

## The Century of Teams

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In the past century society privileged individual leadership in all areas: in business, science, academia, politics, in all fields of human activity, geniuses were sought to solve everything.

In the 21st century, we have understood that things go well when teams are assembled, combining the efforts, professionalism, experience and good intentions of many people.

The world has become too complex to rely on individuals alone to solve ever changing problems. Organizations need tap the collective knowledge of its individuals and revolve around networks of teams to succeed in the current environment.

### **1. Context: Megatrends, Technological Disruption and Exponential Change**

#### **Megatrends**

According to Frost and Sullivan, a megatrend is a large, social, economic, political, environmental, or technological change that is slow to form. Once in place, megatrends influence a wide range of activities, processes, and perceptions, both in government and in society, possibly for decades. They are the underlying forces that drive trends.

Megatrends inform the required transformation, strategic choices, and capabilities that organizations needed to survive and thrive in the future.

PWC group them into five – globalization, demographic changes, urbanization, technology changes, and climate change, and sustainability

## Technological Disruption

The Institute for the Future, a California based research center specializing in long-term forecasting, identified six drivers that will disrupt and reshape the workforce landscape:

Extreme longevity: Increasing global lifespans will change the nature of careers and learning

Rise of smart machines and systems: Workplace automation will nudge human workers out of rote, repetitive tasks

Computational world: Massive increases in sensors and processing power will make the world a programmable system

New media ecology: New communication tools will require new media literacies beyond text

Super structured organizations: Social technologies will drive new forms of production and value creation

Globally connected world: Increased global interconnectivity will put diversity and adaptability at the center of organizational operations

**The institute identified the 10 skills for the future workforce:**

**Sensemaking:** Ability to determine the deeper meaning or significance of what is being expressed

**Social intelligence:** Ability to connect to others in a deep and direct way, to sense and stimulate reactions and desired interactions

**Novel & Adaptive thinking:** Proficiency at thinking and coming up with solutions and responses beyond that which is rote or rule-based

**Cross-Cultural Competency:** Ability to operate in different cultural settings

**Computational thinking:** Ability to translate vast amounts of data into abstract concepts and to understand data-based reasoning

**New Media Literacy:** Ability to critically assess and develop content that uses new media forms, and to leverage these media for persuasive communication

**Transdisciplinary:** Literacy in and ability to understand concepts across multiple disciplines

**Design Mindset:** Ability to represent and develop tasks and work processes for desired outcomes

**Cognitive Load Management:** Ability to discriminate and filter information for importance, and to understand how to maximize cognitive functioning using a variety of tools and techniques

**Virtual Collaboration:** Ability to work productively, drive engagement, and demonstrate presence as a member of a virtual team

## Exponential Change

The concept that technological change occurs at an exponential rate was first introduced by Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel, who in 1965 predicted that every year the number of components per integrated circuit would double.

Advancements in digital electronics are strongly linked to Moore's law: quality-adjusted microprocessor prices, memory capacity, sensors, and even the number and size of pixels in digital cameras.

Digital electronics has contributed to world economic growth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Moore's law describes a driving force of technological and social change, productivity, and economic growth

Jean-Philippe Couturier, at InovenAltenor - a consulting firm specialized in future technology trends - identified six technological advancements that will significantly disrupt the world:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Nanotechnology
- XD printing
- Robotics
- Virtual Reality
- Biotechnology

These trends with the exponential rate of technological advancements will significantly change the way we live; accelerating us to a faster pace than the human race has ever imagined.

Futurist Ray Kurzweil puts it this way: “For the vast majority of human existence, it was safe to assume that the world in which you died would look pretty much the same as the one in which you were born. But that is no longer the case and pretty soon humans won't even die at all” .

We won't experience 100 years of progress in the 21st century — it will be more like 20,000 years of progress (at today's rate)," wrote Kurzweil in 2001.

Just think about how much change we have witnessed in the past 10 years—wireless internet, smartphones, Uber, Facebook, and Twitter—and then try to imagine how vastly different things will be in 2026, or even 2100.

## **2. Impact on Organizations**

No matter if it's the evolution of megatrends, technology disruption, or exponential change it is clear that businesses cannot be successful with an organizational model of hierarchy, command and control designed 100 years ago.

Other models such as the Matrix organizations of the '70s and '80s failed as they conceived organizations as a set of pyramidal boxes filled with individuals that performed tasks, rather than focusing on the dynamic use of individuals and teams to serve customer needs.

It's no surprise that in Deloitte's last Business Leaders' survey, they placed organization redesign as

their number one priority to respond to disruptions in the marketplace.

The study identified that some Companies are decentralizing authority, moving toward product- and customer-centric organizations, and forming dynamic networks of highly empowered teams that communicate and coordinate activities in unique and powerful ways.

This is giving rise to a new model of organization based on a “network of teams” with a high degree of empowerment, strong communication, and rapid information flow.

