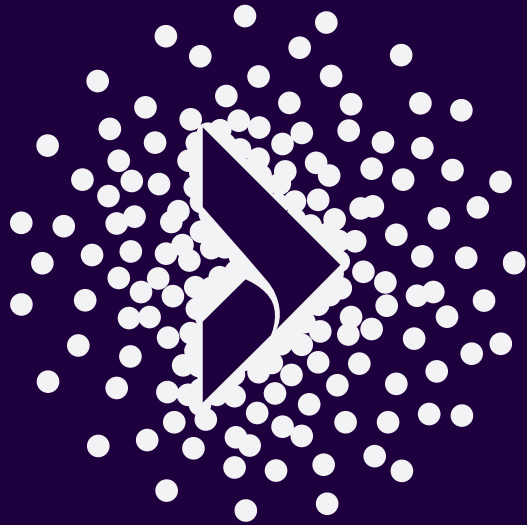


BUSINESS AGILITY INSTITUTE | X2A

Tomorrow-Ready DNA

A Summary Overview of the Domains
and Capabilities of Business Agility



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The Evolution of Our Work

When we first published the Domains of Business Agility ("the Domains") in 2017, we saw them as both inspirational and aspirational. At their core lay a simple, powerful question: How can an organization effectively keep up with a changing world?

The answer isn't found in adopting new processes or following a prescribed transformation. It is found in the capabilities an organization possesses. Capabilities developed through intentional behaviors. How people act, decide, and collaborate across the organization. Business agility is not just something an organization does, it is something it lives.

And tens of thousands of organizations around the world live these behaviors every day.

Yet for many more, we observed a fundamental misunderstanding where "agility" became a goal to chase and a set of processes to implement. In response, we continue to make the idea of business agility accessible for as many people as possible.

It's time to decouple the Domains of Business Agility from the term "Agility. Many now link the term "Agility" to frameworks and checklists. And our work has moved beyond the constraints of the term.

We are happy to share this evolution of our behavioral model: **Tomorrow-Ready DNA**. This latest version builds on our ongoing analysis on the capabilities of high-functioning organizations and incorporates lessons from the rapid adoption of AI across global enterprises.

Why Tomorrow-Ready DNA?

In our physical world, DNA encodes the fundamental capabilities of life. It does not dictate how you use those capabilities, but it defines what's possible. In much the same way, Tomorrow-Ready DNA defines the capabilities of a modern organization. How you use those capabilities is still up to you.

Much of Tomorrow-Ready DNA will look familiar. This is intentional. This represents an evolution of our research, not a departure from it. The same elements still make up the DNA; the **five Core Domains, 18 Essential Capabilities, and 85 Catalytic Behaviors** that make business agility possible.

We believe this approach feels more human, and reflects an organization as a living system, where healthy behaviors signal long-term resilience and performance. Bringing aspirational organizational capabilities to life.

Like the previous model before it, **Tomorrow-Ready DNA** offers a comprehensive map of the capabilities in successful organizations of all sizes and industries. It helps you understand your innate strengths, identify constraints holding you back, and make intuitive, informed decisions about where to focus your energy.

Whether you are an executive seeking a new perspective, a leader aligning your goals, or a practitioner starting out, Tomorrow-Ready DNA provides a practical guide. It is your way to help organizations adapt naturally, and continuously, to a rapidly changing world.

What is Tomorrow-Ready DNA?

Driven by rapid advances in AI and ongoing economic disruptions around the globe, the world is changing faster than ever. Organizations are no longer just competing for market share. They are working hard to stay relevant as the rules of business constantly change around them.

Customers are more informed than ever and expect personalized experiences that were once unimaginable. At the same time, employees are navigating a shifting landscape, seeking stability, empowerment, and clarity on how their creativity and contribution fit alongside increasingly capable technologies.

In this dynamic world, **business agility** is the foundation. The capabilities and behaviors that enable organizations to sense change, adapt, and deliver value.

But no two organizations are the same.

Tomorrow-Ready DNA is the unique expression of your organization's business agility and cultural core. It's how you work, how you engage, and how you collaborate. It's how you show up for your customers. It's what gives your organization the ability to reach its goals, no matter what tomorrow brings.

