Organizational Agility Wins At Scale

Idea In Short

Large businesses already know they need to move faster; the harder problem is building the actual capability to do it. Deloitte's 2025 Global Human Capital Trends research found that 85 percent of business executives say organizations need more agile ways of organizing work, yet only 39 percent are doing something meaningful about it. That gap widens as companies grow, since more employees demand more coordination, more markets create more variables, and more systems introduce more dependencies. The fix is not another technology purchase. It is leadership trained to redesign structures under pressure, platforms that carry coordination at scale without adding drag, and a willingness to reallocate resources as priorities shift rather than defending last year's budget. Boards that still treat agility as a technology initiative are solving the wrong problem. Large enterprises that treat it as a leadership, workforce and operating-model priority are the ones turning scale into an advantage.

Large businesses know they need to move faster, but knowing it and building the ability to do it are two very different things. Deloitte's 2025 Global Human Capital Trends research shows that 85 percent of business leaders see greater workplace agility as essential for responding to changing market conditions, yet only 39 percent say their organizations are doing something meaningful to balance agility with stability. That gap becomes harder to close as organizations grow. More employees require more coordination, more markets create more variables, and more systems introduce more dependencies. What once looked like the strength of scale can quickly become organizational drag when leaders cannot adapt structures, skills and decisions at the same speed as the market.

Leadership depth decides the outcome

Agility rarely fails because teams lack tools. It fails because leaders lack the strategic depth to redesign structures under pressure, and reconfiguring strategy, processes and people at enterprise scale asks for more than instinct. Research on the guardrails that enable agility at large organizations backs this up directly: companies that pair employee autonomy with

clear decision rights around purpose, data, policy and resource allocation post meaningfully stronger results, with revenue growth measured 16.2 percentage points above the industry average.1 Building that kind of decision architecture takes more than good instincts. It asks for training in systems thinking, change management and applied research, and a standard two-year Master of Business Administration [MBA] rarely covers that depth.

What leaders increasingly need instead is a more rigorous, evidence-based decision-making program that costs less time than it might seem while delivering better value than many traditional degrees. That gap explains why so many working professionals now choose remote degrees like an Online Doctorate In Business Administration Program, alongside shorter certificate programs in specific soft skills, all pursued alongside their regular jobs. These kinds of programs blend academic rigor with live business problems rather than abstract case studies detached from a leader's actual organization.

That structure gives corporate leaders a way to test agility frameworks against their own organizations before committing to them company-wide. It is a comparatively safe way to work through new strategies before rolling them out broadly, rather than learning through costly trial and error on the job with real teams and real budgets on the line. Marymount University builds its online programs around this exact need, pairing working professionals with faculty who study organizational behavior as their core discipline. Programs like this give large companies a pipeline of leaders who already know how to translate agility theory into boardroom decisions, rather than importing frameworks that never quite fit the organization they land in.

Firms that have applied structured decision rights alongside this kind of leadership development report a compounding effect. Bain's work scaling agile practices across large enterprises has documented productivity gains of two to four times baseline among teams operating under a mature agile framework, plus a 60 percent improvement in the success rate of large projects.2 Numbers like that make the case for leadership investment more concretely than any general appeal to "moving faster" ever could.

The platforms that carry agility at scale

Strategy alone cannot move a 50,000-person company. Technology has to carry the weight, and a handful of platform categories do most of the heavy lifting.

- Cloud enterprise resource planning [ERP] systems unify finance, supply chain and operations data so leadership sees one version of the truth instead of five conflicting spreadsheets
- Agile portfolio management platforms let hundreds of teams plan in short cycles while still rolling up into one enterprise roadmap, keeping speed and coordination in the same room
- Low-code development platforms let business units build their own tools without waiting months in a central information technology [IT] queue, shortening the distance between an idea and a working product
- AI-driven analytics platforms flag shifting demand or emerging risk in near real time, giving leadership a head start most competitors do not get
- Collaborative work management tools replace long email chains with shared workflows, cutting the handoff delays that quietly stall large projects
- Workforce management platforms track skills across the whole organization, so leaders can redeploy people toward urgent priorities instead of hiring from scratch every time strategy shifts
- Customer experience platforms feed frontline feedback straight into product and pricing decisions, closing the loop between what customers want and what the company builds next

None of these tools create agility on their own. McKinsey's 2025 Research on operating models found that organizations need more than technology to perform in volatile environments, and effective operating models must create clarity, speed, skills and commitment alongside whatever platforms sit underneath them. That reinforces the idea that platforms only deliver agility when leaders build the right structures and ways of working around them. Newer research on redesigning enterprise workflows around AI makes a related point at the process level: organizations that redesign end-to-end processes for autonomous execution, rather than simply adding automation to existing workflows, have reported cycle-time reductions as high as 80 percent.3 The platform matters less than the willingness to rebuild the process running through it.

