

# *Leadership Agility:*

**What is it?**

**How do you develop it?**

*Bill Joiner*



**CHANGEWISE**

# Agenda

- What is Leadership Agility?
- Three levels of leadership agility
- Assessment
- Developing increased agility

# What is Agile Leadership?





**Agility is Flexibility with Purpose**



**Agility is Grace under Pressure**

# The Essence of Agility



Focus



Step back



Gain a broader, deeper view



Re-engage, take action



# Why Agility?

## The Agility Imperative

“The world is more complex and fast-moving all the time, and that isn’t going away.”

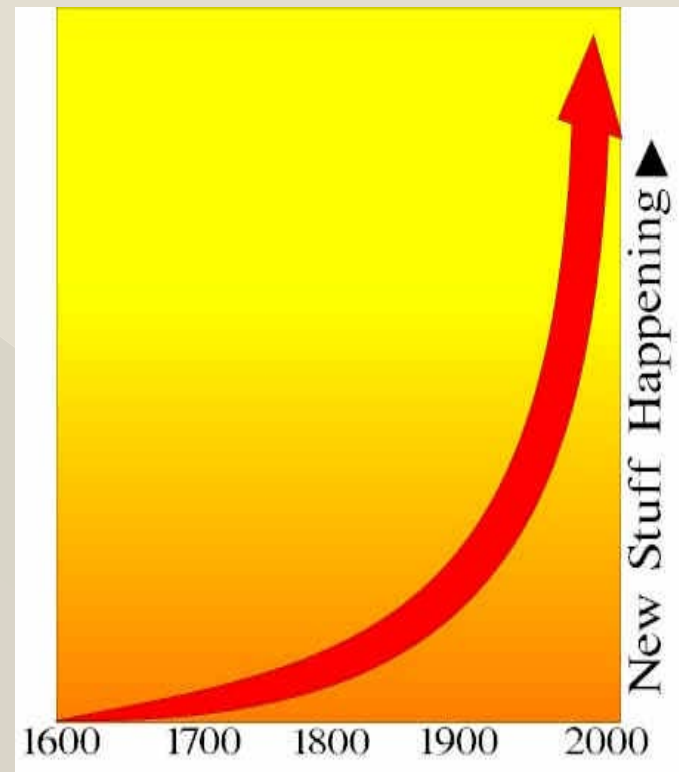
Ed Zore, CEO of  
Northwestern Mutual

“Most Admired” financial services company  
24 years in a row

# Why Agility?

## Accelerating Change

- Technological
- Economic
- Social
- Environmental
- Political
- Military



# Why Agility?

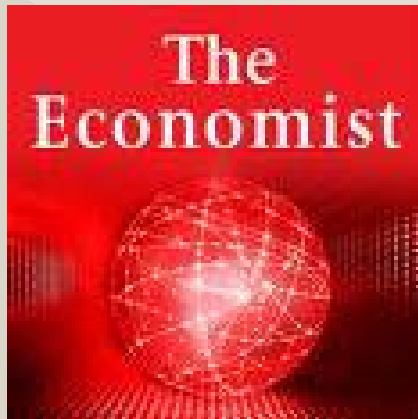
## Growing Inter-dependence



- New communication technologies
- Global economy
- Premium on customer & supplier relationships
- Increasing importance of business partnerships

# Highlights of Research on Organizational Agility

- Organizational agility is a **competitive advantage**. Highly agile organizations outperform their less agile counterparts
- For optimal performance, an organization's **agility level** needs to match the **pace of change** and **degree of inter-dependence** in its environment



# Recent Study on Organizational Agility

- 90% of executives believe that agility is **essential** for business success and growth
- Yet most companies acknowledge they are **not agile enough**
- **Why the gap?**



Accelerating **change** and growing **inter-dependence** are **continually raising the bar** for the **level of agility** needed for sustained competitive advantage