Improving your Tomorrow-Ready DNA requires deliberate choices about the capabilities and behaviors you build into your organization. It is more than updating processes; it is reflected in the everyday decisions you make—what you encourage, what you reward, and how you define success.

Done well, tomorrow-ready organizations do more than respond to change—they use it to advance their purpose.

Business agility is a set of organizational capabilities, behaviors, and ways of working that affords your business the freedom, flexibility, and resilience to achieve its purpose.

No matter what tomorrow brings.

Key Principles

Business Agility is based on four key principles that take into account the different ways organizations establish their Tomorrow-Ready DNA.



PRINCIPLE

1

SPECTRUM. NOT A SWITCH.

Business agility is not something you either have or don't. It exists on a spectrum of maturity.

The real questions are *"where are we strong and what needs to improve?"*

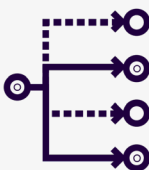


PRINCIPLE

2

STRENGTHS VARY

No organization is uniformly good or bad. Different parts of the business will demonstrate different levels of capability, some strong, others still developing.



PRINCIPLE

3

NO SINGLE PATH

There is no one "right way" to build business agility. What matters is not the method, but the capability it enables regardless of practice, framework, or operating model.



PRINCIPLE

4

CHANGE BEHAVIORS

If you act with agility, you have agility. It is expressed, and measured, through everyday behaviors: how decisions are made, how work flows, and how people collaborate.

FOUNDATION

Elements of Tomorrow-Ready DNA

Tomorrow-Ready DNA is the cultural operating system of your organization. It is made up of 5 Core Domains, which together define 18 Essential Business Capabilities, each brought to life through 85 Catalytic Behaviors (not shown).

Customer-Centered Strategy

Sense & Respond Proactively

Center Strategy on Customer Outcomes

Fiercely Connect with the Customer

Engage Diverse Perspectives

Mobilize For Change

Empower with Accountability

Human-Centered Leadership

Champion People's Growth

Orchestrate Human-AI Workflows

Value-Based Delivery

Seize Emergent Opportunities

Prioritize. Prioritize. Prioritize.

Accelerate Value Delivery

Nurture Trust and Psychological Safety

Embrace Respectful Candor

Cultivate Continuous Learning

Adaptive Operations

Balance Governance & Risk

Rapidly (Re)organize Structures

Fund Work Dynamically

Act as One Organization

High-Performance Culture

These elements work together as a system. Building capability is not a one-time change. It is an ongoing evolution of culture, people, and skills. Strength in one area is not enough; the effectiveness of the whole depends on how these capabilities are developed and reinforced across the organization.

