



elementa
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Adaptive Capability Index Strategic Agility in a Complex World

Instructions: Please read the sixteen statements and decide to what extent each statement is characteristic of your organisation. Record one score per statement (0 – 4). Complete the sub-total score for each of the four constructs and add the four construct sub total scores to achieve the overall Adaptive Capability Index (ACI) score. Then look at the provided interpretation sheet and consider what your scores might mean for your organisation.

Purpose and Difference

Statement	0 Strongly disagree	1 Disagree	2 Not sure	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree	Item Score
1 The strategy process is open and actively solicits input from throughout the organisation and its stakeholders and customers						
2 People have a strong sense of and commitment to, shared organisational purpose and associated organisational priorities						
3 Difference is honoured, valued and respected						
4 Different voices and perspectives are actively encouraged when key organisational decisions are made						
					Sub Total	

Self Organisation & Emergence

	0 Strongly disagree	1 Disagree	2 Not sure	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree	Item Score
5						
6						
7						
8						
					Sub Total	

Feedback, Learning and Innovation

	0 Strongly disagree	1 Disagree	2 Not sure	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree	Item Score
9						
10						
11						
12						
					Sub Total	

Connectedness and Interdependence

	0 Strongly disagree	1 Disagree	2 Not sure	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree	Item Score
13						
14						
15						
16						
					Sub Total	

Overall ACI score (maximum total is 64)

Interpretation



Score between 0 and 16

The Dinosaur

Slow to sense environmental changes. Lacks curiosity and creativity. Tends to make assumptions about the world through a myopic focus on itself. Is set in predictable ways of doing things which stifles innovation and adaptation. Tends to act alone and not a natural collaborator.

This organisation is likely to be organised around either a directive, control orientated model or a completely 'laissez faire' model, without clear and compelling purpose, low levels of innovation and poor internal connections and collaboration.

Departments and professional groups are very likely 'rowing their own boats' to the detriment of the wider organisation. A large number of staff probably adopt a victim like mentality pointing at the inadequacies of senior management as the reason that everything appears so 'hopeless'. People are unlikely to put their heads above the parapet and the same mistakes are likely to be repeated.

Trust is not a characteristic of the way that the organisation works. The management team typically

communicates (one way) through a large, high volume megaphone, or not at all.

The organisation may also be blind to the actual needs of its customers and stakeholders and organised around fiefdoms rather than the needs of customers and/or stakeholders. Intense political activity is likely to be marked throughout the organisation as units compete for resources and influence. It is highly unlikely that this organisation will be able to act with agility and speed in response to a fast changing environment.

Verdict: This organisation could be at risk of becoming irrelevant and its viability/sustainability may well be in doubt.



Score between 17 and 48

The Crab

Hard upper shell, which can create complacency, but soft underbelly. Moves, but not the fastest and often backwards and sideways as well as forwards. Often takes a defensive approach, using camouflage and small bolt holes, which provides temporary safety at times of extreme danger. Sometimes looks like its brain and limbs are not that well co-ordinated. Powerful distinctive front claws to ward off competitors but this only works with the smaller creatures. Tends to rely on instinct rather than intelligence for survival and success.

This organisation is likely to operate with a model that uses top down control but does at times engage with and empower staff. Staff however may be suspicious that this engagement is more manipulative than genuine.

Purpose might be reasonably clear to some, but certainly not all, in the organisation and this probably means that departments and professions are more inclined to 'row their own boats' to the detriment of the wider organisation.

The organisation might not be clear about the essence of its distinctiveness which might lead it to 'cover all the bases' spreading resources too thinly and not defining itself adequately in a competitive marketplace.

Some units and professional groups connect and collaborate quite well whilst others do not. This gives a lopsided feel to

the organisation as pockets of best practice exist alongside the distinctly mediocre.

There is not a consistent leadership style/culture and this could be because the senior team is sucking in so many of the organisation's problems and decisions that it has become swamped and unable to find the space for collective strategic enquiry, reflection and sense making. In this context some leaders effectively empower and enable their staff whilst others definitely do not. Some can work effectively with ambiguity and uncertainty and others need to impose control to engender a sense of certainty, even when this may be self-defeating.

Organisational priorities may not be clear to the bulk of the organisation but everyone is likely to be busy. Some parts of

the organisation are better connected to customers and stakeholders than others.

The overall effect is that the stakeholder and customer experience is patchy and heavily dependent on which part of the organisation one is dealing with.

People often experience frustration that their collective efforts do not produce the outcomes they would want. Some get tired and give up and others just get angry.

A sense pervades that the organisation is trying to avoid defeat rather than pursuing victory. This norm is interspersed with pockets of notable achievements.

Verdict: This organisation could really fly or it could be really mediocre. It is close to a tipping point and how it responds to this is likely to determine its future. Will current conditions enable mediocre/'middle of the road' organisations to succeed or even survive?



Score between 49 and 64

The Dolphin

Intelligent, social, attractive, and nimble. Co-exists and collaborates well with others. Can move with great speed in the right direction when required. Capable communicator and relationship builder. Operates well in ambiguity and uncertainty using the collective intelligence of the pod and its own advanced sonar system.

Clarity of purpose and priorities that engender commitment pervade this organisation. The organisation is very clear about what it excels at and invests in these areas, whilst also making sure that stakeholders and customers continue to receive the value they desire.

Strategy is typically developed through an open process that engages with staff, stakeholders and customers. New ideas are frequently piloted and learning derived from these pilots before wider implementation. In this way new thinking and new courses of action are not killed through 'paralysis by analysis'.

This organisation takes particular care to recruit the very best, from both a technical competence and values perspective. As it has clarity about the sort of organisation it wants to be, it has equal clarity over the sort of people it wants to collaborate with.

Energy laden dialogue involving and valuing very different contributions is very evident. Through dialogue, smart systems and a focus on relationships, knowledge and ideas are quickly connected up throughout the organisation.

Conflict arises because people care but it is usually resolved productively and actually provides an essential creative organisational spark.

People frequently take the initiative to act collaboratively to resolve problems and respond to opportunities. Leaders create the space for this to occur and enable the conditions in which leadership flourishes throughout all levels of the organisation.

Diversity and difference is valued and respected and the strong sense of community fosters the necessary interdependence. The organisation is able to value and develop specialist individuals and their departments and does this in a way that connects these contributions to the wider goals of the organisation.

Hierarchy still exists (principle of the minimum necessary) and helps to clarify and agree the boundaries and outcomes that frame self-organisation and innovation.

Collaboration and cross boundary working are the norm. People are clear that they exist to create value for customers and stakeholders and the organisation is very quick to identify when and where this is not happening and equally quick to identify and enable the right people in developing a solution.

There is a desire to continuously improve and a real concern about complacency is rooted deep in the organisation's psyche.

People throughout the organisation focus on outcomes and values.

Verdict: This organisation should continue to be successful because it has the necessary Adaptive Capability to respond to a fast changing world. However, it must continually seek to develop and improve its adaptive capabilities.