# The Bar has been Raised

**Current Level**



**Previous Level**

**Pace of Change  
and Degree of  
Inter-dependence**

# We Need to Raise our Agility Level

**Current Level**

**Next Level?**



**Previous Level**

**Current Level**

**Pace of Change  
and Degree of  
Inter-dependence**

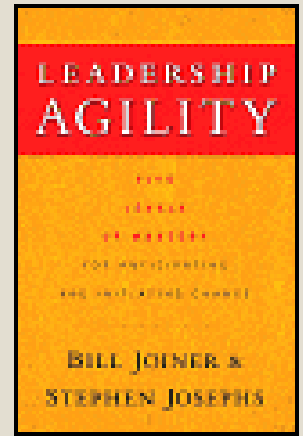
**Level of Agility**

# Leadership: The Key Driver for Organizational Agility

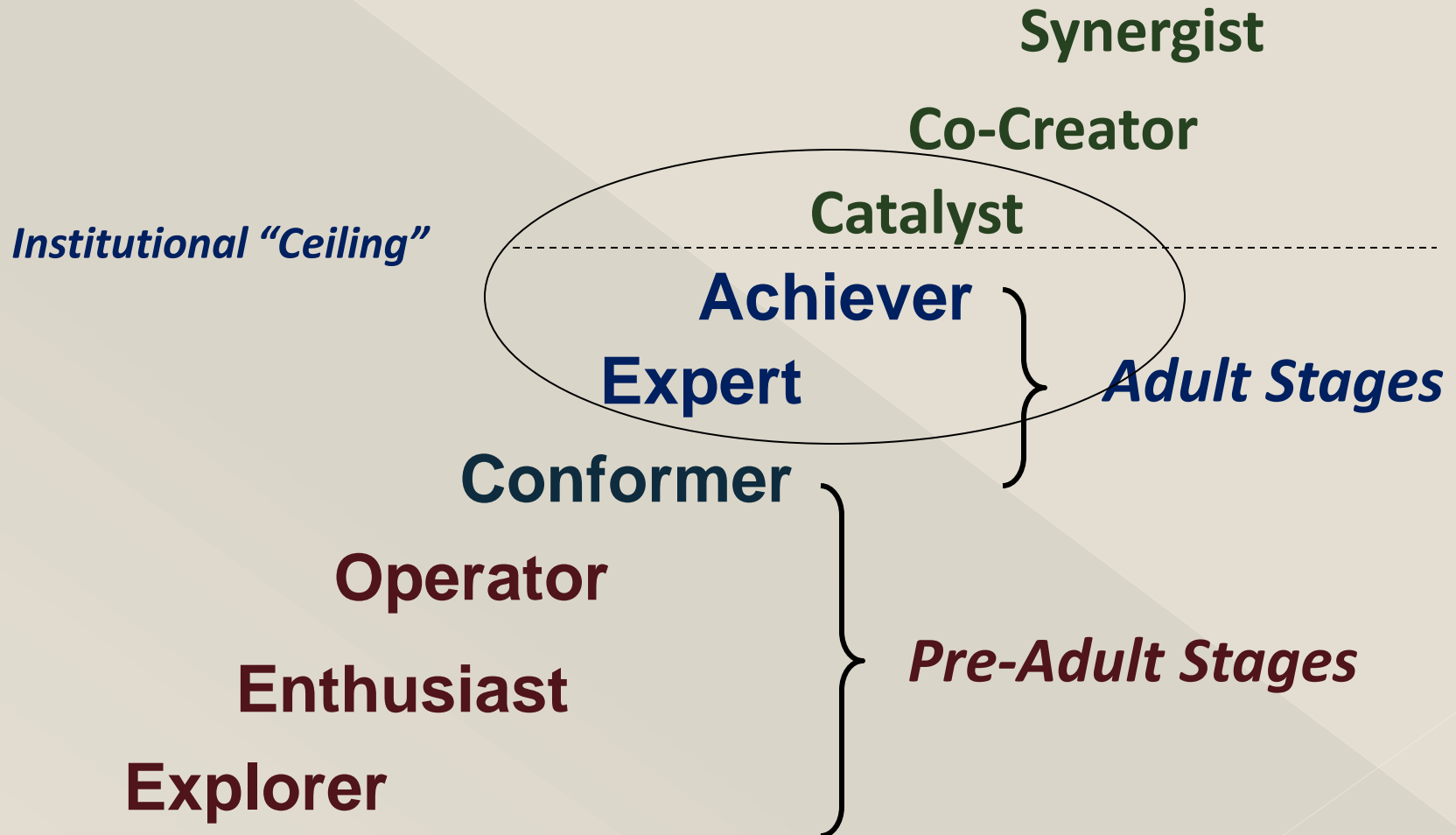
- **Economist study:** Most of the barriers to increased agility lie in the **organizational culture**
- The key point of leverage is the **leadership culture** (new article)

