Cut the Complexity, Part One - Preparation Matters.

How to be both resolved in planning, yet responsive to changes, as you lead toward vision.

In the life of church leaders, Sunday is always coming. There are sermons to prepare, volunteers to be trained, worship to plan, and dozens of other tasks repeated weekly.

Yet in the midst of it all, life sometimes throws us a curve, and we are faced with a crisis of minor or major proportions. Or, maybe the opposite is true: an unbelievable opportunity for ministry presents itself out of the blue.

What do you do?

Move from planning to preparation.

THE QUICK SUMMARY - [The Agility Shift](#), Pamela Meyer

As contrary as it sounds, "planning" -- as we traditionally understand the term--can be the worst thing a company can do. Consider that volatile weather events disrupt trusted supply chains, markets, and promised delivery schedules. Ever-shifting geo-political tensions, as well as internal political upheaval within U.S. and global governments, derail long-planned new ventures. Technology failures block opportunities.

There are a myriad of ways in the current business environment for a company's well-considered business plans to go awry. Most business schools continue to prepare managers to be effective in stable and predictable environments, conditions that, if they ever existed at all, are long gone.

The Agility Shift shows business leaders exactly how to make the radical mindset and strategy shift necessary to create an agile, entrepreneurial organization that can innovate and thrive in complex, ever-changing contexts. As author Pamela Meyer explains, there is much more involved than a reconfiguration of the org chart and job descriptions. It requires relinquishing the illusion of control at the very foundation of most management training and business practice.

Despite most leaders' approaches, "Agility is not simply accelerated planning." Unlike many agility books on the market, *The Agility Shift* provides specific, actionable strategies and tactics for leaders at all levels of the organization to put into practice immediately to improve agility and achieve results.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION - **Move from planning to preparation**

The world is constantly getting more complicated, the lives we lead are gaining complexity at an ever-increasing rate. This rapid cultural change has meddled with the assumption that the near future will resemble the recent past. Change now happens so fast that the planning processes

currently in use are obsolete.

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying "We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them." Another Einstein quote is closely linked: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

If today's leaders want to move out of the same cycle of planning and programming to just keep up, they are going to have to make an intentional shift in their thinking and actions.

It's time to make the shift from planning as an event to developing a focus on preparing as a process.

> *The Agility Shift is the intentional development of the competence, capacity, and confidence to learn, adapt, and innovate in changing contexts for sustainable success.*

> **Three Cs of the Agility Shift**

> *Agility competence* consists of the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to respond to the unexpected and unplanned, as well as to find opportunities in new development and emerging trends.

> *Agility capacity* is the degree of uncertainty and volatility in which a person can be effective. For example, a team may have the competence to get a new product to market on a tight deadline, but it may not have the capacity to do so if the deadline changes several times, if the product specifications change, and/or if there is a worker strike at the manufacturing facility.

> *Agility confidence* is the human need to trust in one's own and others competence and capacity to be effective in changing contexts.

> **The 3 Shifts Needed for Agility**

> *From Planning to Preparing*

> The agility shift is a shift from planning – with its focus on a linear process with a beginning, middle, and end resulting in an actual plan – to a focus on preparing, where all aspects of the system continuously develop the competence, capacity, and confidence to perform effectively in changing contexts.

> *From Events to Processes*

> Organizations must make both a mind-set shift and a practice shift, in which everything from preparing to learning to innovating is continuous, engaging activity rather than simply moments in time.

> *From Information to Interactions*

We operate under the illusion that if we can gain more information, we will not only understand what is happening, we might just be able to control it. The mind-set necessary to improve agility is a change from an overreliance on information and uncertainty reduction toward intentional interaction.

Pamela Meyer, [The Agility Shift](#)

A NEXT STEP

The agility shift is first and foremost a shift in mind-set. This mind-set values interactions within the dynamic present moment. It is also a shift from the false comfort of "a plan" to achieving a state of readiness to find opportunity in the unexpected.

Agile leaders, teams, and organizations maintain creativity under pressure. Awareness of available resources is clearly not enough; agile organizations must have the capacity to use their resources creatively and effectively at a moment's notice in response to the unexpected. Truly agile organizations have a well-developed ability to make shifts that turn those challenges into opportunities.

Using the following SOAR techniques to lay the foundation for beginning the Agility Shift. On a separate chart tablet for each, list each of the four words:

S – Strengths

O – Opportunities

A – Aspirations

R – Results

As a team, discuss the following questions, listing group answers on each chart.

Strengths

- What are we doing really well?
- What are our greatest assets?
- What are we most proud of accomplishing?
- What do our strengths tell about our skills?

Opportunities

- How do we collectively understand outside threats?
- How can we reframe to see the opportunity?
- How can we best partner with others?

Aspirations

- Considering Strengths and Opportunities, how should we make changes?
- How do we allow our values to drive our vision?
- How can we make a difference for our organization and its stakeholders?

Results

- What are our measurable results?
- What do we want to be known for?
- How to we tangibly translate Strengths, Opportunities, and Aspirations?

By identifying and expanding existing strengths and opportunities, your organization identifies what it does well and expands on that, thus giving you more energy to take action when confronted with sudden changes or opportunities.

Adapted from *The Thin Book of Soar*, by Jacqueline M. Stavros and Gina Hinrichs

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This is part of a weekly series posting content from one of the most innovative content sources in the church world: **SUMS Remix** *Book Summaries for church leaders.*

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