

THE SPEED OF CHAOS

By Tom O'Shea, CMC Organizational Agility Practice Leader



Future shock is the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time.

(Alvin Toffler)

Is it just me or do you also feel the strings of life getting wound tighter and tighter all around us? Lots of tension winding things up from so many different directions confounded by the g-force speed of news and social media ... especially in the form of tweets. This maelstrom is creating a new phenomenon we might call ... the speed of chaos. We speak regularly in this space about the VUCA world – that volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous reality we all face. The “viscosity of VUCA” is feeling very thick this week as each of these pistons of chaos are raging whether we talk about North Korea, Venezuela, Washington, Charlottesville or wondering if the next unfortunate community to face unwelcome chaos will be close to your home. Ugh.

Finding solutions to the underlying factors creating the level 5 VUCA we see in the world around us is well above my pay grade. I do think, however, that we should all recognize the spillover of this unsettling and growing tension into the workplace. Our world is often perplexing and we cannot avoid bringing our humanity into the workplace as we try and figure things out. As leaders of organizations, it will be helpful to anticipate these possibilities, imagine potential scenarios and consider the implications in advance.

I am often reminded of the incredible insight that author and futurist, Alvin Toffler, had over forty years ago when he wrote visionary book ... “FUTURE SHOCK”. Toffler could clearly see some of the important implications but also the challenges that lie ahead in coping with the “shattering stress and disorientation” in this chaotic future. He goes on to say ...

“To survive, to avert what we have termed future shock, the individual must become infinitely more adaptable and capable than ever before. We must search out totally new ways to anchor ourselves, for all the old roots – religion, nation, community, family, or profession – are now shaking under the hurricane impact of the accelerative thrust. It is no longer resources that limit decisions, it is the decision that makes the resources.”

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Also posted at: <http://agilityconsulting.com/your-agility-advantage/chaos/>

As the Speed of Chaos accelerates, how can you and your teams become more adaptable and capable than ever before? That is the challenge you face everyday. Our quest to becoming more adaptable as individuals and organizations starts with examining and affirming our core belief systems about important things. In your organizations, what are the values and operating principles that define you and how can you use them to anchor yourselves and your teams as the “accelerative thrust” increases?

This week also reminded me of an article I wrote a few years ago ... What If the USA Were AGILE? In that article, we examined some of the agility implications from the “most important” CEO role in America and also included a **Leaders’s Checklist for Driving Organizational Agility** that can serve as a your mini-playbook for navigating chaos. It has a number of helpful questions for you and your team to explore to help you become more adaptable and capable than ever before to face the FUTURE SHOCK that will no doubt lie ahead. The only real certainty that we have is the knowledge that the future will get faster, more turbulent and VUCA than ever. Ready or not ... here it comes!

I am interested in getting your comments and your favorite Alvin Toffler quotes also.



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