These organizations, which utilize principles based on Stanley McChrystal book, Team of Teams, have several fundamental components:

Move people into customer-, product-, or market- and mission-focused teams, led by team leaders who are experts in their domain (not “professional managers”).

Empower teams to set their own goals and make their own decisions within the context of an overarching strategy or business plan, reversing the traditional structure of goal and performance management.

Replace silos with information and operations centers to share integrated information and identify connections between team activities and desired results.

Organize these teams around mission, product, market, or integrated customer needs rather than a business function.

Teach and encourage people to work across teams, using techniques like “liaison officers” as the US military, “hackathons,” open office spaces that promote collaboration as Apple Inc. and Cleveland Clinic, and job rotation to give teams a common understanding of each other.

Enable people to move from team to team as needed—similar to the way experts come together on Hollywood movie sets or in global consulting firms—and then ensure that people have a home to return to once a team-based project is done. This changes the concept of a “job description” to that of a “mission specialist” or “technical specialist.”

Shift senior leaders into roles focused on planning, strategy, vision, culture, and cross-team communication.

Academic research supports this strategy, Sociologist Robert Dunbar proved that the optimum number of people any individual can know well and communicate with is around 150, a phenomenon known as the Dunbar Effect. Smaller organizational units tap into the human strengths of communication.

### **3. Impact on Talent Management practices**

The new organization based on a network of teams will require a dramatic redesign or elimination of Talent Management practices and processes as well as a redefinition of how to lead in the new environment.

Most of the work in the talent Management space is based on work done during the post-world war Industrial area analyzing big corporations that operated in stable environments. Both the science behind the tools as well as the tools themselves have focused on the organization or on individuals but lacked focus on teams, team composition, performance, and dynamics.

The new model of work will force us to change job roles and job descriptions; rethink careers and internal mobility; emphasize skills and learning as keys to performance; redesign how we set goals and reward people, and change the role of leaders.

#### **Structure**

One may ask, does this New Organization model even need an org chart? Of course, people need to know how the company is organized, who oversees what, and where to go for information and decisions.

But as the research shows more and more, the days of the "org chart" are starting to disappear, because the organization itself operates more like a sports team or consulting firm, and less like a top-down bureaucracy than ever before. What we really need today is a "network analysis" of the company (the discipline is called ONA) that tells us who to call for what, regardless of where they work.

## Careers

In today's digital workplace the value of an individual can be enormous if they have the skills, passion, and network connections to do what is needed. Why would we penalize or hold back someone's ability to grow by telling them that only by moving "up" do you progress in the company?

A consulting, firm, for example, decided that the whole idea of a "HIPO (high potential)" is now obsolete, and it must empower everyone to grow through lateral projects and roles, continuous development, and challenging assignments.

## Leadership

What should high-performing leaders do, who should be promoted to top leadership, and how to design reward and alignment systems to help leaders contribute.

Leaders of teams and networks must promote practices that bring people together, help people develop, and focus on topics like onboarding (people change teams regularly), engagement, career transition management, and continuous learning. These practices are of even more important today because companies are realizing that if they can't help people operate in the team, they transition from team to team, and stay current of new trends- they can't perform as a business.

## Dilemma

All these changes will require addressing the issues of individual-based and team-based practices, and key to this is the dilemma of collective creation and individual recognition.

Whilst the value and strength of individuals in the new setting comes from their connection with the collective intelligence of others, the need for individual recognition remains.

**The challenge for Leaders now is to navigate the boundaries of what is collective and what is individual, mastering the continuous tension between the two.**

The post "The Century of Teams" was first published by Miguel Premoli [here](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/century-teams-miguel-premoli-1f/)

## About Miguel Premoli

Global Human Resources Vice President with 25+ years of Strategic Business Partnering and Talent Management experience across the Americas, Europe, and Asia in Walgreens Boots Alliance, PepsiCo, Walmart, Colgate, and Private Equity backed Digital company.

-Member of executive committees with experience in field, headquarters, and highly matrix organizations.-Specialized in designing and implementing Human Resources Strategies to deliver business value.-Lead large-scale Transformational Changes throughout multiple geographies.-Delivered on Merger, Acquisition, and Integration commitments.-Strong labor background and experience in workforce optimization.-Deployed Advanced Talent Management tools such as Strategic Workforce Planning, HR Analytics, EVP definition, Employer Branding, and Organizational Design.-Pioneered state-of-the-art interventions to drive cultural change, leadership development, and employee engagement.-Leveraged technology and digital infrastructure to deliver employee-centric experiences.-Implemented innovative human capital programs in digital native companies

Strong business background, solid interpersonal skills, digitally savvy, angel investor, and entrepreneur. Focus Areas: HR Strategy, HR Business Partner, Talent Management, Talent Acquisition, Talent Development, Organizational Development, Employee Engagement. Integrated Employee Experience, Executive Coaching. M&A. HR Information Systems. EMEA markets. Latam markets. Private equity-funded companies. PepsiCo, Colgate, Neoris, Revlon, Wal Mart, Walgreens Boots Alliance.

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