

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a busy city square paved with grey cobblestones. Numerous people of various ages and ethnicities are walking in different directions. Some are in groups, some alone, some pushing strollers. The scene is captured from a high vantage point, looking down on the square. The text is overlaid on the top left portion of the image.

Moorhouse

# Thriving in change: Courage, Agility and Talent

Barometer on Change 2018-2019



# Introduction

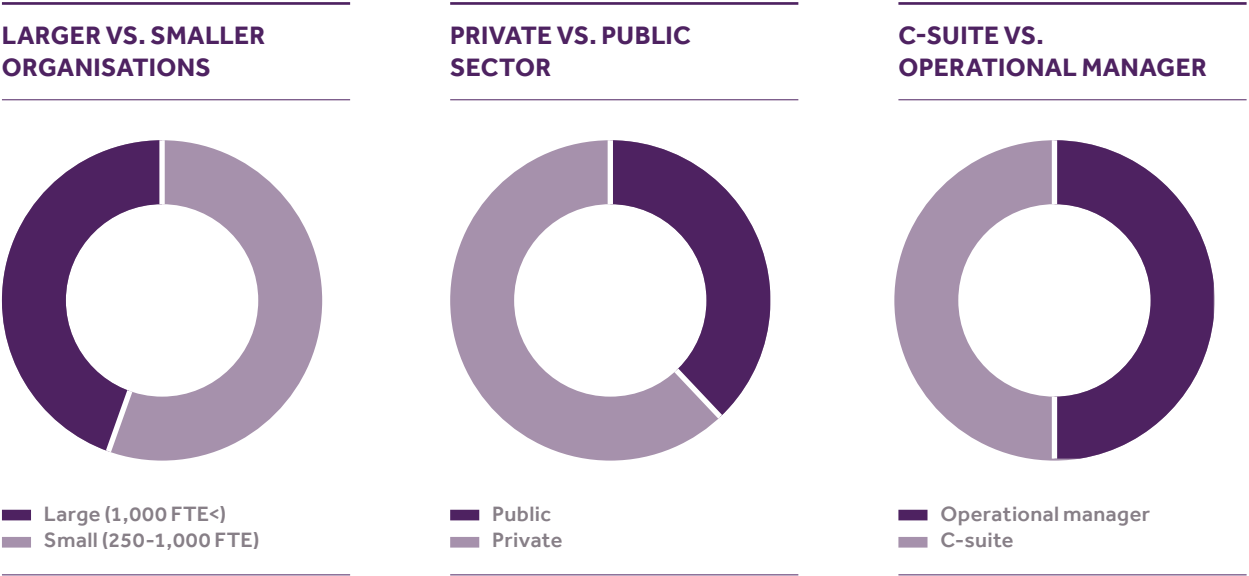
We have been writing our **Barometer on Change** report every year since 2012 to explore the challenges organisations face as they look to thrive in change.

This year’s report has been informed by our annual survey. Our findings draw on the views of over 300 senior managers and executives including board members. The research provides detailed and candid data from organisations across the private and public sectors.

The 2018 Barometer combines insight from this pan-industry research with our collective expertise as a firm. Set against the backdrop of ever-increasing customer expectations, geopolitical instability and a technologically disrupted marketplace, there is a growing gap between the ambition to respond to change and the ability to do so effectively.

In light of our research, we believe there are three areas organisations should focus on to ensure they thrive in change: practising courageous behaviour, demonstrating organisational agility, and nurturing talent at all levels.

## Who did we interview?



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This year, our Barometer on Change report explores the challenges organisations are facing in the current climate, and what they can do to thrive in change more effectively.



# Executive summary

## The current climate

This year, 90% of respondents to our survey believe both the pace and the pressure of change has increased over the last three years, with an 18% increase relative to last year's response. Change is becoming hard to predict and even harder to navigate, with organisations having thoroughly mixed opinions on where to invest internally. And while over two thirds of companies have invested more in change initiatives this year than they have previously, those initiatives frequently become redundant before they are completed because of the pace of change.

