

# Collaboration: The Foundation of the Agile Business



## Agile Pays

Look around you. Businesses that are thriving today are “agile.” Agility is becoming a true differentiator for business success. Agility creates a stronger environment for innovation and adaptability – and creates a cultural shift in doing things. Think about this. Why did Blockbuster and Kodak go bankrupt? What happened to Compaq? Why did Nokia disappear from the mobile phone business?

New research from McKinsey<sup>1</sup> describes agile companies as follows:

“Agile organizations appear to be powerful machines for innovation and learning. What makes agile companies special is their ability to balance fast action and rapid change, on the one hand, with organizational clarity, stability, and structure, on the other.”

Consider the dizzying rise of businesses such as Uber, Airbnb, Spotify, Alibaba, Baidu, and Flipkart. How did they do it? Quite simply, they emphasize innovation and agility.

The world is fast changing. The desire to be nimble and to stay ahead of competition is rising. And it demands both a swiftness and a consistency in process and product innovation that we before considered exceptional.

Agile is the new normal. So, how do you embrace it?

## Collaborate to Innovate

Business leaders are increasingly recognizing that agility thrives only on a foundation of innovation. But innovation does not happen in isolation. Innovation needs an engine within the business organization to feed it. That engine is Collaboration.

Harvard’s Linda Hill explains that “Innovation is not about solo genius. It’s about collective genius. It’s a journey. A type of collaborative problem solving, usually among people who have different expertise and different points of view.”<sup>2</sup>

Smart ideas stem from collaboration. More than sharing information, collaboration is fundamental to the creative process of connecting ideas. And innovation often emerges from great ideas through novel connections. Think about your organization’s last significant innovation.

Chances are it gave your business a boost. Wouldn’t that be a welcome competitive advantage in today’s world where technological changes can easily make the slow movers irrelevant?

Do you now see the connection? Aspirations of success compel organizations to become agile. But agility thrives upon perpetual innovation. Collaboration helps you create that perpetual machine for innovation. And Collaboration technology itself has transformed into an exciting portfolio of possibilities.

“In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.”

– Charles Darwin

## New Age Collaboration

Technology is constantly changing how we interact and collaborate. And in today’s knowledge-based economy, even basic communications have changed dramatically. These fast-moving changes are challenging. They challenge organizations to:

- Support a generation of remote and mobile workers
- Battle to attract talent from a highly mobile global pool
- Connect a worldwide ecosystem of employees, partners, customers, suppliers, and more

Even as individuals, the way we work is changing. You no longer have to be within office boundaries to be productive. Combined with workstyle preferences, technological advances are influencing significant change in workplace dynamics.

Frost & Sullivan estimates that millennials will make up 75% of the U.S. workforce and 30% of the world's total population by 2025.<sup>3</sup> And this generation relies heavily on mobile tools for sharing information, getting answers quickly, making decisions faster, and improving communications beyond organizational boundaries.

The new norm is shifting from momentary collaboration – short instances of people coming together – to continuous collaboration, in which teams work together on an on-going basis. And it requires a different collaboration environment with very different tools that is:

- **Always-on:** Bringing global teams together to work collaboratively in creative styles
- **Live or real-time:** Enabling people to meet over video technologies anytime, anywhere
- **Asynchronous:** Allowing people to work in collaborative virtual spaces from any device
- **Mobile-first:** Empowering people to collaborate when and where they please

With this, it's no surprise that organizations are redesigning physical workspaces that encourage creative interaction and a more free flow of ideas.

## Are You Ready?

As we move rapidly toward a future of digital transformation and agile businesses, collaboration is emerging as the most compelling enabler of innovation. As such, we certainly need more than “good enough” collaboration tools and processes to make the leap. It's time to make collaboration count in your organization.

## Read More

- [The Way We Work Is Changing](#)
- [Cornerstones of Agile Business](#)
- [The Cisco Collaboration Advantage - Business Agility](#)

<sup>1</sup> McKinsey Quarterly: [Why Agility Pays](#) by Michael Bazigos, Aaron De Smet, and Chris Gagnon, December 2015

<sup>2</sup> TED: [How to manage for collective creativity](#) by Linda Hill TED talk, September 2014

<sup>3</sup> Wired: [“How Millennials are Driving 2015 tech Trends”](#) by Simon Dudley, January 2015