

# Sensing Your Next Storm

by Tom O'Shea, CMC



Is it just me ... or does it seem like Mother Nature has been getting increasingly grouchy and downright unpleasant these days? From our home base here in normally calm North Carolina, we have recently experienced the combined drama of earthquakes, tornadoes and a nasty hurricane ... all in a matter of days apart. Enough already! Just as we are powerless in changing the path and fury of Mother Nature, we are also subject to wrath and vagaries of a volatile, fragile global economy. We have described these times as ... **The**

**Era of Rampant Uncertainty.** A friend who studies numerology once told me that I was born under the sign of “uncertainty resolver” so you can imagine how that makes me feel these days!

So, what can we do to try and “resolve” some of this uncertainty we face? Well, since much of the uncertainty in our world results from factors beyond our control as you can see in the classic video **Shift Happens**, we need to get better at understanding our “forces of change” and creating the right kind of “sensing” mechanisms to give us early warning alerts when they start acting up. Just like in our homes where we have numerous “sensing” devices (e.g. smoke alarms, security alarms, thermostats, dogs, etc) that give us early signals or alerts to changing conditions or like the emergency broadcasting system and tornado sirens that help communities stay safe ... we can and must construct comparable sensing systems for early warning signs of change in our organizations if we hope to proactively anticipate change and operate as an Agile Enterprise.

**Anticipating Change** is one of the five drivers in our [Agile Model®](#) for creating organizations that can adapt and thrive in a VUCA world. The organizational processes that build our capacity to anticipate change include the clarity in our VISIONING, the alertness derived from our SENSING and the insights gained from our MONITORING. What are some examples of sensing systems that you can create for your businesses or organizations? Below is a sampling of just a few ...

<b>Samples of Sensing Mechanisms To Help Anticipate Change</b>	
<b>Forces of Change</b>	<b>Possible Sensing Mechanisms</b>
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Customer comment cards or after service surveys to gauge or “sense” customer satisfaction</li> <li>· Periodic customer focus groups looking at future needs</li> <li>· Customer satisfaction surveys conducted in real-time</li> </ul>
Suppliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Vendor advisory panels and roundtable groups with technology tools to create dynamic and time sensitive insight</li> <li>· Global industry trade shows and benchmarking</li> </ul>
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Regular engagement and climate survey feedback</li> <li>· Regular “town hall” meetings with real time open interaction</li> <li>· Employee roundtables and focus groups</li> </ul>
Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Tracking hiring or departures of key positions</li> <li>· Regular feedback from customers and suppliers to questions about which competitors are “best in class” for each product or service category</li> <li>· Use of Google Alerts or other streaming technologies to provide daily information on key competitors, customers or suppliers</li> </ul>

The pace of change in the sensing and monitoring technology field is exponential. IBM’s **“SMART PLANET”** focus highlights continual evolution of creating technology companions that can help facilitate and even enrich our lives at work and home. These technologies are very intuitive and are building very sophisticated levels of “sensing” what our next move might be and then “responding” with a suggested solution. They are great examples of how to make “anticipating change” a very positive and assertive benefit.

We need all the help we can find to adapt and thrive on this sometimes crazy planet. As the IBM Global Services 2011 Global CEO study highlights, the aspect growing fastest on this planet is ... complexity. John Findlay, a world traveling colleague and futurist from Australia, recently sent his latest blog that captures some excellent thinking about how to get better prepared for the next Economy that he calls ... The Wisdom Economy. All good lessons for helping us become more agile in facing the uncertainty of the future by building out our SENSING capabilities.



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