

Orchestrating Organizational Agility

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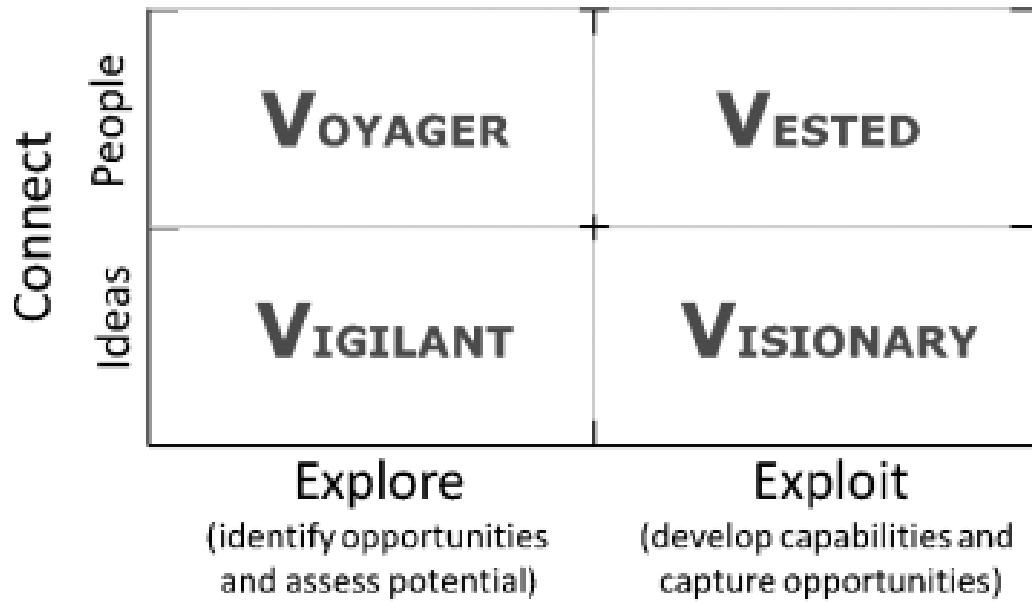


As Jack Welch once stated, “When the rate of change inside an institution becomes slower than the rate of change outside, the end is near.” That quote nicely sums up the challenge that businesses face thanks to the exponential changes caused by digitalization.

Simply put, today’s corporate leaders must ensure that their organizations possess an ability to routinely explore and exploit opportunities faster than rivals. This, of course, isn’t easy.

So, how do you create the organizational agility required to succeed in the digital age? Well, you don’t, at least not alone. But deploying the 4-V digital transformation leadership framework that I have helped develop can allow you to manage this challenge with other leaders within your organization.

As shown below, the model uses two axes, four quadrants, and four leadership types to help you accomplish your goal.



The vertical axis describes leadership as connecting the dots for your organization; ideas on the one hand, people on the other. The horizontal axis represents the ability to routinely explore and exploit opportunities faster than your rivals; that is, being organizationally agile.

Exploration identifies opportunities and assesses their potential, whereas exploitation develops organizational capabilities to capture the value associated with interesting opportunities. Today, exploration and exploitation must be reconceived for your organization to thrive at digital speed.

Making a digital transformation successful requires four types of leadership: *vigilant*, *voyager*, *visionary*, and *vested*.

Vigilant leaders make sense of the digital turbulence outside. They constantly scout ideas and opportunity signals beyond the boundaries of your organization or industry.

Voyager leaders bundle together people's creativity to quickly show digital opportunities at work, turning abstract opportunities into something tangible.

Visionary leaders develop an engaging aspirational picture of the organization as it succeeds in the digital age. They bring a sense of purpose and shared goals to the organization.

Vested leaders go beyond vision and experimentation. They put the complete organization on a roadmap for successful digital transformation, turning it into productive, yet flexible, organizational machinery.

These leadership types are *not* related to positions within the organization, *nor* to personal style. Rather, they refer to four types of behaviours (as described in more detail below). So, whether you are an introvert or an extravert, you must take the same actions.

Leading digital transformation is a matter of action, rather than position, and it requires digital-savvy champions

To succeed, the **vigilant** leader:

- Remains constantly alert for new digital threats and opportunities beyond the periphery.
- Makes sense of the environment to enable others to efficiently identify new digital opportunities.
- Inspires others to explore new ways of working, powered by digital technologies.
- Looks for digital technology to boost his or her own alertness, and the keen sense of other people.

To succeed, the **voyager** leader:

- Bundles together the diversity and creativity of individuals into an entrepreneurial team.
- Explores solutions by efficiently progressing through a steadily paced process of build–measure–learn cycles.
- Uses feedback from customers and other stakeholders to drive forward the exploration of solutions.
- Looks for digital technologies to boost the productivity of exploration teams.

To succeed, the **visionary** leader:

- Brings strategic intent to the organization by telling an engaging story of the organization as it succeeds in the digital age.
- Rethinks the organization's core capabilities for achieving digital-age customer centricity.
- Envisions success by combining the organization's specific core digital capabilities and those of ecosystem partners.
- Advocates the use of digital technologies to create competitive advantage.

To succeed, the **vested** leader:

- Puts the complete organization, rather than individual pieces, on a roadmap to successful digital transformation.
- Mobilizes the right skills and resources for timely exploration and exploitation of digital opportunities.
- Makes sure that new and existing strengths and assets can be efficiently reused for digital innovation.
- Facilitates the adoption of successful digital technologies and practices across the organization.

In successful organizations, each leadership type represents a social network or coalition of individuals spread across the organization. The strength and interactions of these communities of practice determine the success of the organization's digital transformation.

One individual can excel at more than one type of leadership behaviour. But excelling at all four transformation leadership types would be unique. Whatever the case, leading digital transformation is a matter of action, rather than position, and it requires multiple digital-savvy champions.

About the Author

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