It is highly likely that this challenge is only going to become more prevalent – 84% of organisations believe that the pace and pressure of change is going to increase significantly over the next few years.

## The way forward

These stark statistics are not a surprise in a climate of uncertainty – but how do organisations get on the front foot and become proactive rather than reactive to this challenge?

We believe there are three key characteristics that organisations need:



### COURAGE

The importance of developing clarity of purpose and standing for something in the face of adversity.



### AGILITY

The business model to test, listen, learn and adapt, exploring opportunities and executing against them.



### TALENT

The ability to harness individual potential, building authentic relationships and supporting employees to be their best.

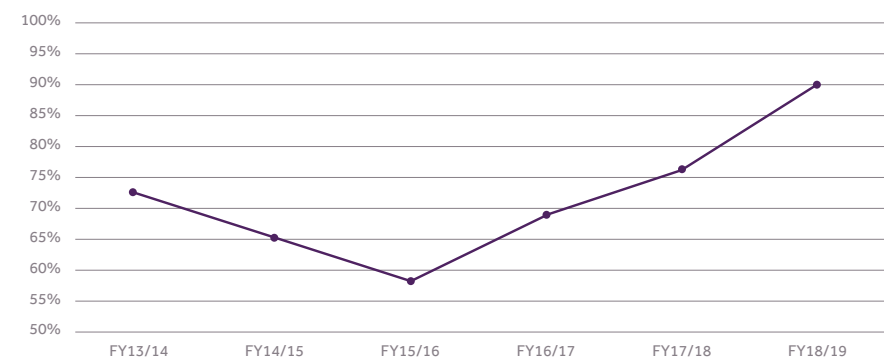


# The current climate

The pace of change is increasing. Significant geopolitical uncertainty, innovative technologies and tighter regulations are disrupting markets and making them more unpredictable. Against this backdrop, it is challenging for businesses to stay current and competitive.

90% of respondents believe that both the pace and the pressure of change has increased over the last three years, representing a growth of 18% from last year.

## PERCENTAGE OF ORGANISATIONS WHO BELIEVE THE PACE OF CHANGE HAS INCREASED IN THE LAST 2-3 YEARS (%)



In response, organisations are focusing on internal change more than ever before. Our findings show that companies are increasingly willing to change the way they work, what they offer their customers, and how much they invest in change initiatives. For example, we have seen a 67% spike in the number of organisations that have increased their funding for change initiatives since last year. Similarly, we have seen another 18% uplift in organisations that believe they have a culture that embraces change, as opposed to one that resists it.

These decisions to invest in change and culture also represent a strategic shift from previous years. In FY17/18, the change in economic climate was cited by 40% of companies as the most influential reason for organisational change. This year, the focus has moved: while the economic climate is still the primary driver of change for 24% of companies, proactive investment to get ahead of competition is a close second. This demonstrates how, against a backdrop of uncertainty, organisations are beginning to look inwards and invest in developing the mindset, behaviours and structures required to thrive in change.

The challenge for organisations is not just responding to individual changes as they happen, but building the right characteristics across the organisation so they are able to proactively thrive in uncertainty.

# 67%

spike in the number of organisations who have increased their investment on change initiatives since 2017

# 24%

of companies consider the economic climate as the primary driver of change



The pace of change is at a six-year high, and only appears to be accelerating.





# Courage



Courage is a choice, not a gift.

– James Easterbrook, Moorhouse



## COURAGE HAS THREE INGREDIENTS

There are three things that courage needs – adversity, sacrifice and clarity of purpose.

If the essence of courage is doing something challenging, then courage cannot exist without the adversity it strives against; there is opportunity in adversity. Similarly, actions only qualify as challenging if there is something to lose, so courage also requires the possibility of sacrifice. And if adversity calls for sacrifice, the only reason to follow through is because organisations genuinely believe it is the right thing to do; in other words, they have clarity of purpose.

