Adapt **First**

Move Adaptability from Afterthought to Prime Time

Be like water: such a gripping metaphor. But what does it mean in practice? Businesses grasp that they need to stand up to change, to adapt quickly, again and again, or otherwise be condemned to the depths of irrelevance. Yet, anticipating change and rapidly adapting to it is a tall order for most businesses and even more for their IT systems, often better known for their complexity and inertia rather than their flick-of-a-switch responsiveness. Small, marginal improvements no longer make the cut. To make the big screen, systems need to be built for adaptability from the get-go, not as a backwards glance or afterthought.

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Expert in Residence

WHY?

You hear that, Mr. Anderson? That is the sound of inevitability. Crises will occur. Failures will strike. Opportunities will arise. Change will come, some to be expected, more in unexpected ways. Adaptability is the essential quality to deal with it. A company's business agility largely depends on its technology agility. But it is painfully difficult to build adaptability into systems only when it is needed.

Systems should be envisioned and built by design for dealing with disturbance and change. The full next-generation toolbox of technology enablers should be considered – from 'mesh' API services and self-improving IT operations up to open, secure data sharing, AI, and autonomous systems. It's also about the mindset that the internal and external context will always, routinely, be disturbed and break: when Failure is an Option, it becomes an opportunity to learn, anticipate and improve. Operational efficiency used to be the mantra. Now it's water-like adaptability and continuous, 'StratOps' agile strategy delivery. Right from the opening scene. Dodge that!

GO FOR IT!

1. Change is not the enemy
Your IT portfolio needs to adapt and change at the speed the business context requires; create a mindset that welcomes comfortable and uncomfortable change, not demonize it.

2. From project to product
Projects no longer end, they keep going until they retire; by thinking products rather than projects, your business will be always evolving, in tune with the latest market developments.

3. Architect to adapt
Follow architectural patterns that create an agile mesh of micro-services and data; look for AI to drastically increase responsiveness and learning.

4. It will break
Assume your business and IT systems will be disturbed - even break. Build in processes, organizational structures and system capabilities that deal with failures and learn from them to improve resilience.

5. Search for the sweet spots
Grow an always explorative mindset to maintain an actionable heatmap of the movers and shakers of your business: where to expect impact from legislation, the future of products and services, new partnering opportunities

6. Prepare your change A-Teams
We all love it when a plan comes together; but it is even better to set up unified, cross-organizational teams – a symbiosis between IT and business folk – that can absorb and action on continuous change, especially when it's not in the plan

MEASURE

- Time to change
- Resilience

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