicants and helped us as reviewers. They have helped with marketing, and they have helped us to continuously improve our process. Without this network of supporters, the awards process would not be taking place. We would like to extend a big thank you to these supporters and we hope to see them again next year. If you want to become a supporter for the award process, please contact us.

Agile Affinity	Agile Alliance	Agile Delta	Agile Marketing Alliance
AgileSherpas	APMG International	Being Agile	Beneficial Consulting Ltd
BeYond Agile	Bright	Business Agility Institute UK	Business Agility Institute
CUPE International Ltd	JCURV	Nimble Approach	People and Transformational HR Ltd
SeedingEnergy	TCC Training and Consultancy	The Corrie Partnership Ltd	Twinxter
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