It comes as no surprise, then, that a resounding 93% of survey respondents believe this clarity is essential to realise their objectives as organisations.

## WHAT COURAGE CAN MEAN IN BUSINESS

We believe courage is an essential characteristic for organisations to thrive in a changing world, both in a professional and in a personal context. The paradox, however, lies in the fact that courage looks different to different people – there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach. For example, some might see a trailblazing visionary as courageous; others will see it as someone who holds their nerve in the midst of adversity.

A courageous solution is typically high risk and counter-intuitive. PepsiCo is a good example of a pioneering business that diversified its portfolio in response to changing consumer needs. In the context of a declining soft drinks market, it moved away from its core product offerings to concentrate on healthy snacks. PepsiCo invested in companies like Bare, who now sell baked apple, coconut and vegetable crisps; it also set up incubators such as Nutrition Greenhouse to accelerate the growth of early-phase food and





Senior operational managers are 20% less likely to agree with their senior leaders on how clear their organisational objectives are.

beverage brands. Clearly, it requires courage to move away from an iconic business's core offering, especially when that business is turning over \$35bn annually. This is one of the key factors that contributed to PepsiCo's 81% growth since 2006 in the most adversarial market the industry has seen to date.

Yet sometimes it is courageous to hold your nerve. While the disruption and diversification of product lines is innovative, it can be equally courageous and effective to do the opposite. Post Cereal, for instance, launched a campaign in 2009 to 'put the "no" in innovation', rejecting the trend of transforming its product – in this case, cereal brands – to try and satisfy changing customer demands. Instead, Post Cereal felt that its brand value and integrity as an organisation was based on consistency, and so decided to preserve its primary products such as Shredded Wheat.

In another example of a counter-intuitive approach, Skoda took its negative brand perception from the 1990s and made it a core tenet of its advertising, using a self-deprecating campaign that made their target market laugh instead of trying to recreate itself. Similarly, Spanish retailer Zara was unable to get the factory contracts it needed to support inventory volumes on the high street, so it decided to produce eight seasons a year instead of four. This has led to its dominance in high-street fashion.

These are success stories of courage in the face of adversity with leaders responding creatively and assertively, driven by extraordinary clarity of purpose. The fact that courage takes many different forms is where opportunity lies; adversity makes courage accessible, meaning any organisation can demonstrate courage so long as it is practised. So if building a culture that enables courageous behaviour can help organisations to be more successful in uncertainty, the logical question is how to build that capability in the first place.

## HOW TO BE MORE COURAGEOUS

With leaders under significant pressure, our core recommendation is to start small. Organisations should begin by clarifying their objectives across all levels of the business. Create a cultural tolerance towards experimentation – and even controlled failure – that demonstrates that the organisation values being bold. Make more decisions based on available data instead of stagnating in cycles of internal debate. These three activities are the fundamental skills to practise if an organisation wants to be truly courageous.

Firstly, develop clarity of purpose. While 93% of organisations believe that having clarity of purpose is important to success, a third of respondents in large organisations (i.e. over 1,000 FTE) felt this purpose was not understood clearly across all grades.

Furthermore, respondents at the operational level were almost 20% less likely to agree with their line managers on how clear those objectives



of respondents believe that having clarity of purpose as an organisation is important to success.

were. But they crave clear leadership: over half of respondents felt that setting clear direction was one of the most important aspects of courageous behaviour that a leader could demonstrate.

So even where organisations believe they are clear about their purpose, in reality there is a significant gap between how clear senior leaders think it is, and how clear it actually is. This is particularly telling when we start attempting to translate strategy into meaningful action, like carrying out a strategic change programme. Bridging this gap is the first step in developing clarity of purpose as a clear enabler for courage.

