

# **Project Management in Flux**

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### **Introduction**

This September, business leaders across the globe will shuffle into conference rooms and offsite destinations to perform a sacred rite of capitalism: strategic planning. Except this time, when they search for the right forecast—the road map that will lead their companies to sustainable success—no credible vision of the future will emerge. The markets are too capricious, the customers too fickle, the competition too nimble for most strategic plans to survive first contact with reality.

Projects, likewise, are increasingly subject to this new age of “flux.” Ever-changing priorities, a multitude of conflicting methodologies, increased pressures to deliver, high-employee turnover, ethical dilemmas stemming from new media and technology—all are symptomatic of a new wave of business models, cultures, and technological innovations constantly changing the face of business. In this new world, what’s a plucky project manager to do?

Throw away everything you think you know, according to *Fast Company*’s Robert Safian. His recent article suggests that there is a subset of people who are uniquely positioned to thrive in today’s unpredictable marketplace. He calls them “Generation Flux,” a designation that is more psychographic than demographic, since it describes a wide swath of ages, races, and cultures. According to Safian, what unites GenFlux is “a mindset that embraces instability, that tolerates—even enjoys—recalibrating careers, business models and assumptions.” He warns that to be successful, even the most experienced of us will have to join their ranks—no easy task, since “the vast bulk of our institutions—educational, corporate, political—are not built for flux.” (Safian, 2012).

Using modern examples of companies who have adopted the notion of “GenFlux” and drawing on decades of consulting experience in the project management space, this paper will seek to provide project managers with the ability to recognize that transformation is occurring, and the tools to manage and lead their teams through the change. Many of the tools and techniques covered in this paper are derived from the United States military, an organization with experience executing high-stakes projects amid quickly fluctuating conditions.

### **What Is Generation Flux?**

#### **The Transformation**

In today’s age of “Flux,” executives devote nearly two-thirds of their time to change management. Unfortunately, research suggests that nearly half of these endeavors result in failure. Why? When asked, executives note two primary factors: “a lack of clearly defined milestones and objectives,” and “a lack of commitment by senior leaders.” But a closer analysis reveals that this is only part of the story. (EIU, 2011).

To illustrate, six years ago three companies controlled 64% of the smartphone market: Nokia, Research in Motion, and Motorola. Today, Samsung and Apple dominate the global multibillion dollar industry. (Safian, 2012). It’s hard to believe that this magnitude of change was caused solely by fuzzy goals and a lack of executive commitment (though surely those may have been factors). Most of us attribute the demise of these companies to technology which too-quickly outpaced their strategic visions.

This is a relatively modern problem. For most of our history, necessity has been the mother of invention. Put another way, when Edison invented the light bulb and the Wright brothers invented the airplane, they did so with a clear application in mind. Though the technology has certainly evolved over time, we still primarily use bulbs to light rooms and planes to travel.

Today, inertia is driving technology forward at a breakneck –often before we know what to do with it. Massive R&D departments, private research foundations, Kickstarter sites, and web-savvy college students ensure a steady stream of technological advances, forcing companies both big and small to spend resources imagining possibilities for that technology, before the competition beats them to it. Few times since the Agricultural Revolution has our species observed technology first and used it later—a dynamic that is dramatically changing the way we live. Safian succinctly describes the effects of this trend:

Online education efforts are eroding our assumptions about what schooling looks like. Cars are becoming rolling, talking, cloud-connected media hubs. In an age where Twitter and other social media tools play key roles in recasting the political map in the Mideast; where impoverished residents of refugee camps would rather go without food than without their cell phones; where all types of media, from music to TV to movies, are being remade, redefined, defended, and attached every day in novel ways—there is no question that we are in a new world. (Safian, 2012).

There may be no question in our minds that “we are in a new world,” as Safian describes. Many companies, however, seem to be slow in acting on this conclusion. Why is this? One reason is that innovation can be profoundly disruptive. Inconceivably, Kodak invented the first digital camera in 1974, but sat on the technology because they feared it would disrupt the profitability of an established line of business—film. In 2012, Kodak filed bankruptcy, citing an inability to compete with Japanese digital camera manufacturers, despite its early leading position. (Huffington Post, 2013).