FOUNDATION

Domains of Business Agility

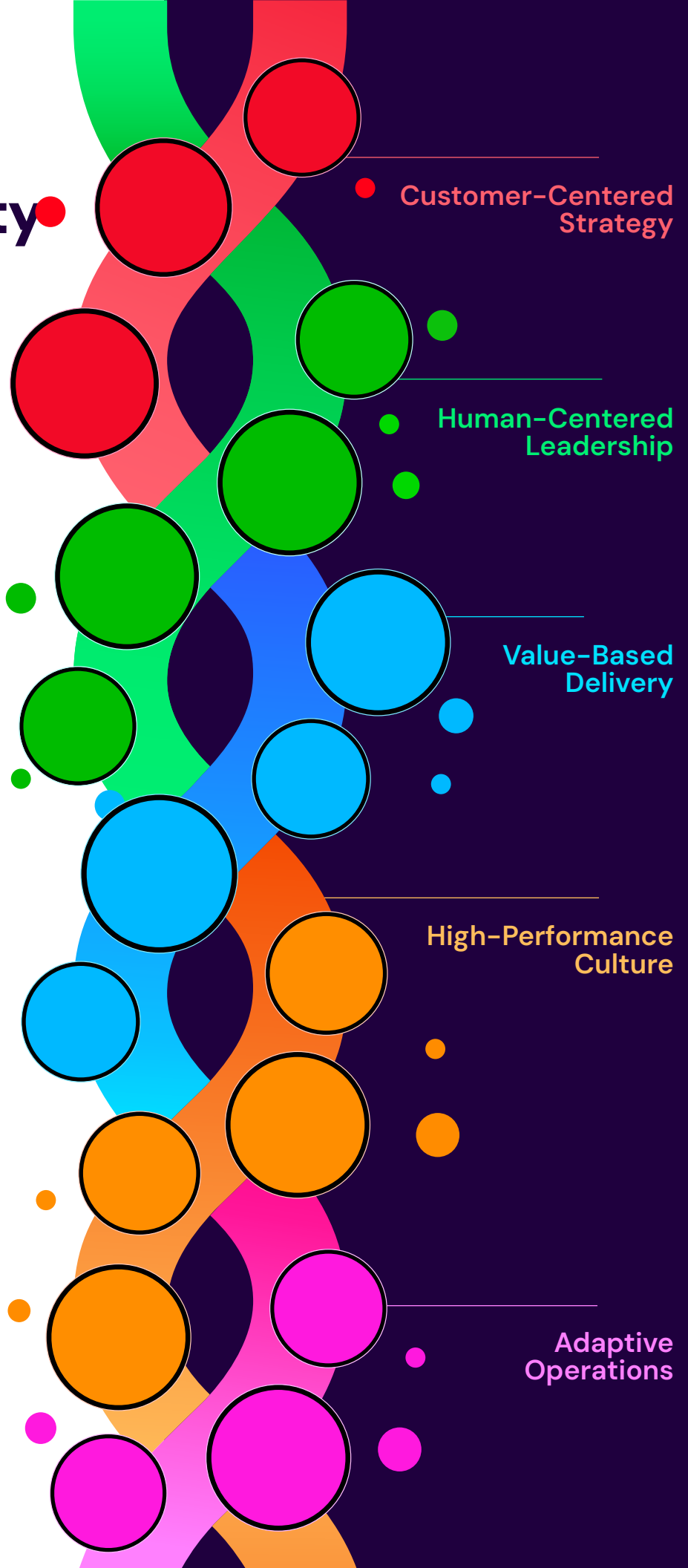
Core Domains

Core Domains are the top-level categories that help you decide where to focus your improvement efforts. Another way of looking at it is, what are the desired outcomes of having greater agility?

There are 5 Core Domains:

1. **Customer-Centered Strategy:** Effectively align strategy and execution to evolving customer needs.
2. **Human-Centered Leadership:** Create the conditions for people to thrive and perform at their best.
3. **Value-Based Delivery:** Enable the right work to flow from idea to outcome.
4. **High-Performance Culture:** Build consistent behaviors and clear standards around a shared purpose.
5. **Adaptive Operations:** Design governance controls for speed, flexibility, and ambiguity.

Each domain groups 3-4 related capabilities into a meaningful area of focus.



Capabilities & Behaviors

Essential Capabilities

Essential Capabilities enable an organization to get things done. For example, how can your organization capitalize on new opportunities? How can everyone work together as a team? How can you fund projects flexibly? How can you communicate openly and take bold steps?

Research from the Business Agility Institute shows that these 18 essential capabilities emerge as business agility matures. We have associated each capability with the domain they best support.

Capabilities come to life through certain catalytic behaviors. When people consistently act in specific ways, the organization develops these capabilities. There are more than 80 behaviors that help organizations build the 18 essential capabilities.

Catalytic Behaviors

Picture leaders who reward risk-taking, give teams room to innovate, adapt strategy based on customer feedback, and let purpose guide their actions.

Picture a workforce that is united as one team and committed to your mission.

Picture a workplace where people feel safe and are encouraged to question the norm and think differently.

These are all observable behaviors, not just tools, processes, or systems.

A Catalytic Behavior is a clear, observable, and repeatable action taken by a person or group within an organization. These behaviors are the practical expression of business agility, shaping how people work, decide, and collaborate.

Each Catalytic Behavior is expressed by a type of role in the organization; either

leaders, executives, or everyone.

- **Executives** are leaders with significant responsibility and authority. They are usually directly responsible for financial results and the strategic vision.
- **Leaders** are people with significant influence and varying degrees of authority across the organization. While this often includes people managers, not all leaders are managers. Leaders also include the Executives mentioned above.
- **Everyone** includes the entire workforce, including employees, contractors, managers, leaders, and executives. Collectively, Everyone's behaviors set the culture of the organization.