The second point is around building an open culture that accepts decisions that require sacrifice. Our survey identified that a fear of failure results in low risk appetites that stunt organisations' ability to change; 64% of respondents did not know how failure was treated in their organisation.

There is a fear of failure in the workplace, so organisations tend to avoid it; 10% of respondents believed that failure would result in them being made redundant. Courage demands sacrifice, though, so in order to act courageously, leaders need to be prepared to put a potential outcome, or ego, on the line in the pursuit of something greater. This may require a cultural shift.

Lastly, organisations should develop the ability to make decisions faster in the face of adversity. We saw that being honest and transparent was the single most important behaviour courageous leaders can demonstrate, with 66% of respondents agreeing it was an essential component of courage. This could be as simple as admitting when something is not working and taking steps to change it. But the truly courageous will make the decision to change something when it is working well in the knowledge that in the future it may not, just as PepsiCo did when they anticipated that consumers would not want as many soft drinks in the future.

## Why it's worth it

If being courageous is about clearly standing for something in the face of adversity and professional sacrifice, then the impact of courage is threefold.

Courageous behaviours create clarity in the organisation, giving people direction at all grades. This helps attract top talent that buys into the vision and underpins commercial success. These behaviours engender trust from employees and customers alike, helping organisations to build brand loyalty through the clarity and transparency of their actions. So organisations should challenge the status quo, and continually develop courageous behaviour at all levels.



# Agility



In our experience the key characteristics of agile enterprises are those which harmonise exploration and execution within their operating models.



— Anna Rissen, Moorhouse

## WHAT BEING AGILE REALLY MEANS

If being courageous fosters clarity of purpose and brand loyalty, organisations can use this to retain their core values while being increasingly open to flexibility in the business model. This points to our second key characteristic for organisations that thrive in change – agility.

When organisations consider agility, it should go beyond Agile development methodologies and pure speed, which it is often misconstrued as. Instead, we believe agility is composed of two things: exploration and execution. If exploration is the act of searching for new opportunities by restlessly testing and constantly learning, then execution is the ability to operate efficiently at full speed with a clear target in sight. And while speed is a key part of both, being agile is less about creating products or services at a breakneck pace and more about listening to customer feedback in order to continually generate understanding.

## SIZE DOESN'T MATTER, BUT SPEED DOES

The implosion of companies like Toys 'R' Us is a reminder of what happens when organisations either fail to adapt to the pace of change, or cannot flex the business model enough to satisfy their customers' needs.

We found that companies are struggling to match the pace of change. 57% of companies take longer than nine months to respond to change, while only 18% can react within a financial quarter. The speed at which an organisation adapts to its environment is critical to success. This is due to the fact that economies of scale are still seen as more important than economies of speed. This attitude needs to change if organisations are to thrive in uncertainty.

**87%**

NEW!

of respondents agree that new products and services are important to the future success of their business.

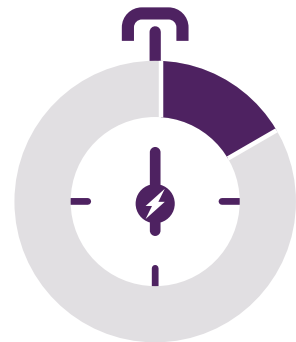
Economies of scale typically focus on reducing the cost per unit to achieve massive production volume. Economies of speed, however, focus on small-scale production to get a minimum viable product to a point where it can be tested rapidly by its intended customers. This keeps investment costs low.

A good example of changing at pace is Amazon's online grocery business, Amazon Fresh, which launched in the UK in 2016. Its purpose was to deliver groceries, and it worked well in what was at the time a growing market. The following year, Amazon acquired Whole Foods for \$13.7bn. At the time, Amazon had a market-leading delivery infrastructure, due in part to an ongoing partnership with DHL. However, it lacked the brand reputation for good, healthy produce – something which the acquisition of Whole Foods ended.