Kodak’s story is hardly unique. When Fast Company released its 2013 list of the 50 Most Innovative Companies (Industry, 2013), the relative absence of large, established firms was palpable. Start-ups are routinely ousting big blue-chip companies for prominence, largely because the job of an established firm is to execute on a proven business model, while the job of a start-up is to search for a workable business model. Unfortunately for the S&P 500, enterprise innovation is no longer a “nice to have.” It’s a strategic necessity for companies both big and small. Just ask Microsoft.

In the wake of the iPad and the multitude of Android tablets flooding the market, Microsoft was in a hurry to get in the game. In 2012, the company quickly released a tablet—the Surface RT—which received immense praise from critics for its elegant construction. In 2013, the company announced a massive write-off of \$900M in unsold merchandise. What happened? In designing the tablet, Microsoft was unwilling to walk away from a once-flagship operating system that most critics agreed had become vastly inferior to the competition. Even after writing paragraphs of praise for the device itself, reviewers recommended that consumers stick with their iPads. (Burns, n.d.).

### How Does Flux Affect Projects?

The effect of Flux on companies is becoming apparent, but how is this transformation affecting projects? For one, an uncertain business climate is making multi-year enterprise projects riskier. Nowhere is this trend more evident than in the beleaguered IT sector, where large-scale projects consistently deliver 56% less value than originally predicted by executives, while running nearly 45% over budget. (Bloch, n.d.). What’s causing such spectacular failure? A survey by IBM reveals that 58% of executives surveyed cite “an inability to adapt to changing mindsets and attitudes” and “corporate culture.” (IBM, 2008)

Most troubling is the fact that senior leaders are often getting in their own way when it comes to project success in chaotic conditions. A recent article in *The Journal of Change Management* noted that corporate leaders’ ‘blindness’ to organizational systems and/or a focus on their own ego needs led them into a range of ‘traps’ that seriously damaged the success of change interventions. On the other hand, leaders who were involved in successful change efforts displayed a unique ability to “work in the moment,” a hallmark of Generation Flux. (Higgs, 2010).

Unfortunately for today's project managers, "working in the moment" is not a skill given much attention within the discipline. An intense focus still exists on delivering projects according to plan—on time, on scope, and on budget—often with little attention paid to changing business needs. Put another way, in the classic application of project management techniques, the Triple Constraint often eclipses equally significant project drivers.

Even in companies practicing agile methodologies, leaders cite difficulty in scaling up, or integrating these techniques with the top-down command structures in place at their organizations (Boehm, 2005, p. 370). While traditional "command and control" organizational charts served us well in the industrial age, the post-industrial age requires a level of agility and responsiveness rendered nearly impossible in this type of reporting structure. While true that projects still benefit from clear roles and responsibilities, project outcomes suffer when teams are not empowered to respond to change on the frontlines.

### What Is the Future of Flux?

Flux will continue to plague projects in every industry and every sector, and chaotic disruption will continue to be rampant. Consider the examples cited by Safian in his original analysis:

No one predicted that General Motors would go bankrupt—and come back from the abyss with greater momentum than Toyota. No one in the car-rental industry foresaw the popularity of auto-sharing Zipcar—and Zipcar didn't foresee the rise of outfits like Uber and RelayRides, which are already trying to steal its market. Digital competition destroyed bookseller Borders, and yet the big, stodgy music labels—seemingly the ground zero for digital disruption—defy predictions of their demise. Walmart has given up trying to turn itself into a bank, but before retail bankers breathe a sigh of relief, they ought to look over their shoulders at Square and other mobile-wallet initiatives. Amid a reeling real-estate market, new players like Trulia and Zillow are gobbling up customers. Even the law business is under siege from companies like LegalZoom, an online DIY document service. (Safian, 2012).