Refer to the complete Tomorrow-Ready DNA for the full list of behaviors and how they map to capabilities. For simplicity, this summary overview does not include them.

Customer-Centered Strategy

As customers' needs and expectations continue to change, organizations need to respond quickly to stay relevant. Keeping a laser focus on what resonates with your customers enables you to adapt to their changing needs in real time. Even anticipating their needs before they ask.

Customer-centricity is the foundation of modern business. When your strategies align with your customers, your customers become your greatest allies in an uncertain world.

CAPABILITIES

FIERCELY CONNECT WITH THE CUSTOMER

Every role in your organization contributes to the value created for customers. This means that, no matter their role, everyone must place the customer at the heart of each decision. Every action taken to create meaningful customer value. And every strategy made with the customer experience in mind.

Connecting with the customer means going beyond surface-level understanding. It requires understanding their values, needs, and expectations by actively listening and learning from them. When you know what motivates and excites your customers, what their goals and challenges are, you can create a future that inspires them.

SENSE & RESPOND PROACTIVELY

Organizations can no longer afford to take a “wait and see” approach when it comes to change. Technology, market, and customer trends move quickly, and whether these shifts are a challenge or opportunity depends on your perspective.

You must proactively seek emerging patterns and trends that could lead to significant disruption. This isn't just a task for the few people at the top of your organization. It requires everyone to keep a watchful eye and open mind, especially to recognize weak signals before they become obvious. Organizations that excel do more than observe. They respond early, make informed bets, and adapt ahead of the curve, turning uncertainty into advantage.

CENTER STRATEGY ON CUSTOMER OUTCOMES

Strategy is no longer a static plan set months or years in advance. It is continuously shaped by the outcomes your organization seeks to create for its customers. Evolving as expectations change. Rather than defining success by internal milestones or completion of work, your strategies are centered on delivering meaningful customer value while also ensuring organizational sustainability.

This requires a more dynamic approach to strategy: one that is iterative, responsive, and grounded in real-world signals. When strategy is anchored in customer outcomes, your organization can refine goals, make better trade-offs, and adapt with clarity and purpose.

DOMAIN

Human-Centered Leadership

Your organization's strongest advantage comes from your people and the culture they build together. It is every leader's job to help others succeed and thrive in this environment. And this goes beyond direct employees. It requires building a people-first culture with partners, collaborators, and contractors.

Human-centered leadership starts by building trust and respect. It means sharing information openly, communicating clearly, and giving others power and responsibility. What matters most is not just a leader's knowledge, but how they create an environment where people can do their best work.

CAPABILITIES

EMPOWER WITH ACCOUNTABILITY

To drive timely decision-making and adaptability, you need to bring ownership to the lowest responsible level in your organization. Where leadership sees the big picture, others can often see critical details more clearly and are best positioned to act fast. They understand what is needed, and, when empowered, can make a powerful impact for both the customer and the organization.

Empowerment allows individuals to contribute meaningfully through the mindsets of growth and ownership. However, empowerment without accountability is laissez-faire. And accountability without empowerment is just command and control. Empowerment with accountability requires balancing the two in order to become truly tomorrow-ready.

ENGAGE DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

The next big idea could come from anyone in your organization. This means that organizations must aggressively invest to seek out and openly discuss diverse ideas from anyone. Especially those closest to the customer. There is always more than one way to think about something, and each person brings a perspective forged through their unique identity, culture, and experiences.

However, seeking out and discussing diverse ideas is not enough. Organizations also need to act on diverse ideas. Integrating them into their strategies, roadmaps, and plans.

MORE CAPABILITIES



CHAMPION PEOPLE'S GROWTH

People are the lifeblood of your organization. It's their talents, skills, and ideas that drive success. That's why it's vital for organizations to attract, develop, retain, and manage their people well. Leaders need to spot latent potential, create supportive environments, and create opportunities. In the end though, it's up to each person to pursue their own growth.

