

Agility: The Gift that Keeps on Giving

By Tom O'Shea, CMC Organizational Agility Practice Leader



'Tis the season of giving and reflection. As we wind down yet another year, it's time to reflect on the year gone by and shape our expectations for the year that lies ahead. So, how did you do this year in meeting those goals and expectations that you set last December in anticipation of 2015? How should you grade yourself and your team this year ... pass or fail? Better or worse than the year before? Yes, I know ... it's not as simple as that. In some ways, however, I do believe the most important strategy for success in an increasingly complex world ... is to keep it simple. As Don Sull, the MIT Sloan School professor and strategic agility guru, says in his new book, there are [Simple Rules](#) that can make the difference in this complex world.

As I work with my clients and reflect together on what shapes "success" in 2016 and beyond, we strive to use a simple framework of our own involving three very basic questions for themselves and their teams ...

- How can we create greater shared FOCUS on our central purpose (why are we here) and the value system that shapes our culture?
- How can we become better and FASTER at those things that truly matter at all levels in our team?
- How can we become even more adaptive and FLEXIBLE throughout our team to navigate the dynamics of change and delight our stakeholders



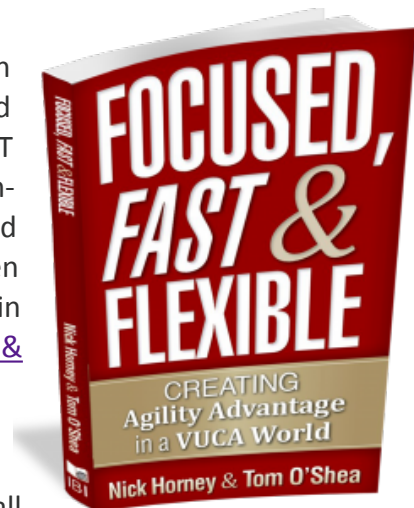
Many of my friends and colleagues know that bareboat sailing in beautiful settings like the British Virgin Islands is one of my passions. I also like using sailing imagery in my workshops to illustrate the leadership, values and high performance in team agility. No doubt, leaders today are often navigating in uncharted waters with very unpredictable conditions – the essence of the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world. We all must navigate with a DO MORE WITH LESS reality that means every crew member must

be a talented, motivated and agile leader. As with a sailing vessel in any kind of "race" or competition, there must be clarity of purpose and compass direction to guide our navigation and establish our team focus. There must also be a shared operating system of communication, rapid decision-making and synchronization of activities to be better and faster than competing boats and teams. Finally, since we are operating in the open waters and subject to the sometimes unpredictable forces of mother nature, we must be prepared and able to adapt and

change as necessary to tact for success. Part of the success equation also involves having the right vessel and technology to compete which in this sailing metaphor includes a sturdy keel underneath, which I always equate to the core values that provide counterweight to keep our team stable during heavy storms.

Like any world class performance team in any sport, such as Barcelona FC in soccer and even the NFL Carolina

Panthers in 2015, building out the capabilities associated with those three questions helps create competitive advantage and organizational agility. In that way, AGILITY becomes the GIFT that keeps on giving for leaders and teams that embrace the on-going learning agility aspect of getting progressively better and faster. It starts with a shared core belief system and then includes systematic development of the capabilities outlined in our [THE AGILE MODEL](#). Our new book [FOCUSED, FAST & FLEXIBLE: Creating Agility Advantage in a VUCA World](#) provides you and your team the rest of the roadmap. This might be a great gift idea for your whole team this year click here for a [bulk order](#) – and give them the gift that will keep on giving all next year and beyond.



So, what is the PAYOFF FOR AGILITY? We have been preaching this gospel for almost 15 years about the value proposition for agility and good to see McKinsey & Co and other large consulting firms providing further research based validation for key agility drivers and assessment tools. You might also appreciate this article associating agility and stability ... [Agility: It Rhymes with Stability](#)

Best wishes for you and your teams as you look to 2016 and prepare to navigate in those waters. I welcome your stories and questions so we can navigate in a regatta-like community of practice. I also encourage you and your team to participate in our THE VUCA REPORT pulse survey which we are building as a global “tell-tale” to help us all anticipate change ... [WHY YOU WILL LOVE THE VUCA REPORT](#) Spread the word and link.

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