Flux is not just a problem for companies or projects, either. Individuals will need to become more comfortable taking risks, learning new skills, and even launching new careers to keep pace with the new economy. Fortunately, new techniques are emerging to help companies, project managers, and individual employees "flux" with the times.

## Learning from Gen Flux

### Techniques for Dealing with Change

#### *Leader's Intent*

In a world where a competitive advantage often evaporates in less than a year, can companies afford to spend months at a time crafting a single long-term strategy? Rita McGrath, author of "Transient Advantage," believes the answer is no. Instead, she argues, "to stay ahead, [companies] need to constantly start new strategic initiatives, building and exploiting many *transient competitive advantages* at once." (McGrath, 2013, p. 64) In other words, companies (and their PMOs) must embrace Flux.

McGrath goes on to cite seven strategic planning "traps" arising from deeply embedded traditional notions about competitive strategy that are now obstacles to agile, adaptive organizational cultures. The first two are particularly important for project managers because they deal directly with the "holy trinity" of PM practice: the Triple Constraint. This is how McGrath describes them:

**The first-mover trap:** This is the belief that being first to market and owning assets create a sustainable position. In some businesses—like aircraft engines or mining—that's still true. But in most industries a first-mover advantage doesn't last.

**The superiority trap:** Almost any early-stage technology, process, or product won't be as effective as something that's been honed and polished for years. Because of that disparity, many companies don't see the need to invest in improving their established offerings—until the upstart innovations mature, by which time it's often too late for the incumbents. (McGrath, 2013, p. 66)

Companies who rely on the “first-mover trap” prioritize schedule and speed of completion above all other project drivers, while those who rely on “superiority” use the efficiency of a project's scope and budget to measure success. Unfortunately, in today's climate of “transient advantage,” it may be time for project sponsors to look beyond the Triple Constraint for measures of project success and efficacy.

Inspired by the military, many companies maintain flexibility of strategic direction by using technique called “Leader's Intent” (from the original concept, “Commander's Intent.”) A Leader's Intent is a concise statement in every plan that communicates to the organization the project's purpose, method, and end-state: what success looks like, feels like, acts like, and sounds like. Consider the difference between the following statements:

**Triple-Constraint Based:** “Our goal is to complete this software implementation with less than 2% schedule and cost variance.”

**Leader's Intent Based:** “For the 90 days after we deploy the software, my phone will ring only with compliments.”

In the first (more traditional) example, the project is more likely to be completed on time and on budget. However, this will likely be accomplished at the expense of equally important drivers: fluidity of operations, user competence, and customer satisfaction. In today's environment, regardless of industry or function, team actions are occurring near simultaneously and are usually geographically distributed. The only way for leaders to effectively manage their work is to provide teams with sufficient guidance to think and act without them. The second statement accomplishes this by focusing the team on the *value* the project brings to the organization rather than the mere efficiency with which it is executed.

In organizations that utilize Leader's Intent (or something like it) on projects report higher achievement on a holistic set of project success factors and increased team ownership of project success or failure. The technique can be used at the tactical level of management as well. For example, Leader's Intent can be used to set the tone and objective for a meeting:

“Coming out of this meeting, we should have all requirements captured, or have defined where we can find answers to our outstanding questions.”

It is important to note that although Leader's Intent does attempt to supply a method for achievement of goals, it is *not* a detailed “how to.” It is designed to take the staff from the strategic level to the tactical level, so that within a defined scope of responsibility team members are empowered to make decisions rapidly and effectively on the front lines.

### *Assumptions Management*

Second to establishing a clear Leader's Intent, it is crucial to carefully manage assumptions in a high-Flux environment. Assumptions are living and breathing—they pop up at all points along the project lifecycle and they go on to become either facts or risks. In this way, they can be a powerful leading indicator of trouble ahead—if they are carefully documented. Unfortunately, many project leaders ignore this crucial step, or stop managing assumptions past the planning phase.

