



CXO FOCUS

NEW METHODS REQUIRED TO BE THE AGENT OF CHANGE

EXPERTS SAY STOP THE MEETINGS
AND GIVE EVERYONE A VOICE



JULY 2023



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“We need to reject the myth that the more people you get involved in collaboration, the slower and less bold the outcomes—the perception that inclusion leads to mushy consensus”



“The reality is that we only changed where we work for a little bit, not how we work,” contends Keith Ferrazzi, executive team coach and author of *Competing in the New World of Work*. Ferrazzi’s work aligns with a growing realization that a new way of working is required in order for technology leaders to be agents of change in the enterprise.

Ferrazzi says that the world’s best teams don’t win because of leadership alone. They win largely because of their teamship. He contends that the Covid-19 pandemic gave a

glimpse of what this future of work looks like, but too many organizations have retreated into pre-pandemic ways of working.

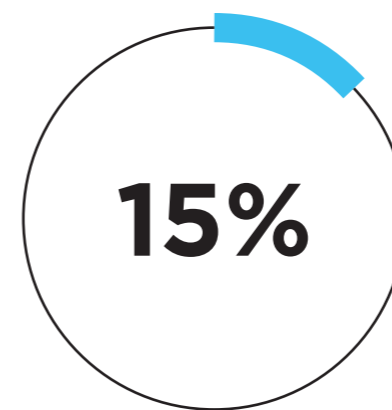
“We need to reject the myth that the more people you get involved in collaboration, the slower and less bold the outcomes—the perception that inclusion leads to mushy consensus,” he says. “We must shift to a more inclusive approach to collaboration that leads to a greater diversity of thinking and even bolder ideas from a broader network of stakeholders—inside and outside the organization.”



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KEITH FERRAZZI





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Ferrazzi goes on to say that “The power of hybrid working is that it doesn’t have to be meeting based. If you start the meeting in a Google doc and ask 12 people about a problem and what are the solutions, and what are the risks, the shared doc becomes a decision board, and the introvert has time to consider a response, and the loudest voice in the room no longer dominates.”

“Instead, you have a beautiful tapestry of 12 people’s insights that can be sent to other people that may have a useful point of view,” he observed. Twelve people out of 12 feel that they have been heard. That then goes on to 30 people, and there has not been a single meeting. It is a massively different way to collaborate.”

Technology has made broader inclusion and co-creation easier than ever before and opened up ways to Meeting Shift—to shift collaboration out of meetings to work with our peers asynchronously. But our research shows only 15% of teams are leveraging these most innovative practices for collaboration and decision-making. The simple practice of shifting collaboration from traditional meetings to asynchronous practice is a critical step on a team’s journey to becoming world-class. Ferrazzi says these are the ways of working the unicorn companies that are disrupting business models and disrupting ways of working and have been for some time, and it’s available to anybody. We ignore them at our peril.

For enterprise CIOs, this means a need to create a new social contract because digital transformation will be delivered by hybrid teams that are a loose network of individuals who are critical to the outcome. As a result, teams may form differently from the traditional ways. Central to enabling this change is a complete rethinking of communications in business.

“When you use a series of meetings as your form of collaboration, it significantly elongates change if you get more people involved,” he continued. “More people compound the number of people in a meeting, and so the cycle extends. The average meeting of 12 people has four people that think they were heard.”



CIO is key

If organizations are to digitally transform and compete with digitally native companies, ending meetings and creating true collaboration will be essential. Ferrazzi believes CIOs are the CXOs that can lead this change and deliver digital transformation.

“We are at a stage where we need to reinvent work, and that takes an engineering mindset,” he said “That is not a core competency of human resources. It should be a core competency of the CIO team to partner with HR and to stop talking about two or five days in the office and to change the way we work.”

According to Ferrazzi, the first port of call for this change is within the CIO’s department. “Make sure you do it in your organization first, and then your organization is the best practice example,” he said.

“At the Home Depot, the CIO is going fully remote in an organization that is fully physical,” Ferrazzi noted. “They have defined ways of working that have created disproportionately high levels of productivity, cost reduction, resilience, and engagement. They are now selling this outcome to the CEO.”

That last point is why Ferrazzi says it’s important for CIOs to create a viable hybrid working environment for their own teams. It’s about being intentional.

“If you have an opinion about flexible working, then so does the CEO, and the CEO is going to win,” he said about discussions based on opinion. “The CEO is operating on serendipity culture and remembers how to build teams and have meetings or bump into people in the hallway.”



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But like the CIO of Home Depot, the debate changes if you can demonstrate team improvements.

“You have to cultivate the culture from the top of the organization and then you have to ensure that your leadership can believe in that,” observed Joshua Surre, assistant vice president of infrastructure and operations at HCA Healthcare. “Once the leadership believes in that and talks about it purposefully and the reasons, then you will have people adhere to that.”

New leadership

To develop an organization of hybrid teams requires a new form of leadership and leadership training.

“We don’t often teach leadership how to create teams that are each other’s coaches,” said Surre, adding that skills investment must become a focus for CXOs if organizations are to succeed at digital transformation.

“Give them the opportunity to train in automation and incentivize people to get that training so they can give back,” Surre continued. “We had three people move to our public cloud team, and that’s great. But how do we find system admins in this market?”

In addition, Ferrazzi said organizations need to develop higher levels of transparency. Some of

the digital businesses that have transformed the economy have transparency that is not always comfortable but delivers results.

“Most of us live in organizations that are highly conflict avoidant,” Ferrazzi noted. “Some teams are mediocre, and we’ve gotten used to accepting that. Unfortunately, it’s acceptable to talk behind each other’s backs but not in a room.”

Digital transformation is about more than the technologies that digitize business processes and routes to market. Digital transformation requires completely rethinking how to work as a team. “We have to pivot the social contract and teach people how to use the collaborative stack, including when working in person,” Ferrazzi concluded.



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