

Luminous Group Consulting LLC:

Adaptive Practices Assessment



We live in one of the most challenging times we have seen in several generations. There are great uncertainties on a global scale with companies cutting staff and government reforming programs, reducing services, and creating regulations that will affect every business. Of course, every one of us feels this uncertainty in our private lives. The effect is felt throughout the business world with massive changes in consumer behavior and little historical information that would help us feel confident about spotting and interpreting trends from which to make predictions.

Simply put, we live in uncertain times and conventional management tools are frighteningly inadequate, as their assumptions regarding time do not fit the current rate of change. How do you manage a business when so much about the future is unknown and not knowable? How do we make strategic decisions when information about our business is only slowly trickling up through the layers of management, often with a lot of filtering and protecting that reframes bad news into pretty boxes? The temptation for managers and executives to improve the quality of information by going closer to the source is great and often leads to overwhelm and micromanagement. The approach is unsustainable and rarely improves the way the business actually runs.

Maybe this is just a phase and we simply need to hunker down and wait for the chaos to be over. But what if the analysts are right when they predict that this chaos is the new "normal" in a fast-paced, global economy where information travels at the speed of light?

At Luminous, we believe organizations will create value by investing in business cultures that are more agile and innovative. By doing so, businesses become better able to adapt to change - and more importantly - become drivers for change. Agile businesses are quicker to spot opportunities that are often fleeting and meet market demands in smaller niches with greater profit margins for as long as they are viable. These organizations are constantly innovating, increasing business performance, and changing the game.

Here are some of the ways our processes have helped to transform organizations:

- We helped a biotech company transform a critical proprietary laboratory process from one which took 2 months to complete down to 12 hours, an efficiency increase of 2,600%. This not only improved performance, but dramatically increased throughput and reduced errors.

- We assisted a major law firm strengthen its internal software development processes by introducing real-time feedback systems that enabled developers to uncover and address software quality issues before they were introduced to users. This enabled the group to release new features at more rapid intervals, fostering increased communication between users and the development group, increasing overall speed to value and team velocity.
- Analyzing a significant money management company's Information products and reports to streamline and enable the scalability of the organization's reporting capabilities. This consolidates workflow, reduces bottlenecks and redundancies, improving the overall information flow within the organization. The improved system reduces the overall cost to produce, maintain, and re-use information.
- We aided an advertising firm implement a firm-wide system that standardizes and integrates the job ticketing and work product processes, resulting in one system the entire company can use to track and create work.
- In a regulated environment, we supported a startup in putting into place the management tools and technical infrastructure to prioritize and track progress towards compliance transparently to the entire organization. The resulting collaboration on all levels surfaced key requirements, reducing risk and enhancing overall confidence in the system.
- We supported a design firm in articulating their strategic vision and identify management metrics that allowed them to manage their time and resources effectively - resolving critical bottlenecks in their collaboration that hampered their ability to reach their goals.
- We worked with a major university to implement a knowledge sharing portal that connects collaborators from all over the world share pertinent and timely information disease research, keeping the researchers in touch with what the others are doing and fostering new levels of collaboration.

How do you build such a culture and what are the trade-offs? In our experience, it is important to realize that there is no single culture or model to make a business more agile. We all start exactly from where we are and the circumstances to which we have to adapt. Every business already operates within existing assumptions and values - their culture - from which they are able to increase their agility. And from here, we are able build on forward thinking ideas like emergent strategy (Mintzberg 2000), organizational learning (Senge, 2001), and new, adaptive systems in leadership (Wheatley, 1996) just to name a few. We can also learn from proven management practices such as lean manufacturing (Krafcik, 1988) and agile software development (Schwaber & Beedle, 2001).

These frameworks provide guidance and ideas to begin the journey in whatever area of our business provides us the highest leverage for change - where leverage can be measured as the greatest value with the least amount of effort and disruption. By working with Luminous, you will generate practices of

collaborative problem solving, reflection, and feedback that engage, motivate, and reward. In this shift we learn as much about the new culture as we learn about improving the performance of the business.

As businesses evolve toward more empowerment of workers, more venturing and decentralization, and, with the rise of all kinds of alliances and joint ventures, more porous boundaries -- culture must also evolve. This core process is what Luminous supports your organization in executing.

The resulting culture includes these features:

- More decision making by those closer to the information
- Power to self-organize around shared goals
- More informal information sharing and transparency
- Iterative processes that shorten feedback loops

All these management practices rely on engaged employees that are trusted to prototype and discover the best ways they can contribute to creating business value.

To support business leaders in beginning this journey, the Luminous Group has developed an Adaptive Practices Assessment which measures organizational adaptation ability across 10 dimensions to help determine what kinds of environmental changes would support the growth of an adaptive and innovative culture. It takes a very practical, down to earth look at your management practices and resulting organizational behavior that provides focus and priorities by identifying areas where you are likely to find high value points.

To find out more how our Adaptive Practices Assessment can help your organization build a plan to create an increasingly adaptive, agile, and innovative culture, contact us at +1-866-495-7354 or on adaptive@luminousgroup.net.