To ensure that assumptions are accurately and systematically identified across the project lifecycle, it is helpful to divide long projects into “waypoints,” or points along the project timeline where new information may become

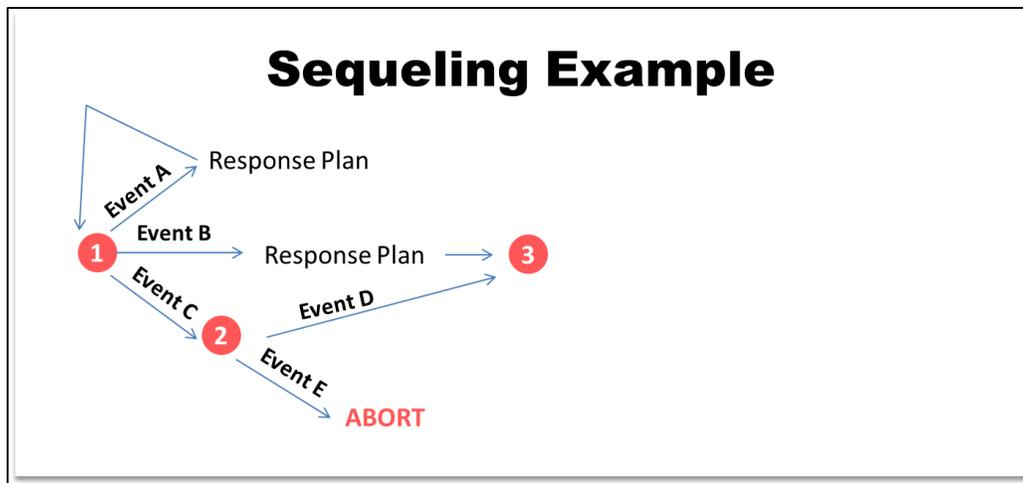
known or a major decision must be made. Then, during project planning, identify assumptions from the first waypoint to the second, and then from the second to the third, and so on. Later in the project, as milestones are crossed, assumptions can be freshly and/or iteratively analyzed.

Taking the time to systematically identify assumptions—even before addressing risk—is a good way to eliminate the impact of “known unknowns,” or those risks that could have been prevented with more communication across the project team.

### *Sequeling*

Once project assumptions (and accompanying risks) have been identified, categorized, assessed and verified, it is time to think about risk response plans. A sound risk response strategy is a key companion to Leader’s Intent, since it gives the team additional direction and guidance for how to handle unexpected events and issues. *Sequeling* is a technique used by the military to plan risk responses for military operations, and utilizes the “waypoints” established during assumptions identification to plot parallel project possibilities.

The technique begins at Waypoint #1 and establishes the optimistic, likely, and pessimistic outcomes for that milestone: three possible “sequels” to first milestone. Response plans are discussed and mapped for each possible outcome. The same process is completed for subsequent milestones. To illustrate how this works, review Exhibit 1. This approach recognizes that certain risks may occur at multiple points in the project plan, and the desired response may vary according to *when* the risk is realized.



**Exhibit 1**

## Techniques for Building a High-Performance Team

### *Self-Organization*

People are born with the drive to solve problems. A few years ago, MIT researchers conducted an experiment with Ethiopian first graders in a remote, illiterate village. They sent an unopened box of tablet computers to the group of children, and taught one person in the village how to recharge them. Then they watched.

Within four minutes, one of the children had opened the box and found the on/off switch. Within five days, the children were using an average of 47 apps per child, per day. Within two weeks, the children were singing the ABC

song around the village. Within five months, one of the children had learned to hack the Android device. (Talbot, 2012).

For a Leader's Intent to be effective, team members at all levels must be empowered to address problems in their path without micro-interference. Specifically, team members must be allowed to self-organize in order to achieve established objectives. Put another way, the Leader's Intent may set a general path from A to Z, but the team must have significant control over the approach (B to C to D and so on.) This principle of self-organization is what led Google to be successful in its early years. Until very recently, Google encouraged employees to venture outside their functional areas to form "grouplets"—teams with no budget and virtually no decision-making authority who nonetheless were authorized to spend up to 20% of their time pursuing new ideas. Interestingly, these "grouplets" were also charged with convincing the rest of the company to adopt their products. This practice led to such successes as Gmail, Google News, and the once-famous Google Labs. (Mediratta, 2007).

