Business Agility Tastes Like Chocolate?
Business Agility (BA) Defined

Responding effectively in a continually emerging ecosystem: a form of fitness
Ecosystem Intelligence™ drives Business Agility

A new leading indicator: how Rich and Sweet are your exchanges?
How BA tastes like [sex and] chocolate

A delicious intersection of Social Neuroscience, Business Anthropology, and Ecosystem thinking
Ecosystems are continually emerging

How Wolves Change Rivers
As ecosystems change, exchanges change

Agility is social/biological: fundamentally interactive

The formidable Colombian lesserblack tarantula could easily eat an animal as small as the dotted humming frog, but it doesn’t....

The spider and frog have been observed sharing burrows created by the spider.

The two species share a mutually beneficial arrangement. Many other predators that might otherwise dine on the dotted humming frog wouldn’t dare enter the burrow of a large hunting spider to do so.

The frogs can also feast on small invertebrates attracted to the remains of the spider's kills.

So, how do these amphibian room-mates pay their rent? The humming frogs eat ants, including those that might otherwise eat the Colombian lesserblack's eggs.
The exchanges in your Business Ecosystem will morph and re-morph

What’s required to lead the change? to respond effectively?
The primary apparatus of BA was developed in the Stone Age.
Our brains evolved to keep us focused on interacting with others. (Maslow had it upside down.)
Social Animals co-regulate

Long before humans’ Stone Age, mammalian neurophysiology provided advantage for 65 million years.
While commerce, society and the brain were co-evolving...

Maybe 250,000 – 500,000 generations...

People lived and worked in small groups

They knew each other all their lives

They knew their ecosystem and everyone’s role in keeping the group vital

They saw little social or technological change during their lifetimes
Neural networks are largely established before puberty

We are extremely vulnerable to social insecurity
A business is a network of exchanges: nothing more nor less. Exchanges are where/how value is created, delivered and assessed.
Exchanges are based in vulnerability.
Our brains are organized to rely on exchanges; we are exquisitely attuned.
SweetSpot Exchanges taste like sex and chocolate

The ecstasy of knowing that you’re contributing your best
and your people benefit

Great for business too:

- Often distinctive
- Highly valued; profitable
- Rejuvenating for both parties

Moving your business in an advantageous direction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAST COMPANY  09.07.18  5:00 AM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORLD CHANGING IDEAS</strong></td>
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<td>This startup is trying to beam cheap internet into low-income communities. Starry, a new service provider that uses innovative antenna technology to deliver internet, hopes to bridge the digital divide for people in public housing.</td>
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<td>For people living in public housing, finding a good, accessible Wi-Fi signal can often be a struggle. Now that a good internet connection is vital for so many facets of life—from school to job searching to communication—this deficit is both a significant indicator and driver of socioeconomic disparity.</td>
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Exclusion – or the threat of exclusion – is almost intolerable

We humans are handicapped by social insecurity

The pain of a broken heart is like a broken leg.

Mentoring tastes like sex and chocolate.

Matthew Lieberman and Naomi Eisenberger, UCLA Social Cognitive Neuroscience Labs
“There is much suffering in the world… from hunger, from homelessness, from all kinds of diseases. But the greatest suffering is being lonely, feeling unloved, having no one. I have come more and more to realize that it is being unwanted that is the worst disease that any human being can ever experience.”

-Mother Theresa
How does all this work in modern business?

Social Neuroscience, Business Anthropology, and Ecosystem thinking...
Your percent of Rich Exchanges is an early indicator of BA condition

Invite value partners to participate
Are people in better shape exchanging with you?

Grey Brothers Dashboard  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rich Exchanges 18%</th>
<th>Sweet Spot Exchanges 67% of Rich Exchanges</th>
<th>HoHum Exchanges 69%</th>
<th>Painful Exchanges 13%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>20% Employees</td>
<td>Customer Techies</td>
<td>Customer tech managers</td>
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<td>Customer CFO’s</td>
<td>100% Customer CFOs</td>
<td>Bankers</td>
<td>San Francisco gov’t agencies</td>
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<td>Partners</td>
<td>50% Partners</td>
<td>Social networks</td>
<td>X and y software suppliers</td>
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<td>Marketing consultant</td>
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<td>Subcontractors/outsource orgs</td>
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Workout 6/13/15
Do people with ‘foreign’ points of view feel welcome and understood around you?

Simple test: do you look forward to interacting again?
Do you tune in, with pleasure?

Do EcoPartners™ seek the experience of exchanging/being with you?
Welcoming a constantly emerging ecosystem?
Generate the experience of belonging

Inside your enterprise and around your ecosystem

Create inclusion with play

Create inclusion with sincere questions
A culture of inquiry fosters Agility

Bring shared vulnerability into your conversations

Develop practices to optimize resilience

- Promote inclusion
- Neutralize status
- Provoke curiosity
- Encourage neuroplasticity
Agility begs us beyond the limits of our tribally-birthed brains. We can train our executive function and work mindfully with the social brain.

EI packs big rewards

- **Profitability**
- **Loyalty**
- **Information**
- **Resilience**

**Culture of inquiry**
- EcoMapping
- Celebrating ‘failure’ and new questions

**Physical vitality**
- Rest and Recreation
- Celebrating new forms of movement and play

**Skills**
- Social/Somatic Awareness
- Conversational Intelligence®

**Sustainability**

Celebrating new forms of movement and play
Will you be ready, willing and able to respond?

✓ Will they trust you to care what’s happening with them?

✓ Will you be in shape to welcome new input?

✓ Will you attract well-informed thinking partners exploring new opportunities?

✓ Can you let go of your current ‘reality’? Your current role?
Don’t forget that business is biological

Ecosystems operate in shared vulnerability

- Our brains/bodies evolved to thrive in a stable social ecosystem.
- Ensure the experience of belonging: minimize social insecurity.
- Celebrate resting. Allow people to work smart; provide clear specs and timelines, and enable them to devise their own workflows.
- Steadily increase your percentages of Rich and SweetSpot Exchanges.
How will you sustain curiosity?
With gratitude for the teachers and researchers who illuminated the path

Marsha Shenk is a veteran consultant, a pioneer of Business Anthropology. Her syntheses of the cultural, biological, and historical influences that impact modern commerce have empowered business leaders for 4 decades.

www.BestWork.biz
@MarshaShenk
Curious? You might enjoy

A few accessible books about brain function

Social, Matt Lieberman

How Emotions are Made, Lisa Feldman Barrett

Brain Rules, John Medina

Stealing Fire, Jamie Wheal and Steven Kotler

Conversational Intelligence, Judith E. Glaser