# Multi-Year Research Project

- How do highly agile leaders think and behave?
- Are more agile leaders more effective?  
Under what conditions?
- How does leadership agility develop?
- **Key finding:** Levels of leadership agility correlate with well-established stages of personal development



# Stages of Development



# Levels of Leadership Agility

Current  
Institutional  
“Ceiling”

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- 10% **Catalyst**
- 35% **Achiever**
- 45% **Expert**
- 10% **Pre-Expert**

# Three Leadership Arenas

	Leading Change	Leading Teams	Pivotal Conversations
Catalyst Level			
Achiever Level			
Expert Level			



# Ed: Expert Level Leadership Agility



- You've been at it for seven months. How is it going? (**Approach to leadership**)
- How did you get started in **changing the organization**?
- What has it been like working with your **executive team**?
- Have you had any **conversations** so far that have been especially challenging?



# Ed: Expert Level Leadership Agility

- What are the **key characteristics** of this approach to leadership?
- What kind of **motivational energy** gets generated by this kind of leadership?
- What kind of **leadership culture** does it encourage?

# Expert Level Leadership

- **Underlying assumption:** Leaders are respected and followed because of their authority and expertise
- Tactical. I focus on incremental improvements within the unit over which I have authority
- Minimal engagement with stakeholders. Either strongly assertive or accommodative in resolving differences
- One problem/person at a time. I have low awareness of my own biases when solving problems
- I strive to improve in our technical or functional specialty. But I'm not very open to feedback



# Ed: Achiever Level Leadership Agility



- You've been at it for seven months. How is it going? (**Approach to leadership**)
- How did you get started in **changing the organization**?
- What has it been like working with your **executive team**?
- Have you had any **conversations** so far that have been especially challenging?



# Ed: Achiever Level Leadership Agility

- What are the **key characteristics** of this approach to leadership?
- What kind of **motivational energy** gets generated by this kind of leadership?
- What kind of **leadership culture** does it encourage?

# Achiever Level Leadership

- **Underlying assumption:** I motivate others by making it challenging & satisfying to contribute to larger objectives
- ~3-5 year outcome orientation. My change initiatives include an analysis of the strategic environment
- I recognize the need to gain stakeholder buy-in. Mainly assertive or accommodative, with ability to compensate
- I see connections between problems. I seek good data as a way to test my own subjective judgment
- I strives to contribute to significant outcomes. I'm open to feedback that might help me achieve these outcomes



# Ed: Catalyst Level Leadership Agility



- You've been at it for seven months. How is it going? (**Approach to leadership**)
- How did you get started in **changing the organization**?
- What has it been like working with your **executive team**?
- Have you had any **conversations** so far that have been especially challenging?



# Ed: Catalyst Level Leadership Agility

- What are the **key characteristics** of this approach to leadership?
- What kind of **motivational energy** gets generated by this kind of leadership?
- What kind of **leadership culture** does it encourage?

# Catalyst Level Leadership

- **Underlying assumption:** Leaders articulate an inspiring, transformative vision and bring together the right people to translate vision into reality
- Transformative vision. My initiatives include development of a culture of teamwork, participation, and empowerment
- I proactively engage with diverse stakeholders, because I believe their input increases decision quality, not just buy-in
- I know that all data are shaped by frames of reference. I try on frames of reference that conflict with my own
- I want my work to have personal meaning for myself and others. I proactively seek and utilize feedback

# The Research Shows that ...



- You don't skip stages/levels
  - You retain capacities you develop at previous levels
  - Your agility level can vary throughout the day
- 
- “Downshifting” to previous levels can be intentional or unintentional

# Most Common Leadership Culture

- Some **Catalyst** leaders here and there
- Strong **Achiever** culture at the top levels
- Strong **Expert** culture at the middle levels
- High-potential and executive leadership development programs focus mainly at **Achiever** level

# Optimal Leadership Culture for Today's Environment

- Strong **Catalyst** culture at the top levels
- Strong **Achiever** culture at the middle levels
- High-potential and executive LD programs would focus mainly at **Catalyst** level

# Potential Concerns

- Can we have too many Catalysts?
- Who will do the tactical work?
- Will we wind up with insufficient expertise?