Overcoming unprecedented delays

The cost of delay becomes clearer when we look at how large businesses actually allocate resources. PwC's 2025 Global CEO Survey found that more than two-thirds of chief executive officers [CEOs] reallocate less than 20 percent of their financial and human

resources from year to year, with roughly half reallocating 10 percent or less.4 That pattern highlights how difficult it remains for organizations to shift people and investment as priorities change, even when leadership already agrees the priorities have changed. Technology can make those shifts easier to execute once a decision is made, but leadership must first create the organizational flexibility to move resources where they can create the most value in the first place.

That challenge extends to the workforce itself. Deloitte's 2025 Talent Agility Leadership Survey found that 95 percent of executives consider skills agility essential to business strategy over the next five years. The message is direct. Organizations cannot become more responsive if their people cannot adapt alongside their technology, processes and priorities, no matter how sophisticated the surrounding platforms become.

In simple terms, agility rewards organizations that can quickly move resources and skills, while rigid structures make every strategic shift harder than it needs to be. Boards may once have treated agility as a technology initiative, but large-scale businesses increasingly need to treat it as a leadership, workforce and operating-model priority instead, with budget and headcount decisions built to match.

What the data says about agility at scale

Reading the research together, a consistent pattern emerges across leadership, workforce and technology.

Agility factor	Role in large businesses	Evidence or key takeaway
Agile operating models	Reduce layers, clarify ownership and accelerate decisions	McKinsey highlights clarity, speed, skills and commitment as core operating-model outcomes
Workforce adaptability	Helps businesses redeploy people as priorities, markets and technologies change	95 percent of executives say skills agility is essential to business strategy over the next five years
Resource flexibility	Allows leaders to shift people and investment toward emerging opportunities	More than two-thirds of CEOs reallocate less than 20 percent of financial and human resources annually

Agility factor	Role in large businesses	Evidence or key takeaway
Cloud ERP and workflow tools	Connect data and reduce operational handoffs across complex functions	Supports faster access to information and more consistent cross-functional execution
AI and analytics	Detects demand shifts, risks and patterns before they become larger problems	Gives leaders earlier signals for faster, evidence-based decisions
Customer experience platforms	Connect customer feedback with product, service and pricing decisions	Shortens the feedback loop between customer needs and business action

The skills dimension of this table deserves particular attention, since it is where the gap between intention and execution tends to be widest. The World Economic Forum's research on the future of jobs found that 85 percent of employers plan to prioritize reskilling their workforce, yet only 25 percent of companies currently offer formal AI training programs despite two-thirds of business leaders saying they would not hire candidates lacking AI skills.5 That gap between stated intent and actual investment mirrors the same 85-to-39 pattern seen in the broader agility data, and it is worth large organizations treating it as the same underlying problem rather than a separate workforce issue. Large businesses do not become agile by installing software or running a single transformation program. They become agile by aligning leadership, technology, talent and decision-making around continuous adaptation.

- 1The Four Guardrails That Enable Agility
- 2Agile Enterprise
- 3AI-First Enterprise Operations: Reinventing The Operating System Of Work
- 4PwC's 2025 Global CEO Survey
- 5Leaders Share Their Vision As 85% Of Employers Plan To Prioritize Reskilling Their Workforce

Summary

Large businesses do not become agile by installing software or running a single transformation program. They become agile by aligning leadership, technology, talent and decision-making around continuous adaptation, and none of those four pieces compensates

for weakness in the others. The strongest organizations understand that agility does not mean abandoning structure. It means building structures that can change when circumstances demand it, backed by leaders trained to redesign them under pressure and platforms that let hundreds of teams coordinate without losing speed. When leaders can make faster decisions, teams can reallocate resources, and technology supports rather than obstructs that movement, scale stops being a source of drag and becomes the advantage competitors cannot easily replicate. The gap between recognizing agility's importance and actually building it is where most organizations still get stuck, and closing it is now a leadership responsibility rather than a technology initiative.