This illustrates how a company can adapt its business model to capitalise on changing markets. And while Amazon's status means it can afford to buy a change into its business model, we found that an organisation's size has no significant impact on its ability to respond to change any faster than its competitors. Customers must find the proposition credible for agile behaviours to succeed; there has to be congruence between an organisation's brand and its offering.

## WHY MOST COMPANIES STRUGGLE TO BE AGILE



The biggest obstacle to agility is the way an organisation is set up. The convention of working in expertise siloes is gradually being replaced by more dynamic (and sometimes virtual) multidisciplinary teams, often complete with matrix management structures.

This is also seen in the incubation teams and accelerator divisions of companies. These teams are typically formed of a small number of innovative individuals who explore new products and services while the primary revenue stream continues, doing what is known to work. The challenge with this approach is that these operating models often struggle to then accommodate changes to the business model.

Only 18% of respondents can react to change within the first 3 months of it happening.

Organisations know they must change to thrive. Whilst 25% of companies identified new products and services as the most critical factor to the survival of their business in the next few years, 87% stated that new products and services are essential if they are to thrive in change.

Despite knowing this, our survey identified that the majority of business leaders believe their own organisational structures are the single biggest barrier to becoming more agile. Viewed objectively, the operating model that underpins an organisation's ability to generate revenue needs to be flexible enough to accommodate changes in the business model, providing a platform for experimentation.

## HOW TO BECOME MORE AGILE AS AN ORGANISATION

The answer to becoming more agile, as with becoming a more courageous organisation, lies in finding balance in the operating model. An agile operating model begins at the team level, starts small and spans people, culture and ways of working. Culturally, organisations should look to encourage individual entrepreneurship amongst teams. 'Failing fast' should be acceptable, so long as employees learn from it. This approach breeds a sense of ownership, and allows talented people to pursue what they are passionate about. The devolution of decision-making that comes with this culture empowers team members to be courageous, by making decisions quickly while taking into account customer feedback.



# 57%

of respondents believe it takes them longer than 9 months to respond to change effectively.

But even as agile behaviours flourish across teams, persuading investment boards to fund the trial and refinement of new customer value propositions can still be a challenge. This is primarily because business cases are predictive rather than evidence-based. The majority are high-level estimates, predicated on projections rather than on testing and learning. It is therefore far more effective to focus on iterative investment instead.

Our recommendation is to build a metered funding approach into the accepted ways of working at an organisational level, investing in prospective products or services gradually as they demonstrate value.

## Why it's worth it

By incorporating more agile behaviours, organisations accomplish three things. Firstly, they typically minimise capital at risk: an initiative will be tested in order to pass the first stage gate, and will continue to be tested periodically. Secondly, organisations keep their teams hungry as they drive valuable insight through customer feedback and refine their product or service quickly. And finally, encouraging experimentation across a broader portfolio of products and services enables leaders to gradually invest more money where there is evidence of an initiative's success.

If being an agile organisation is about adapting the business model, then the speed of experimentation and subsequent execution is where the focus needs to be.



# Talent

“

We need to move from 'have done' experience to 'could do' capability and potential in order to turn talent into an invaluable asset that enables us to navigate the challenges ahead.

”

—Richard Goold, Moorhouse

## WHY WE NEED TO CHANGE HOW WE THINK ABOUT TALENT

If courage and agility are key characteristics to an organisation that thrives in change, its ability to be courageous and agile is dependent on its people. As an integral part of any business, our final characteristic is talent. This includes attracting, recruiting, developing and harnessing the potential of talented people. More importantly, it means providing a stimulating and supportive environment alongside exciting opportunities so that those people remain engaged and motivated.

This is getting more difficult to do effectively as the world of work changes, from falling average tenures through to changing expectations about careers. For example, it was recently estimated that the gig economy and freelance workers will account for over a third of the global workforce in the next two years<sup>1</sup>. With employee expectations changing and organisations waking up to the fact that maintaining the status quo is not a sustainable approach, organisations need to embrace the challenge and change the model.



