BUILDING AGLITY AT SCALE

Whitepaper 2019

Written by Tony Tregurtha, CEO, Enlighten Operational Excellence.
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SERIES

An agile back office that can quickly respond to opportunities and threats - what an enticing vision! But how can large companies put this vision into practice and become truly agile, when the reality is that their operations are cumbersome, slow moving beasts that - like a supertanker - are slow to realign and readjust? Thankfully, there are several steps companies can take to shift from 'cumbersome at scale' to 'agile at scale'.

Before offering solutions for shifting to an agile environment, it is worth briefly exploring how companies evolved to be cumbersome. Fundamentally, **organisations are designed to be stable and adopt** a "If it's working don't mess with it!" mentality. They are frameworks that allow exceptions to be managed effectively, producing predictable outcomes and constraining as much change and risk as possible. They strive for consistency and foster an environment that values stability over dynamic change. Conformity can be seen, for example, in the areas of:

- **Compliance:** Pressure from regulators to comply with rules, policies and regulations
- **Risk:** Protect the organisation from security threats and reputational or financial damage, which calls for checks, balances and rigidity
- **People:** Clearly delineated reporting lines, goals and procedures, a management team that is filled with domain expertise and promoted based on technical skills rather than management qualities.

Together, compliance, risk, and people practices create an environment of stability and certainty, not an environment that can dynamically change or readjust. The desire for stability manifests itself in symptoms across all critical performance measures:

- **High Backlogs:** Work accumulates and becomes critical before anyone reacts

- **Overstaffing:** Pockets of the operation are overstaffed because readjustments are rarely made, and load balancing does not occur
- **Silos:** Operations are managed in parts (silos) rather than as a whole

"Agile runs contrary to what organisations are fundamentally designed to do: to provide stability. It disrupts the permanence of the system, creates vulnerability and is rarely successfully implemented. Instead of becoming agile at scale, organisations remain 'cumbersome at scale'."

Creating agility at scale

There are several actionable steps you can take to shift from 'cumbersome at scale' to 'agile at scale'. The first is to solve your current operational problems and shift to agile metrics, behaviours and culture:

AGILE METRICS
From opaque operations to transparency
Before becoming agile, you need to create transparency across your operations by implementing dynamic metrics and providing managers with information. You need a system that gives you fast, accurate information even when the deliverable is a moving target. By having greater visibility and continuous feedback loops, your managers can react quickly to changes and bottlenecks in the development process, which is required if you want to be agile.

AGILE BEHAVIOURS
From reactive to proactive management behaviours:
You need to create transparency across your operations by implementing dynamic metrics and providing managers with information. You need a system that gives you fast, accurate information even when the deliverable is a moving target. By having greater visibility and continuous feedback loops, your managers can react quickly to changes and bottlenecks in the development process, which is required if you want to be agile.

AGILE CULTURE
From low employee engagement to a high engaged workforce
Improve employee engagement through participative management practices to create a culture that embraces agility. This includes using transparent communication tools and methods to draw in your team members and bring visibility to, and sharing of, best practices, as well as the identification of obstacles encountered throughout the workday.

The integration of active leadership and the daily review of performance reports allows for a streamlined approach in conducting structured, transparent and targeted performance reviews and one-on-one coaching. Team member satisfaction and engagement increases when knowing what needs to be done and how individual performance can influence the results. Increased engagement further leads to improved team performance.

To learn more about how our clients successfully create agility at scale, contact Enlighten

Connect with us

Contact us

+61 92322771
enquiry@enlighten-opex.com