The principle of "self-organization"—central to Agile methodology—is crucial on projects operating in an uncertain environment. Self-organizing teams are comfortable managing individual workloads without management interference, and will democratically shift work among themselves based on individual capacity and capability. (Highsmith, 2004). This isn't to say that senior management is not critical to project success. To the contrary, research from scholars at Victoria University of Wellington found that agile practitioners cite "support from senior leaders" as a critical success factor for self-organizing teams. Paired with a clear Leader's Intent, a willingness to distribute substantial decision-making power to front-line employees is a powerful approach that will prepare organizations to respond to a rapidly changing external environment. (Sillitti, 2011).

#### *Respect for Time*

In the Age of Flux, time is measured in days and hours. Just as companies must continually revisit their strategic plan to ensure relevance, individual leaders must respect the transience of their own priorities. This requires an approach to time management which is both flexible and disciplined. One approach is to choose two or three priorities *daily*, rather than weekly. After these priorities are selected, work in short bursts of productivity (20-25 minutes) with short breaks in between each session. Each segment of time should be devoted to a single activity or task, and interruptions (email, phone calls, etc.) should be kept to a minimum and documented when they occur. After four or five sessions have been completed, a longer break is permitted to check email, reassess priorities, return calls, or chat with the team. This approach balances accessibility with productivity, and allows for rapidly changing priorities while still placing emphasis on productive "single-tasking" time.

Many companies cite meetings as their organization's biggest barrier to time management. On the one hand, meeting face-to-face (or webcam to webcam) is a good way to ensure effective communication and high-performance teaming. On the other hand, too many meetings can be a productivity suck. The Leader's Intent technique can be employed by managers to set clear objectives for meetings, and by team members to make wise decisions about which meetings to attend.

#### *Return on Bother (ROB)*

Jim Gilmore, author of *The Experience Economy*, routinely sizes up situations and opportunities by asking, "Is it worth the bother?" (Goldsmith, 2012). For all the effort that we put into strategic projects, it is important to remember that even with great planning, many projects (especially in the Age of Flux) are unlikely to achieve commercial success. When this happens, it is important to foster an organizational culture where asking questions—even difficult ones—is encouraged at all levels. As McGrath writes in her book *Discovery-Driven Growth*, "provided that you keep your disappointments cheap, you can afford a lot of them." (McGrath, 2009, p. 1)

Sometimes, redirecting a project (spinning it off, reducing scope, or salvaging some aspect of it) is an option. Constructively pruning low-yield, resource-sapping projects is the hallmark practice of a company comfortable with Flux. Unfortunately, the temptation can to hold on to these projects can be powerful:

Pruning is one of the toughest, but one of the most important tasks you can undertake when you pursue innovative growth. There is a temptation to keep going on—a temptation that escalates as the time, energy, and resources invested in the project increase. The tragedy is that the energy of good people and the effectiveness of your organization can be compromised by being entrapped in what venture capitalists call ‘living dead’ projects. (McGrath, 2009, p.2)

As project managers, we often think of “cost” in terms of dollars only. However, for companies prioritizing innovation, people are their biggest asset. It’s important to realize that disengaging from projects or tasks is not a failure. Just as a smart military leader will disengage from a skirmish to win the war, a savvy leader will assess whether each project in her portfolio continues to yield a “Return on Bother” (ROB).

## Techniques for Communicating in an Ever-Changing Environment

For high-performance teams to work efficiently, communication techniques specifically suited to a high-Flux environment are needed. These techniques are designed to make communications rapid, concise, and an effective aid for decision-making.