The gig economy offers a 'tour of duty' approach to work. This is characterised by a commitment of between three to five years on the part of the employee, underpinned by a clear understanding of benefit and value for both parties. What it lacks, however, is the cultural bedrock that organisations can offer their people over a longer period of supported growth, developing potential in other areas. We found that 51% of organisations across all sectors consider attracting and recruiting talent to be their biggest challenge, and believe it will only get harder over the next three years. If an organisation is to thrive in uncertainty, we need to turn the way we think about talent on its head.

## WHAT TALENT MEANS

When discussing 'talent', we are really referring to talent as the combination of someone's capability and their potential – capability being what someone can do, and potential being what they could do in the future.

We found that 62% of organisations believe new skills are the most important factor for their business to develop over the next three years. This is compounded by the fact that the half-life of a skill is currently estimated at five years<sup>2</sup> and is continually falling. This demonstrates that talent is dynamic, and an organisation's perception of talent today could well be obsolete in the future.

Some skills, however, will always be relevant – the importance of work ethic, resilience, creativity, integrity, adaptability and emotional intelligence will never change.

<sup>1</sup> Junko Kaji, Karen Edelman, et al., The Rise of the Social Enterprise: 2018 Deloitte Human Capital Trends, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/at/Documents/human-capital/at-2018-deloitte-human-capital-trends.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott, The 100-Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity (Bloomsbury, 2016)



## BALANCING CAPABILITY AND POTENTIAL



Organisations should therefore shift the focus from capability to potential. To keep pace, they need to be providing employees with the opportunities to develop whilst ensuring they retain a learning mindset. The concept of the 'perpetual learner', where every employee is always learning regardless of role or grade, is central to this approach. While capability is still fundamental to do what is needed today, an individual's ability to build a breadth of skills is what will allow organisations to thrive in change.

Smaller organisations (i.e. 250 – 1,000 FTE) are significantly more confident in their ability to attract and recruit top talent.

To nurture and develop talent requires a change in mindset at the organisational level. Organisations should recognise that people no longer join companies for life, but instead tend to look for experiences that last three to five years<sup>3</sup>. Leaders need to be able to accommodate and support this. Some candidates will move from one experience to another in the same organisation, while others may pursue those experiences elsewhere. Either way, organisations optimise the productivity of their workforce and positively contribute towards talent retention when they embrace this trend.

## HOW TO ATTRACT, RECRUIT AND DEVELOP TOP TALENT



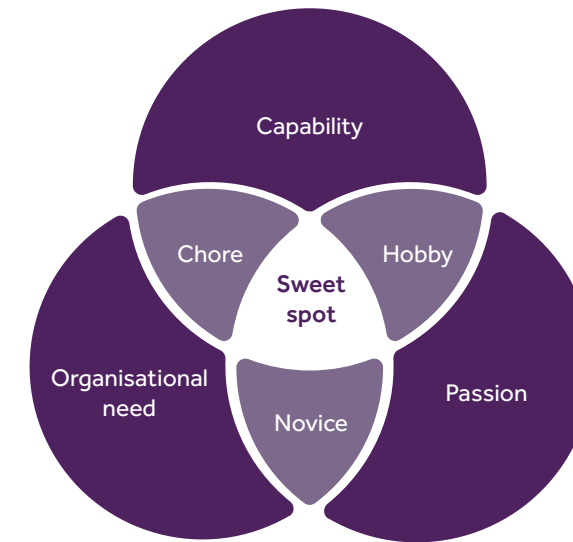
# 81%

of respondents are intending on boosting their L&D budgets by over 5% this year.

Smaller organisations (i.e 250 to 1,000 FTE) believe they are significantly more confident in attracting and recruiting top talent than their larger corporate counterparts. This is no surprise given that they tend to place more emphasis on individuals instead of employee groups, drawing a clearer link between the company's purpose and the individual's ability to contribute to it.

