

# How Agility drives engagement and organisational effectiveness



**Organisations that were most likely to survive – or even thrive – during the pandemic were those that were able to quickly respond to their environment and adapt. They harnessed technology to connect colleagues and customers, they embraced new service models and some even developed new products and services.**

But some were not so lucky. Global brands have lost millions or filed for bankruptcy. Luxury goods, fashion, travel and retail have been hardest hit. Small businesses too have been affected. Fortune magazine<sup>1</sup> estimate that in the US alone, almost 100,000 small businesses have permanently closed during the pandemic.



## Why is agility important – and even more so now?

This isn't a new phenomenon. Even before the pandemic, we were living in a world that was becoming increasingly volatile and complex. The old "if" and "then" aspects of process-led, top down, hierarchical organisations are becoming increasingly obsolete. In fact, McKinseys<sup>2</sup> reported that fewer than 10 percent of the non-financial S&P 500 companies in 1983 still remained in the S&P 500 in 2013.

The environment that we operate in, as well as the demands of our stakeholders, are evolving at pace,

resulting in rapid organisational change and restructuring.

Entire businesses and industries are being fundamentally altered - or even replaced - by disruptive technology. Just as the horse was replaced by the car, video streaming killed the video store and innovations such as chat bots, GPS, shared car rides and digital news are changing our working and personal lives.

The volume and interrelatedness of digital data that organisations and their partners have access to is truly mind-

blowing. There are entire new genres of businesses being created with the sole purpose of optimising and mining data.

And of course, with working from home now a reality, the war for talent has become a global challenge – the digital drain has been reversed with creative and technical experts leaving our cities in droves.

**How organisations anticipate and respond to – or even initiate – change, will be key to their success and competitive advantage**

# How to build agility

**But it's not all doom and gloom.** The last 15 months have taught us that organisations – and their employees – can be extremely versatile and resilient. Contact centres with thousands of employees flipped to homeworking within 48 hours. Online retail sites have been launched in days. Hospitality venues have been made Covid-safe. Manufacturing companies have repurposed their production lines to make PPE. The medical and pharmaceutical sector has developed diagnostic tests and vaccinations at pace.

## Here are the lessons we've learned

Here at Peachy Mondays, we've had the privilege of working alongside some great employers, large and small, who have demonstrated amazing feats of agility, despite challenging circumstances. What do they have in common?

### #1 Unity of purpose

Agile organisations may be incredibly complex, "living" organisations, but they are held together by a strong, stable backbone – their organisational glue if you like. They have a clear ethos and purpose. No matter what role you perform in an organisation, no matter how much internal or external change you are experiencing, employee decision-making and actions are anchored in organisational purpose. Organisational purpose and values guide action at a local level which in turn creates cohesion at an enterprise level.

### #2 Customer centric

Agile organisations listen to their customers. More than that, they anticipate what they will need – even if they don't currently know that they need it! They seek out customer insight at every turn, they share knowledge about customers across the organisation and they listen to their customer facing employees who are, of course, best placed to identify customer pain points and opportunities.

### #3 Empower and trust teams

In his book *Loose*, Martin Thomas wrote that the future of business is letting go. Agile organisations hire great people that they can trust, and then they trust them to do great things. Employees are guided by outcomes rather than being slaves to process and bureaucracy. Autonomous teams work together, supported by organisational infrastructure that is efficient, effective, and easy to navigate. Leaders are there to remove obstacles and role model ways of working.

### #4 Experiment, fail fast, learn fast

Agile organisations are learning organisations. They are curious and invest budget and resources in experimentation. They are open to and encourage challenge. Failures are killed quickly and without sentiment. Failures are treated as opportunities to learn rather than blame. There are structured processes in place to reflect on and capture learning from both successes and failures.

### #5 Adopt technology at pace

Agile organisations are early and rapid adopters of new technology. A McKinsey analysis of 350 industrial companies found that those that made investments in automation, e-commerce, and other areas achieved higher revenues and total returns to shareholders than digital laggards<sup>3</sup>.

## How can Peachy Mondays support you?

We're here to help you **Listen better, Act faster, and Drive engagement & effectiveness**. If you'd like to learn more about how Peachy Mondays can work with you to understand levels of Agility and – most importantly – increase Agility in your organisation, **get in touch**.

<sup>1</sup> <https://fortune.com/2020/09/28/covid-businesses-shut-down-closed/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-five-trademarks-of-agile-organizations#>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/risk/our-insights/covid-19-implications-for-business>