Leaders must ensure everyone has the support they need to grow and succeed. This calls for a big-picture view. What complementary skills, behaviors, and experiences would help the team right now? Could someone gain more by moving to a different role instead of staying where they are? What will the team need in the future?

MOBILIZE FOR CHANGE

Change does not happen because the leader points in a new direction. It's a good first step, but nothing happens until people are motivated to change and the work environment around them makes the change natural and easy. Mobilizing for change means aligning all three—clear direction, emotional engagement, and an environment designed to sustain the change.

This requires more than communication or planning. Sustainable change only happens when people behave differently. Organizations must create shared understanding, connect change to purpose, and remove the friction that slows progress. Only then do people actively participate in the change.

DOMAIN

Value-Based Delivery

To create value for customers, your organization needs to deliver the right work, in the right way, and at the right time. As customer needs change, you must be ready to make deliberate, and sometimes difficult, trade-offs about where to invest time, effort, and resources.

But focusing your efforts is not enough if the systems that deliver value are ineffective. Value can only be delivered at speed when the systems that support it are designed for flow. Organizations must actively identify and remove constraints and reduce bottlenecks to enable work to move smoothly from idea to outcome.

CAPABILITIES

PRIORITIZE. PRIORITIZE. PRIORITIZE.

Just how many 'top priorities' can an organization really handle? Too much is crippling. The most important work gets buried under everything else, compounded as new tasks and ideas emerge. This is how progress stagnates and dies.

Leaders must ruthlessly prioritize the organization's work, again and again. What matters most? How does it support your current vision, strategies, and goals for your customers? Is everyone on the same page? Prioritizing helps teams finish what matters most, faster. Which, in turn, creates capacity for tomorrow's top priority.

ACCELERATE VALUE DELIVERY

How fast can a great idea move through your organization to reach your customers? How quickly can you add an idea to your strategy, secure funding, build a team, and launch?

Success depends on when your product gets to the customer, not just when you are "done". However, getting the right value into the hands of your customer is often more important than getting any value to them as quickly as possible. Agile organizations dance between delivering immediate needs and longer-term needs. The goal is to deliver the right value at the right time (and no later) for your customer.

[MORE CAPABILITIES](#)



SEIZE EMERGENT OPPORTUNITIES

Unless acted upon, an opportunity is just potential. Lost, if you are not paying attention. This potential can emerge from anywhere, big or small. An opportunity to expand how you serve your customers when you realize that they have an unmet need. Or an opportunity to address a global need exposed by major geopolitical events, market shifts, or technological advances.

To fully seize an emergent opportunity, organizations must be able to recognize it for what it is and evaluate it in the context of their current strategy and portfolio of work. Then, organizations must be able to act decisively to reallocate people, funds, and resources from current commitments before the window of opportunity closes.

ORCHESTRATE HUMAN-AI WORKFLOWS

It is not just people and processes that determine how work moves through an organization, but the interaction between humans and intelligent systems. Whether through AI, robotics, or other technologies, an augmented workforce combines judgment, creativity, and context with speed, scale, and automation. Crucially, the people closest to the work must play an active role in shaping and evolving these workflows, ensuring they remain practical, effective, and continuously improving.

True agility is not achieved by optimizing isolated tasks or maximizing efficiency in individual components. It comes from orchestrating the end-to-end flow of value.

DOMAIN

High-Performance Culture

A High-Performance Culture thrives when engaged people identify with your organization's purpose and work. It is reflected in how work gets done every day through shared expectations, strong habits, and a commitment to learning.

This does not happen by chance. It flourishes under deliberate leadership that sets clear standards, supports growth, and reinforces the behaviors that drive excellence. When done well, high performance becomes ingrained as the norm, not the exception.

CAPABILITIES

NURTURE TRUST AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Trust is, and always has been, the foundation of high performance. Without it, information is withheld, challenges go unspoken, and opportunities are missed. Organizations must create environments where people feel confident not only in each other's intentions, but in the systems and leadership that surround them. This trust enables openness, honest dialogue, and the ability to work through uncertainty together.

Psychological safety is a critical expression of that trust. First defined by Amy Edmondson as "a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking," it allows individuals to speak up, ask questions, and admit mistakes without fear of negative consequences.