### *The BLUF*

The BLUF (which stands for “Bottom Line, Up Front”) is a technique used by the military to streamline communications in chaotic situations. In the business world, the technique can be used across an organization to rapidly communicate in times of change. The BLUF is a short statement that 1) quickly summarizes the purpose of an email or other communication and 2) clearly identifies the desired response. It is placed at the very top of an email, while supporting detail and analysis is placed in paragraphs below. This allows recipients to quickly digest the communication and make an informed decision about its priority and impact. Here are some examples:

**BLUF:** Quick summary of both vendor proposals included below. Need your decision by Tuesday March 31st at 3 PM.

**BLUF:** We have 2 options for a meeting date: Friday March 5th at 3:00 PM or Monday March 7th at 10 AM. Please respond with your preference by Tuesday March 1st at 3 PM.

**BLUF:** A new risk has surfaced concerning Project Alpha, and could impact schedule by as much as three months. Details included below:

By using the BLUF, companies can reduce the “noise” that constantly obscures messaging and slows communications when teams are required to work primarily over email. It also forces the sender to think clearly about each communication’s intended purpose and desired result.

### *The SITREP*

Situational Awareness (SA) involves an understanding of how information, events, and one’s own actions will impact goals and objectives. Unfortunately, many project status reports focus on facts and updates at the expense of true understanding. A SITREP is a situational report that emphasizes analysis over pure reporting (which can be provided in a supplemental document, if desired).

An ideal SITREP should take five minutes or less to read, and should focus on communicating meaning from data or trends. Consider the following statement:

“More than 500 homes were destroyed in the disaster.”

Without context, it is difficult to assess the *meaning* of this statement. For example, the meaning changes if you are told that the storm occurred in a community with 600 total homes. A good Situational Report will always contextualize important updates and risks. It will also clearly call out any needed action or decision.

### *The After-Action Review (AAR)*

Similar to “lessons learned,” an AAR serves as a waypoint during which a project team reviews project performance. An effective AAR will focus on four questions:

1. What did we expect to happen?
2. What actually happened?
3. Why (or why wasn't) there a gap?
4. What can we do next time to improve (or ensure) these results?

Unlike a lessons learned session, an AAR goes further in assigning “Who’s” to these items. *Who* needs to know these insights? *Who* should implement these lessons? *Who* should decide what to implement? Because of their immense value to projects, AARs should be conducted at various points along the project lifecycle. Especially on larger projects, AARs can serve as a much-needed “tactical pause” at logical breaks in the schedule.

## **Flux in Action: Case Study Examples**

### **General Electric: Changing the Face of Change**

General Electric is a corporation in an industry that has traditionally found change difficult. That (like almost everything else) is changing. Beth Comstock, the chief marketing officer at GE, notes that “business model innovation is constant in this economy...you start with a vision of a platform. For a while, you think there’s a line of sight, and then it’s gone. There’s suddenly a new angle.” (Safian, 2012).

Comstock is the architect of Ecomagination and Healthymagination, GE initiatives built on a platform of innovation launched in 2005. These massive portfolios of innovation projects required a completely different corporate culture than the one fostered by Jack Welch (now retired) during the company’s “glory years,” but the road to change was long and arduous.

First, GE needed to shift its hiring focus from GE “lifers” to those with more entrepreneurial experience. The influx of innovators caused tension among the ranks, but GE was able to channel that tension creatively by forming “digital challenge teams” to tackle specific challenges within the scope of its mission. They followed that move with the rollout of a brand new “contemporized view of expectations” for the company’s 650 managers, a program that encourages development of the soft skills needed to lead in times of uncertainty. (Safian, 2012).

As a symbol of the changing times, GE headquarters has been physically transformed into a space that promotes egalitarian values. A large kitchen has been installed, so that team members can cook together and enjoy a glass of wine on breaks. The building formerly known as “The White House,” where executives would go after dinner for drinks has been gutted in favor of a university-style coffee shop accessible to all employees. (Safian, 2012).

Since launching the new cultural initiatives and innovation platforms, GE has been named one of America’s Most Innovative Companies twice in the last three years, while the company’s eco- initiatives now bring in more than \$18 billion annually in revenue. (Industry, 2010) (Industry, 2011) (Safian, 2012).

