

Navigating Change

Pursue clarity, momentum & a stronger culture

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Change is no longer an occasional disruption in business — it is the operating environment. In the office technology industry especially, teams are navigating constant shifts: rapid innovation cycles, artificial intelligence (AI) integration, evolving customer expectations, reorganizations, hybrid work models and economic uncertainty. While change can fuel growth and opportunity, it can just as easily erode morale, fracture trust and stall performance if not handled intentionally.

The difference between teams that merely survive change and those that thrive through it is not luck or talent. It is mindset, habits and leadership behaviors.

After years spent on high-performing teams — first as a student-athlete and football team captain at Penn State, and later working with organizations across industries — I have seen a consistent pattern. Extraordinary teams do not eliminate uncertainty. They learn how to navigate it.

Below is a proven framework used by exceptional teams in both sports and business to turn disruption into clarity, momentum and stronger culture.

Calm Down: Identify What Is Actually Changing

When change hits, the natural human response is emotional before it is analytical. Rumors spread. Anxiety rises. People fill information gaps with worst-case assumptions. Teams react to perceived threats rather than real ones.

Extraordinary teams start by slowing things down. Before shifting strategy, reallocating resources or overcorrecting behavior, they ask a simple but critical question: “What is actually changing and what is not?” This distinction matters. In many organizations, leaders and teams confuse surface-level disruption with foundational instability. A new system rollout becomes “everything is broken.” A leadership transition becomes “our culture is gone.” A market shift becomes “we are falling behind.” It can all feel like the sky is falling.

In reality, while tools, processes or priorities may be changing, core values, customer needs and team capabilities often remain intact.



High-performing teams take the time to assess:

- What is news? What is noise?
- What is within our control?
- What assumptions are we making?
- What problems are real versus emotional reactions?

You cannot shift effectively if you do not understand the real issue. Calm is not complacency — it is clarity. And clarity is the foundation of smart decisions.

Stay Customer-Focused: Lead With Clarity & Purpose

When organizations face internal change, it is easy for teams to become inwardly focused. Processes shift. Roles change. New systems are introduced. Meetings multiply. Energy turns toward what is happening inside the organization rather than who the organization exists to serve.

Extraordinary teams resist that pull. They anchor themselves in a clear, shared understanding of purpose and they keep the customer at the center of every decision.

In times of uncertainty, customer focus becomes a stabilizing force. While strategies may evolve and structures may shift, customer needs remain remarkably consistent. High-performing teams use that consistency as a compass. They ask:

- How does this change improve the customer experience?
- What does our customer need most from us right now?
- How do we continue delivering value — even as we adapt internally?

This clarity gives teams direction when details are still

emerging. It reduces confusion and aligns effort around something bigger than individual roles or short-term discomfort.

Leading with purpose also helps teams stay motivated. People are more willing to endure change when they understand why it matters and who it helps. A clearly communicated vision transforms disruption from something happening to the team into something the team is moving toward together.

Extraordinary leaders communicate that purpose repeatedly and plainly. They do not assume alignment — they reinforce it. In doing so, they create focus, reduce friction and keep teams grounded in what matters most. When everything feels uncertain, the customer becomes the constant. Extraordinary teams never lose sight of that.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate: Transparency Builds Trust

If there is one behavior that separates extraordinary teams during change, it is communication — not more emails and not longer meetings. It is clearer, more open and more honest communication.

During disruption, silence is rarely neutral. When leaders withhold information — or delay communication until everything is “perfect” — people assume the worst. Trust erodes in the gaps.

Extraordinary teams operate with what I call “painful transparency.” They communicate earlier, more often and with greater honesty than feels comfortable. This includes:

- Sharing what is known and what is not
- Acknowledging uncertainty without defensiveness
- Explaining the “why” behind decisions, not just the “what”

Research consistently shows that trust is built less on certainty and more on credibility. Teams do not expect leaders to have all the answers, but they do expect them to tell the truth. In times of change, effective communication is not about control, it is about connection.

Be Consistent: Focus on the Fundamentals

Change can create the illusion that everything needs to change. Extraordinary teams resist that temptation. While strategy may evolve, the fundamentals still matter. Customers still need support. Deadlines still exist. Standards still apply.

High-performing teams simplify during chaos. They narrow the focus to what matters most and execute the basics exceptionally well.

This is especially critical in technology-driven organizations, where innovation pressure can pull teams in too many directions at once. Extraordinary teams ask:

Teams that grow through change actively choose perspective. They shift from asking: “How is this hurting us?” to “What is this teaching us?”

- What are the nonnegotiables now?
- What does excellence look like today?
- How do we continue serving customers through this transition?

Consistency creates stability. Stability builds confidence. Confidence allows teams to adapt without losing their identities. Change does not excuse poor execution. In fact, it demands better discipline.

Choose How This Will Change You

Pressure reveals more than it creates. Extraordinary teams understand that tough times are not just obstacles to survive — they are opportunities to develop. The question is not whether change will affect you, but how. Will it make the team defensive or resilient? Fragmented or unified? Reactive or reflective?

I often compare this process to chemistry: heat and pressure can either cause breakdown — or transformation. The same conditions that crack weaker bonds can strengthen stronger ones.

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This mindset does not minimize difficulty. It reframes it. Growth is rarely comfortable, but it is always intentional. As one leadership guru says: “Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.”

Take Copious Notes: Capture the Lessons

As a college football player, I watched a tremendous amount of film of both games and practices. (Technically, we watched video, however, the term “film” has stuck.)

The purpose of filming is not judgment — it is improvement. It creates a shared, factual record of performance that allows teams to identify patterns, correct mistakes and make smarter adjustments moving forward.

The same principle applies in business. If we fail to capture and document our experiences — what worked, what did not and why — we lose the opportunity to grow from them. Without an honest record, reflection turns into opinion and improvement becomes guesswork.

Extraordinary teams take notes. They document decisions, outcomes and lessons learned — not to dwell on the past, but to prepare for the future. Because unless we are willing to own what we have done — and what we have not done — there is no room to make the necessary adjustments to perform better next time. And there will always be a next time.

Change is cyclical. This will not be the last disruption your team faces. Extraordinary teams document their learning. They take time — after the storm — to reflect:

- What worked?
- What did not?
- What would we do differently?

This reflection transforms experience into wisdom. Too many organizations rush forward without capturing insights, only to repeat the same mistakes later. High-performing teams build institutional memory. They record lessons, refine playbooks and prepare future leaders with context, not just conclusions. Growth compounds when learning is preserved.

Conclusion: Turning Uncertainty Into Advantage

Change is unavoidable. But chaos is not. The most successful teams do not wait for certainty before acting. They build clarity, trust and discipline in the midst of uncertainty.

By calming down, staying customer-focused, communicating transparently, staying consistent, choosing growth and capturing lessons, teams do not just navigate change, they use it as a catalyst for innovation, stronger relationships

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and customer-centric performance.

Extraordinary teams are not defined by the absence of challenge. They are defined by how they respond when it arrives. And in today's business and technology landscape, that response makes all the difference. ■

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