

Future leaders' approach to developing a robust strategy for their organisation



CFE Factsheet

THE CENTRE FOR FUTURE ENTERPRISE

In today's volatile business landscape, the traditional strategies are rapidly becoming obsolete. Enterprises that once operated under the assumption of stable environments with predictable futures are now finding themselves continuously assailed by unforeseen disruptions.

From socio-political upheaval to rapid technological advancements, the only certainty in the modern world is the relentless march of change. It is within this context that the concept of organisational robustness takes on an unprecedented importance.

Traditional strategic frameworks, premised on the availability of reliable information and future predictability, are inherently fragile in the face of the unexpected. For organisations looking to thrive, a fundamental re-evaluation of strategic thinking is not only advisable, it is essential - and being robust is key.

To truly understand the essence of robustness, we must first dispel the myth that it involves merely resilience or flexibility. While these traits are critical components, robustness is a distinct paradigm that requires organisational structures to be highly adaptable, even as they maintain a clear and unyielding stability at their core. Robust organisations are not brittle; they acknowledge that being resilient to one factor may render them fragile to another. The essence of their strength lies not in a resistance to change, but in an intrinsic capacity to sense, anticipate, and shape their environments.

What does this mean in practice? It requires developing a keen awareness of potential high-impact events with low probabilities and crafting flexible yet focused strategies to address them.

Key features of a robust strategy

In practice, implementing a robust strategy requires a fundamental shift in organisational culture. It demands a willingness to operate in a state of perpetual transformation, where change is not a threat but a welcome partner in the pursuit of organisational advancement.

The process begins with fortifying the organisational core - identifying and shoring up weaknesses, streamlining operations, and cultivating a workforce that is not only adaptive but resilient. Attention to detail, appliance of proven methodologies and an eye for continuous improvement is significant in carving out the robust nature of an organisation's strategy. From this position of foundational strength an organisation can confidently develop a robust strategy - one that incorporates 10 crucial attributes.



Robust organisations have robust strategies that allow them to thrive in a messy, fragile, unpredictable, and volatile environment.

10 key features of a robust strategy

1. Designed for multiple futures

Instead of constantly pivoting or reacting to change, a robust strategy is designed to span multiple potential futures. It is not about predicting the future with absolute accuracy; rather, it is about creating a strategic framework that can withstand a myriad of potential disruptions. By intelligently investing in opportunity detection, organisations can position themselves as the architects of their destiny, rather than the subjects of an unpredictable narrative.

2. Anticipatory ethos

To be robust is to be anticipatory. Strategic thinking must be attuned to detect and prepare for potential scenarios, both positive and negative, before they materialise. This forward-looking stance allows a robust strategy to respond to changes with a premeditated game plan, rather than simply reacting in panic.

3. Agility and innovation as cornerstones

Agility and innovation must become the cornerstones of an organisation's approach to not just strategic planning, but to its very existence. This means moving beyond the comfort zone of known risks and instead, actively seeking out and engaging with environments that challenge assumptions and foster creativity.

4. Thrives in chaos

Gone are the days when strategic planning could revolve around fixing one path to success. Today, robust strategies are agile, ready to pivot at a moment's notice as waves of disruption hit the corporate shores. These strategies view chaos not as a deviation from the norm but as the norm itself. They are built to thrive within a messy, fragile, unpredictable, and volatile environment.

5. Imagination as a strategic construct

In a world where the future is shaped by unprecedented innovations, the ability to envisage alternate realities is key. By engaging in mindful future casting and the simulation of various states, organisations can pre-emptively design strategies that are elastic enough to stretch across multiple potential outcomes. This should not be mistaken for naïve optimism. Instead, it is an approach that combines an urgent recognition of the challenges lying ahead with a fundamental optimism about the capacity for change and innovation. Robust organisations do not merely weather the storm; they recognise the storm's potential to seed growth and transformation.

6. Ambitious in intent

A robust strategy is audacious in its scope. It shuns mediocrity and embraces ambitious objectives that galvanise organizations, providing direction and motivation. This intent sets the tone for relentless pursuit, which becomes key to navigating a complex and rapidly evolving world.

7. Paradoxical by design

Strategic robustness is neither a rigid blueprint nor a 'let's hope for the best' approach in the face of the unknown. It is the art of being both elastic and decisive, of recognising that strategic choices must sometimes be as paradoxical as the conditions they seek to address. This paradox of elusiveness, where decisions are made in the absence of perfect information, yet are informed by a breadth of possible futures, is at the core of the robust strategic approach. By integrating seemingly opposing forces into a strategic framework, organisations can create unique value propositions that traditional, one-sided strategies might overlook.

8. Astute decisiveness

Amidst a myriad of choices, a robust strategy is defined by its clarity in direction. It makes decisions with decisive and measured action, avoiding the pitfalls of hesitation and compromise. Its focused path guides resource allocation and ensures that energy is concentrated where it can yield the greatest return.

9. Nimble in form

A robust strategy is agile and adaptable, often taking shape in the form of living documents that are constantly revised and updated. It acknowledges the fluidity of the world and ensures that the strategy stays relevant and effective. A nimble strategy empowers an organisation to promptly respond to unexpected changes in market dynamics, emerging technological trends, and shifts in consumer preferences.

10. Purposeful by default

Lastly, a robust strategy operates within a framework where purpose is not just a mission statement but the DNA of the organisation. It transcends profit motives to include a broader spectrum of stakeholders. Such a strategy aligns the short-term actions with a well-articulated vision, sustaining organisational values through all activities.

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Researchers at QUT's Centre for Future Enterprise (CFE) conduct highly theoretical and conceptual research on organisational robustness, while at the same time focusing on operationalising it and developing robust business strategies. We help organisations just like yours design strategies that address weaknesses in traditional strategy.

- ✓ **Optimised outcomes:** Tailor your vision of success, whether that's profit maximisation, accelerated growth, or a blend of objectives. Our team can help you define and achieve your most critical goals.
- ✓ **In-depth information access:** Harness the power of high-quality, actionable insights. We provide access to comprehensive information, empowering you to make decisions with confidence.
- ✓ **Clear stakeholder mapping:** Easily identify and engage with key players that influence your business environment. Understanding each stakeholder's impact is crucial for a cohesive and robust strategy.
- ✓ **Strategic alternatives exploration:** Go beyond conventional choices. Our tools offer an array of strategic alternatives like nuanced price discrimination tactics and innovative product differentiation strategies.
- ✓ **Stability amidst change:** Equip your organisation to excel when variables shift, ensuring long-term viability.
- ✓ **Anticipate environmental shocks:** We work with you to ensure environmental shocks are not just anticipated; they are woven into the fabric of your strategic plan for seamless risk management.
- ✓ **Trade-off analysis:** Assess your options with a sophisticated trade-off analysis. Our team will assist you in weighing alternatives against your business imperatives to arrive at informed, strategic decisions.

Contact us to find out more about developing a robust strategy for your organisation.

Our site also offers more research and practical resources to help you build a robust strategy.



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CFE research focuses on four themes and the nexus between these: the trusted enterprise; the paradoxical enterprise; the algorithmic enterprise and; the robust enterprise.

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