CULTIVATE CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Whether from within or outside, a learning organization is always seeking new insights and knowledge and using this to continuously improve itself. The organization creates the conditions for everyone to learn from experience, whether their own, peers, customers, or the world. In an individual, this capability is called a growth mindset: the recognition that your talents and abilities can be continuously improved.

This relentless pursuit of continuous improvement requires individuals and organizations to be open to learning opportunities, both planned and unexpected. Planned learning can be as simple as taking the time to inspect what is happening now, or it can come from investing in formal experiments and prototypes to see what's possible. Unexpected learning emerges out of accidents, failure, and mistakes. In turn, this requires a willingness to accept and talk about failure.

MORE CAPABILITIES



EMBRACE RESPECTFUL CANDOR

In an empowered organization, candor is essential, not “a nice to have.” The free and respectful sharing of information gives people and teams the context they need to make good decisions quickly, without hesitation or concern about expressing themselves. Information and feedback, both good and bad, are communicated openly and honestly.

While some information must remain confidential for legal or strategic reasons, organizations should default to the open sharing of information.

ACT AS ONE ORGANIZATION

Tomorrow-ready organizations are built on collaboration. When everyone is aligned and working together, the organization can achieve goals that span teams, functions, and divisions. So, instead of just focusing on one area, leaders must consider the whole system.

While individuals and teams have autonomy, the construct of the organization, from its structure and work processes to how it connects with the market and external partners, is designed to create alignment.

Adaptive Operations

Your organization is a complex, adaptive system operating in an environment that is dynamic and constantly changing. Yet many organizations still rely on structures, governance, and processes designed for stability and predictability. This disconnect creates friction, slows decision-making, and undermines your performance.

Adaptive operations are intentionally designed for change. Whether streamlining approval and decision processes or shifting funds and people to where they need to be, when they need to be there, every governance policy and procedure is designed to enable a fast, coordinated response to evolving customer needs.

CAPABILITIES

BALANCE GOVERNANCE AND RISK

The right balance requires enabling people with the highest degree of autonomy while maintaining appropriate safeguards to protect the organization from undue risk. Often challenging long-held assumptions about control, compliance, and what is truly necessary.

Are you spending \$5 to save \$1? Are your systems designed for the few who break them? Are you introducing unnecessary delays and bottlenecks? Are people bypassing the system just to get their work done?

FUND WORK DYNAMICALLY

Money is the lifeblood of your organization. Funding, or the ability to move money where it's needed, is what keeps your organization alive and thriving. To seize breakthrough opportunities, you need to be able to quickly shift funds to areas with the greatest potential impact.

This means changing how your organization allocates money, moving from fixed budgets for projects or departments to funding business outcomes without being bound by an annual cycle. The potential benefits in innovation, growth, and customer value are truly massive.

RAPIDLY (RE)ORGANIZE STRUCTURES

In a changing environment, static structures quickly become constraints. Responsive team structures move the right people to where they need to be, when they need to be there, without delay or impediment from complicated change processes.

Rapidly reorganizing structures requires more than flexibility. It demands intentional design. Roles, reporting lines, and team boundaries must be adaptable, with minimal friction to change.

CONCLUSION

No Matter What Tomorrow Brings

At the end of the day, the goal is to achieve your purpose — *no matter what tomorrow brings*.

That is the purpose of **Tomorrow-Ready DNA**. It's a guide to understanding the capabilities of your organization when it's at its best. And it's a practical model for leaders to reflect on the behaviors needed to get there.

Our hope is that we have expanded what's possible in your mind. That you see the journey towards an organization better able to sense change, align people, make decisions, and deliver value in a rapidly evolving world.

To get there, don't try and change everything at once. Start with the capability that matters most to you right now and develop the behaviors that enable it. Sometimes this requires learning and mindset shifts. Other times this requires changes to governance, incentives, or structure. Progress happens step by step, through deliberate choices and repeated action.

And just as your organization continues to evolve, so will this model. We will keep learning, refining, and improving Tomorrow-Ready DNA through research, practice, and the insights of those applying it in the real world. As you use this model in your own organization, we hope it helps you build the capabilities needed for whatever comes next.

Good Luck and Have Fun!
~ **X2A Leadership Team**