# Tools for Assessing Leadership Agility

- Grid in Chapter 1, White Paper or Culture Article
- Chapter 2: The Five Ed's
- Leadership Agility book
- Leadership Agility 360 – April 12-13
- Leadership Agility Bench Strength Assessment

# Leadership Agility 360

- Level of agility in leading organizational change, leading teams, pivotal conversations
- Unique rating method: Choose agility level, then extent of effectiveness within that level
- Comparative rating process: Ability to rate multiple people at one time

# LA360: Sample Item



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Welcome, Agility Stakeholder 1

## Section 2: Improving Team Performance

### **4. When team members resist changes in team functioning, this manager: -**

Name	Listens to the views of team members but primarily relies on their own judgment			Asks for and considers team member views while advocating their own views			Initiates open dialogue that genuinely considers and addresses team member reservations			Don't know
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# Executive Teams



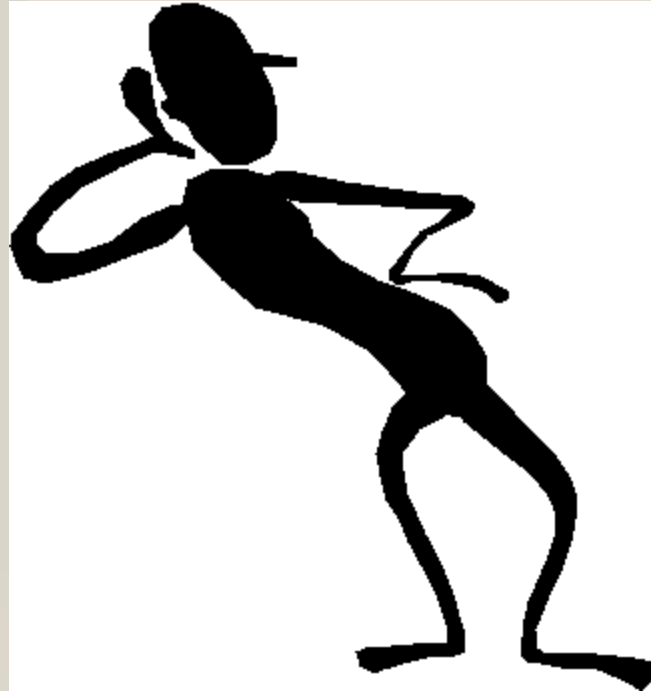
- Optimal starting point: Create a new leadership culture within this team
- Assess pace of change and degree of complexity in this team's work environment
- Determine this team's current and optimal agility levels
- What to continue and what to change to activate the desired level of agility?
- Intervention methods: Training, coaching, facilitation

# Leadership Development



- Reflective action is the essence of agility and the primary way to develop higher levels of agility
- The best vehicles emphasize action learning
- Not necessary to segregate Experts, Achievers, and Catalysts
- Important to focus not only on learning new skills and behaviors but also on developing the mental and emotional **capacities** that make them possible.
- Work with clients to maximize organizational impact

