

# The Importance of Being Agile (Board Agility/Agile Boards)

By Mike Richardson, Team Agility Practice Leader

This quarter's NYSE Corporate Board Member Magazine has a cover article entitled, "The Importance of Being AGILE" ([read here](#)).

The headlines are:

- **"The current wave of uncertainty, combined with the breakneck speed of technological change, means public company boards must be nimble and able to retool strategy more quickly than ever before."** My Translation: Indeed, we live in an accelerating world of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity).
- **"More than ever, strategic agility is emerging as a crucial skill for boards to master"**. My Translation: Indeed, Agility separates the victors from the victims, the best from the rest, the first from the worst, disruptors from disruptees.
- **"Every single company and board must be running alternative scenarios that could be relevant to their businesses. It's what-if, what-if, what-if"**. My Translation: yes, indeed, to learning from foresight not hindsight, which can be hideously expensive.
- **"Agility is the name of the game today as a board, you've got to be on your toes all the time, ready to zig or zag at a moments notice"**. My Translation: Agility is the only competitive advantage which has any permanence these days. Everything else is increasingly temporary, increasingly quickly.
- **"At its worst, responding too sluggishly (or too aggressively) to an external threat can expose the company to bankruptcy or a takeover"**. My Translation: Indeed, Agility comes from the and-proposition of not under-reacting and not over-reacting all at the same time, and being in the flow of that, which is hard to facilitate, so it raises the bar on Board Chairs and CEOs.
- **"If you don't have a diverse set of people around the table [specialists and generalists], it's tougher to anticipate risks because you don't have the imagination"**. My Translation: Yes, a diverse combination of specialists and generalists, well facilitated like a peer-group. That's why I love my work as a Chair of Vistage peer groups and specializing in helping organizations and boards import the power of peer groups into their process.
- **"We're living in a world of constant disruption, where technology has exceeded our ability to adapt"**. My Translation: VUCA – AGILE = FRAGILE. If VUCA exceeds your Agility the result is Fragility, which will show up probably bigger, faster and sooner than you think!
- **"Create a disruption committee to help anticipate future challenges. You need to have a mentality of "who or what can disrupt my business?" whether it's competitors, the political**



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environment, or something else, and be able to respond. The biggest challenge today is staying informed on what's going on. Things can change so quickly, if you blink, everything is different". My Translation: Yes, its essential to have a rigorous VUCA Radar Scanning process.

- **“Strategy, once forged at annual retreats, has become a year-round endeavor. Scenario planning has emerged as a crucial strategy-setting tool. Having those things on your radar screen and factored into your strategic plan helps ensure that you take into account things that otherwise might come out of nowhere”.** My Translation: Indeed, traditional “Strategic Planning” doesn’t cut it any more – we must have an Agile Strategy Process, as an ongoing dynamic process of strategy which is on all the time.
- **“In the end, maintaining that kind of flexibility and openness to shifts in the external environment, all while resisting the urge to over-react, is what board agility is all about, whether the challenge comes from a disruptive technology, the political world, mother nature, or someplace else. A board that stays agile and responsive can help a company survive and thrive in an unpredictable world filled with external threats and challenges”.** My Translation: Indeed, the Board plays a crucial role. Read more: [Agile Boards](#).
- **“There’s no real best-practices sheet or how-to manual for staying nimble, at least not yet”.** My Translation: Actually, that’s part of our work in Agility Consulting & Training, helping the Board, Chair, CEO & Management Team install an Agility Operating System and playbook to deliver on all of the above.



Coincidentally, notice their use of kick-boxing graphics in the article, as an analogy for agility – last month in my Vistage Groups I Chair my speaker was a former kick-boxing world champion, Bob “Thunder” Thurman ([read more](#)).



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