



Resist, reframe, or reimagine?

Confronting uncertainty and
the new speed of adaptation

Where's your uncertainty threshold?



Beneath the hype and cliché
lies a kernel of truth—

change and disruption have
indeed become the norm.

Are you really ready for
what that entails?

Are you comfortable with change? With uncertainty?
With unknowns?

And where's your limit? At what point does it feel too
fast, too much, or too much at once?

We call this **the uncertainty threshold**. If you recognize that you have one—and sense that recent years may have tested it—know that you're not alone.

Few would argue that the past decade or so has brought a range of significant structural and even systemic changes that have been largely sector and geography agnostic.

Fewer still would dispute that **this pace and scale of change and uncertainty will continue**, if not accelerate, over the medium to long term.

Just listen to earnings calls.

Even the best planned and most choreographed are revealing.

Contrasting a sample quarterly period in 2013 with the most recent quarter of 2023, mentions of “disruption,” “volatility,” “uncertainty,” and related terms in CEO- and CFO-led earnings calls of **the largest U.S. corporations were up by 256%.**¹

Meanwhile, mentions of new technology themes, including “AI,” “quantum,” “machine learning,” “Web3,” “emerging technology,” and related terms **increased by a dramatic 3,040% in the same period.**²

Even when shrouded in disclaimers and legalese, these presentations illuminate what’s **drawing the attention of corporate leaders and their investors.**

¹ Source: comparing CEO- and CFO-led earnings calls of 10,000+ between 8/3-11/2/2013 and 5/3-8/2/2023 including all of the S&P 500, Russell 1000, and FTSE 100 Indices, Alphasense.

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The truth behind the **hype cycle**

It's been **impossible to escape the growing noise and hype around change**, transformation, and innovation fueled by post-dotcom advancements in technology; accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic; and exponentially surging with generative AI's potential so dramatically (and tangibly) entering the public domain.

You're probably sick of hearing "change is the new normal," "things will never be this slow again," "disruption is the new status quo," or other similar phrases.

And while there may be a kernel of truth beneath all the hyperbole and cliché, we don't need more passive agreement, nodding heads, or catchphrases. **We need action.**

We're undoubtedly in an environment of increasing uncertainty and unknowns. CEOs and their leadership teams are already facing—and will only continue to face—a **plethora of strategic, customer, economic, and operational challenges**. Among them: changes in value propositions and customer experience, business model evolutions, shifts in core economic assumptions and resource allocation, changes in talent and human capital management, and more.

Many of these may come to be considered significant, if not existential. But it's not these individual challenges we're seeking to explore here.

Organizations don't change; **you do**

Beneath the operational questions the C-suite is confronting are some more fundamental questions of resilience, tenacity, adaptability, leadership, and culture.

As a CEO, **how equipped do you feel** to lead in an environment of constant, unrelenting change?

What about the broader C-suite? Is there a collective acknowledgement and commitment to the idea that what got you here—culture, capability, leadership style, and decision constructs—won't be sufficient for this new operating environment?

Are you confident in your world view? Can you trust the lenses you apply to assess, connect, and

interpret different data, trends, and nuances that inform your view of the future of your organization? And, perhaps most importantly, does the beat and rhythm of your C-suite match the reality of today's increasingly dynamic environment?

This leads to our central question: Where's your uncertainty threshold? Call it your tolerance, your limits, your comfort zone. Whatever term you choose, are you ready to stretch it?

After all, organizations don't embrace change. People do. And that starts squarely with leaders.



We've arguably used some emotive terms.

We didn't do so gratuitously. It's merely a reflection of the reality facing executives today, which distinguishes this **looming wave of change**.

Both industry and society have encountered periods of transformation dating back centuries.

Critics argue that on each occasion, **organizations have weathered the storm and adapted**—whether to the production age, the machine age, or the computing age—despite those prophesizing catastrophe.

What's different now is the **ubiquity of technology**, the pace of progress, and the range of fields concurrently encountering disruption, innovation, and radical new potential. From the arts to the sciences, from industries reliant on labor inputs to those reliant on knowledge, no sector is immune.

What's different now is the sheer scale of it all.

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