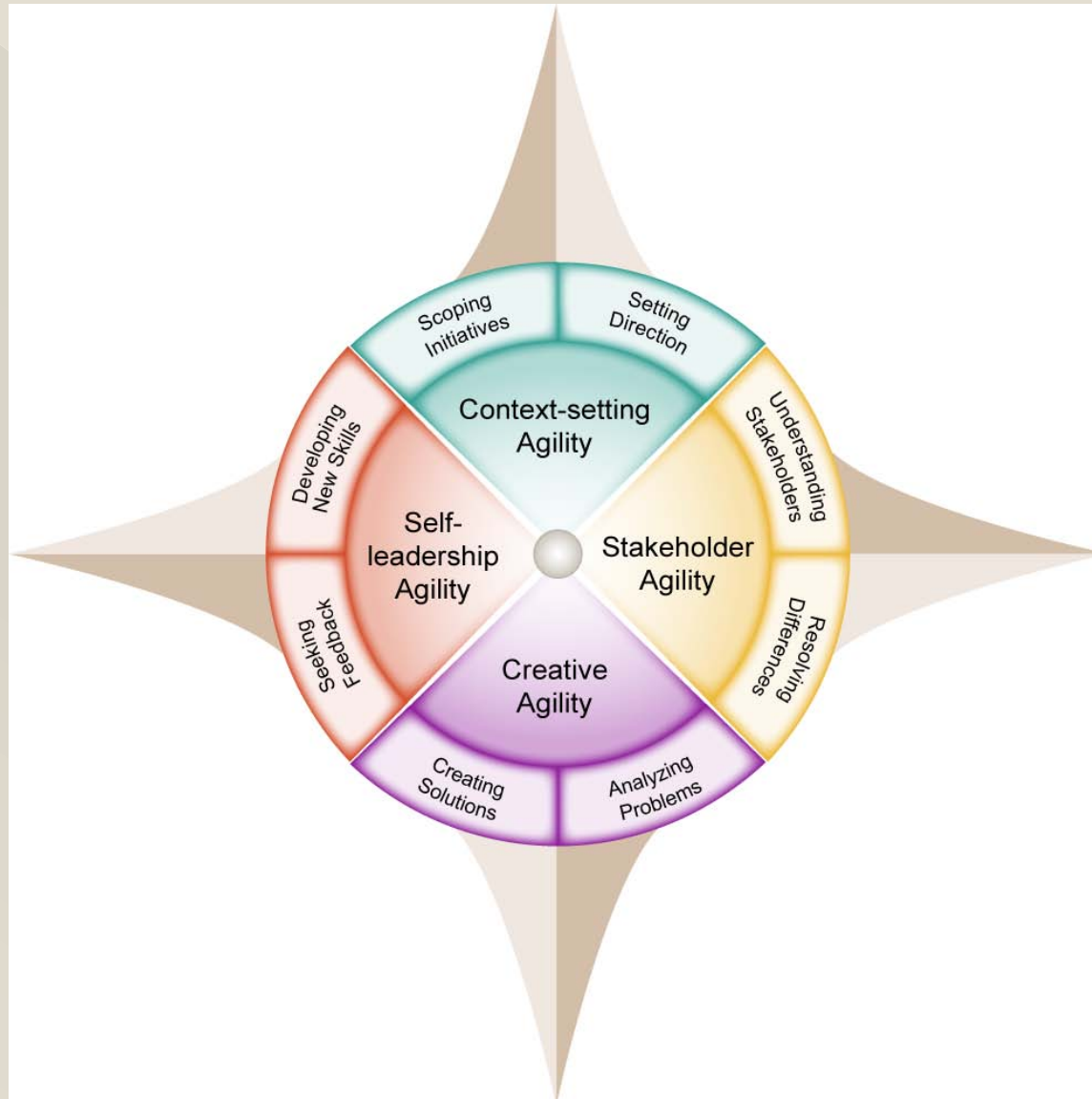
# Questions & Comments



# Levels of Awareness & Intent

	<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Intent</b>
<b>Expert</b>	Modest reflective capacity	To improve and accomplish things
<b>Achiever</b>	Robust reflective capacity	To achieve desired outcomes for valued institutions
<b>Catalyst</b>	Able to “reflect in the moment”	To create satisfying human contexts that enable sustained achievement of desired outcomes

# Four Leadership Agility Practices



# Catalyst Organizational Change

	<b>Achiever</b>	<b>Catalyst</b>
Context-Setting Agility	Focused within industry and on raising stock price	Also aimed beyond this to become best regional in N. America & be benchmarked by co's in other industries
Stakeholder Agility	Saw stockholders as the only stakeholders. "Heroic" mentality	Involved a broad range of stakeholders to increase quality of ideas
Creative Agility	Saw problem as being like past problems and therefore having difficult but familiar solutions	Saw problem as unique. Developed strategies through participative, creative problem solving

Who's to say what's impossible?  
They forgot this world keeps spinning.  
And with each new day  
I can feel a change in everything.



As my mind begins to spread its wings,  
There's no stopping curiosity.  
I want to turn the whole thing upside down.  
I'll find the things they say just can't be found.