## Nike: Applying Flexible Discipline

When Robert Safian asked Nike CEO Mark Parker if the company would consider having branded hospitals, doctors, or health food, the answer was a resounding “no.” Parker replied that these businesses didn’t intersect with Nike’s core focus on sport. And yet the company was just named the No. 1 Most Innovative Company in America by Fast Company. In 2012, Nike’s experimentation yielded two hit products: the Fuelband (a \$150 electronic bracelet that measures your movements throughout the day) and the Flyknit Racer, ultra-lightweight shoes that are more environmentally friendly (and cheap to produce) than anything else on the market. The result was a 60% increase in annual revenue since the CEO took over in 2006. Profits are likewise up 57%, with Nike’s market cap more than doubling. (Carr, n.d.)

How did Nike “just do it?” By embracing Flux and applying flexible discipline to their innovation platform. Many of the company’s best ideas come from the bottom up, fueled by a clear Leader’s Intent and a willingness to embrace disruptive technology. The Flyknit, for example, was so disruptive it required a complete overhaul of the company’s manufacturing process. Nike is willing to bet big on promising products because it is also ruthless about killing unpromising ones, conserving resources for the initiatives that really matter. For a while, a product called Magneto was Nike’s next big thing. They were magnets attached to your temples that would be used to attach futuristic eyewear. The Magneto was in final prototype stages when CEO Parker called it off. (Carr, n.d.)

In addition to its commitment to a profitable project portfolio, Nike has a unique ability to anticipate the evolution of its products. In 2012, Nike partnered with the startup mentoring firm TechStars to entice entrepreneurs into launching companies on top of Nike’s digital platform. For example, many games are now built on the Fuel Points collected by users of the FuelBand. By “sequeling” possible futures for its products, Nike has the insight needed to fully exploit its competitive opportunities. (Carr, n.d.)

### Evolution of the Project “Team”

The companies that are surviving and thriving in the midst of Flux are those that recognize that project teams are a living, breathing, fluid entity. Team members come and go, objectives change, and new ideas surface each day. Today’s teams are comfortable with self-government and perform best when they are given latitude to think critically, creatively, and collaboratively.

Google’s “grouplets,” GE’s “digital challenge teams” and Nike’s engineers are just a handful of examples in a sea of companies moving toward “collaborate and attack” team cultures. These companies may be well-known for a clear Leader’s Intent, but they are famous for the creative and decision-making latitude they afford front-line employees. To lead our project teams into the future, we must be willing to embrace a new way to work—a new team culture where trust rather than seniority is the primary currency.

To conclude, the concept of the project “team” is evolving. It must in order to meet the challenges of a turbulent business climate. While this paper has described some of the tools and techniques that will help Project Managers adapt to change, the larger lesson is that “what got us here won’t get us there.” As PMs, we must constantly be re-evaluating our tools and processes to ensure we’re ready to anticipate and rapidly respond to what lies ahead.

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**Bill Fournet** is the Founder, President, and CEO of The Persimmon Group. In addition to leading The Persimmon Group since its inception, he also leads the practice areas of leadership development and business consulting to clients in various industry verticals including energy, financial services, aerospace, telecommunications, government, human resources and healthcare.

Over the past two decades, Bill has led strategic programs spanning years, staffed by hundreds of people, sourced globally, and managed budgets in excess of \$2 Billion. Bill is in-demand as a speaker and educator from organizations across the globe. He earned a bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University and a master's degree from Oklahoma State University. He is a member of the State of Oklahoma Governor's Business Roundtable, a member of the Oklahoma State Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors, and a member of the Oklahoma City and Tulsa Metro Chambers of Commerce.

**The Persimmon Group** is a management consulting firm that works with organizations, in both the public and private sector that want a tailored approach to business growth and improvement opportunities. Since 2004, TPG's experienced consultants have provided a wide range of expertise in many industries and in numerous areas including business strategy, project management, information technology, and leadership development, among others.