

ISB CTO

Week 19: Leadership in the Age of Disruption

Video 1: The Dynamics of Disruption

- Companies today face unprecedented levels of change, driven by rapid technological advancements and market disruptions.
- Adaptability, rather than strength or intelligence, is the key to survival in a dynamic business environment.
- The landscape of the world's top companies has evolved significantly, with many newcomers rising to prominence in a short time.
- The business life cycle follows an S-curve, and organisations must recognise where they stand on this curve to stay ahead of potential disruptions.
- Leadership's primary responsibility in times of disruption is to prepare the organisation for change, and individuals should likewise be proactive in managing their careers.

Video 2: Response to Disruption

- Disruptions can manifest as both threats and opportunities, so a balanced approach is essential.
- Chasing opportunities without evaluating their financial viability can lead to peril.
- Solely adopting a threat-based response is inadequate, as it may stifle innovation and growth.
- The key lesson is to perceive disruption as both a threat and an opportunity, protecting the existing while exploring the new.

Video 3: Leadership Strategy

- Leadership responsibilities encompass scanning the environment, preparing for change and developing both threat and opportunity responses.
- Creative disruption can be instigated through approaches like challenging basic assumptions, combining unrelated elements, leveraging constraints and borrowing insights from other industries.
- A leader need not always be the inventor; scaling up existing innovations can create a substantial competitive advantage.
- In a rapidly changing world, strategy development and execution are becoming increasingly intertwined, necessitating greater agility.

Video 4: Leader's Posture in a Changing Universe

- Change is a fundamental aspect of the current business landscape, necessitating proactive responses.
- Effective responses to disruption involve addressing it as both a threat and an opportunity simultaneously.
- Leadership involves scanning the environment, anticipating change, fostering innovation and embracing change.
- Creativity is vital for generating new ideas and innovative solutions.
- Strategy execution is a continuous process of sense-making, strategising, execution and revision.
- Leaders must embrace an agile mindset and foster change within their organisations.
- The willingness to relearn and adapt is a hallmark of effective leadership in an era of disruption.

Video 5: Leadership vs Management

- Leadership transcends mere management; it involves leading people, not managing them.
- Leadership necessitates followers—individuals willing to be led in a common direction.
- Followers seek belongingness, significance, rewards and a sense of purpose from their leaders.
- Leadership comprises four core tasks: inspiring people, setting values, shaping culture and delivering results.
- Often, leaders overly focus on delivering results, neglecting the first three critical leadership tasks.
- Balancing these leadership tasks is essential for effective leadership and achieving desired results.
- Personal and organisational leadership development is crucial to thrive in a world characterised by constant disruption.

Video 6: Key Leadership Behaviours

- Authentic leadership hinges on self-discovery and self-awareness.
- The pivotal question, "Why should anyone be led by you?" is central to leadership development.
- Leadership is an evolving journey, with five distinct levels, starting from positional leadership.
- Authenticity is vital for effective leadership; inauthenticity erodes trust.
- Leadership is situational, necessitating flexibility while maintaining authenticity.
- Flexibility should not equate to inauthenticity; being true to oneself is essential.
- Leaders can master the art of selective vulnerability, intuitive sensing and 'tough empathy' for better leadership.
- Embracing one's differences can be a source of strength in leadership.

Video 7: Characteristics of Successful Leaders

- Successful leaders share common traits such as decisiveness, engaging for impact, proactive adaptation and consistent results.
- Charisma can be cultivated and is based on presence, power and warmth.
- Warmth and empathy play a significant role in projecting charisma.
- Leadership skills that move beyond positional authority are essential in the modern world.
- Leaders should consider how they build teams and be cautious of creating homogeneous teams that hinder exposure to diverse perspectives.

Video 8: CTO's Strategic Response to Disruption

- Effective leadership requires anticipating technological disruptions and adapting to innovation.
- Leaders must assess emerging technologies and be willing to update or replace existing business models.
- Success depends on embracing new platforms and letting go of outdated approaches.
- Organisations must build dynamic capabilities to stay agile in a rapidly changing landscape.
- Innovation often involves refining existing technologies with a user-friendly focus.

Video 9: Navigating Disruption Through Innovation

- Disruptive technologies are rapidly changing industries and challenging traditional business models.
- Responding to disruption requires balancing the protection of existing strengths with the openness to explore new opportunities.
- Strategic technology planning should involve continuous revision and adaptation to keep pace with emerging innovations.
- Creating a learning organisation is essential to navigate constant technological change and maintain agility.

- Effective strategy execution in turbulent times involves defining plausible scenarios, identifying strategic hedges and conducting experiments.
- Monitoring external innovations through "prescriptive surveillance" is crucial for anticipating disruptions and preparing to embrace or counter them.

Video 10: The BlackBerry Case Study

- Leadership with a clear vision can drive exponential growth, especially when it complements the existing team's strengths.
- A company's culture can evolve over time, but changing it without careful consideration can lead to negative consequences.
- Technological innovation and adaptability are critical; clinging to outdated models can lead to decline, even for disruptors.
- Ethical issues and internal challenges can contribute to a company's downfall, sometimes from the very culture that once drove success.
- The ability to pivot and adapt to new disruptions is essential for long-term survival and growth.