Organisations should help their staff navigate their own careers, starting with understanding the 'why' of work. It is important to connect people with the end result of what they do and what the organisation does, harnessing the value of people knowing that they are making a difference.

Alongside employees feeling that their contribution is valuable, organisations need to focus on offering compelling experiences over clearly articulated and structured career paths. If the concept of joining a company and working up the ranks is a thing of the past, then organisations need to make sure they are offering something different that is valuable to their people. Honest career conversations, authentic relationships, a coaching approach to development, a learning mindset, and the professional freedom to explore how personal interests complement work are the way forward.



Given each employee will want different experiences, organisations should take the time to build authentic relationships in order to understand individual passions. And while most organisations recognise the importance of having these conversations, we found that a third of businesses struggle to do so consistently.

To do this effectively, we suggest organisations use the CPO model. This is a behavioural framework that triangulates what someone is good at, what they really enjoy doing, and what the organisation needs from them. If organisations can move to a place where their people are playing in their personal 'sweet spot' most of the time, then that can only be a positive – for their people and the organisations as a whole.

In doing so, employees are offered the space they need to harness their potential, going beyond the value of current capabilities and investing in skills for the future. It will become increasingly important that managers and leaders are able to coach their people and, through coaching conversations, help them to navigate their careers in pursuit of their passions.

## Why it's worth it

Investing in how we develop the skills and knowledge of our people so that they are equipped and prepared to adapt to the current climate of change is important.

81% of organisations intend to increase their L&D budgets by over 5% next year but this in itself may not be enough. How we help our people learn and how we make this learning available so that we are satisfying the 'always on, always learning' mindset could be the difference that makes the difference. By encouraging a learning mindset, organisations promote constant curiosity and drive internal development.

Perhaps more important, however, is the versatility and organisational resilience that comes with this approach. As employees are encouraged to pursue relevant areas of interest and own their development journey, organisations become more agile, avoiding the siloes that typically stymie speed-to-market whilst fostering a culture that invests in the individual.

<sup>3</sup> Reid Hoffman, Ben Casnocha, Chris Yeh, Tours of Duty: The New Employer-Employee Compact, Harvard Business Review June 2013 issue, <https://hbr.org/2013/06/tours-of-duty-the-new-employer-employee-compact>.



# Conclusion

## Where we go from here

As the pace of change increases, so too does the pressure on organisations to stay relevant. And while they are investing in more change initiatives, there tends to be a lack of clarity on what those initiatives are supposed to achieve. For many, the focus is on staying afloat in turbulent times as opposed to getting ahead of the curve.

In order to navigate change proactively and thrive in uncertainty, organisations must take steps to build these characteristics into the way they think and work:



### COURAGE

Organisations should develop clarity of purpose and encourage bolder ways of working for employees. Organisations that create a cultural tolerance towards sacrifice and encourage devolved decision-making will set the bar for the rest of the market.



### AGILITY

Organisations should experiment and execute at speed. The ability to adapt the business model and flex the operating model to accommodate new value propositions is fundamental.



### TALENT

Organisations should build authentic relationships with their people in order to develop their capabilities and to harness their potential. Learning and development is becoming an increasingly important factor in attracting, recruiting and nurturing talent as we move away from careers and towards experiences.

# Talk to us

## Who we are

We are a dynamic consulting firm, focused on delivering change. We make sure our clients succeed in their long-term goals by helping them turn their strategy into action through exceptional delivery and a commitment to establishing a culture of change.

We specialise in turning your strategy into action and by bringing structured delivery expertise. Whether you are making small internal changes or transforming your business model, our expertise, straightforwardness and dedication to quality means you receive an unparalleled service.

## Who to talk to

If you would like to find out more, please visit [www.moorhouseconsulting.com](http://www.moorhouseconsulting.com), or contact us at [info@moorhouseconsulting.com](mailto:info@moorhouseconsulting.com) or +44 (0) 20 3004 4482.



