video1957599828

**Mike:** Hey, welcome everybody to another episode of the One Advantage podcast. I am excited about the topic we have today and our special guest we're gonna be talking about, take the leap into Agile leadership with a special guest of Mark Redgrave. Mark, welcome to the podcast.

**Mark:** Morning, Mike. Thanks for having me. Great to be on The One Advantage this morning.

**Mike:** Yeah. Beautiful. Thank you so much for being here and happy New Year to everybody again. We said that in our last episode. Happy New Year to you, mark. Let's make it a great one, everybody, not least of all, by taking the leap into Agile leadership in our ever changing business world, we keep hearing how we should be agile.

What is Agile leadership and how do we get started? With our special guest, mark Redgrave today, he is an expert in business agility and a senior advisor at McKinsey and Company. And we're gonna take a deep dive into organizational team and leadership agility. And let me tell you, everybody, mark knows his stuff.

Just listen to this.

He specializes in team transformation ways of working and high performing teams as a former Chief Transformation Officer for three, not one, not two, but three separate billion dollar companies and an advisor to companies all over the world. Mark is an expert in business agility. He reveals the shifts in mindset, clarity and empowerment required to make a step change, breakthrough in team engagement and productivity. He has used business agility to transform the effectiveness of more than 350 teams over the past six years, and as we said, is currently a senior advisor for McKinsey and Co and Company. Welcome again, mark Redgrave.

**Mark:** Thanks. Yeah, that's quite an intro. Let's see if we, let's see if we can make some sense for the next couple of minutes.

**Mike:** You have been a busy guy over the last five to 10 years. Oh my gosh. And not least of all, all over the world. Mark, so just color in a little bit, what have you been up to over the last five or 10 years?

**Mark:** I guess so look I'm I've been focusing on transformation and ways of working and the concepts of business agility for the last eight years. Really? Yeah. Before that, my previous career advertising guy in London, I. Started a software business in the first.com boom. By the way, we're in another boom right now.

It's called an AI boom. It looks exactly the same to me. It's an absolute land grab. But I started a software company in the two thousands, moved to San Francisco nearly sold it and became Rich and the richest person you've ever met, but didn't sell it. Oh. And actually then moved to New Zealand.

So my transformation journey. For the last eight years has been primarily in Australia and New Zealand, actually, and I landed in Orange County in the beginning of last year. So a new implant to the us, not my first time in the us but yeah, it's been a, I seem to love to travel around the world and make life hard.

Make life hard for myself, Mike. That seems to be a so

**Mike:** Indeed everybody. So Mark is a globe trotter and yes, that is a strange accent that you hear. Where are you from originally? Mark?

**Mark:** Yeah, British originally confused. Now I've got two, eight, I've got an 18 and 16-year-old kids. They're very confused too.

**Mike:** You've got two Englishmen on the call here today, everybody. It's your lucky day. Jason and Leo are not with us this time around. They're off doing their thing. So I took the opportunity of inviting Mark to join us because he and I are gradually evolving ways of working together.

And we're getting involved in a few things and we're gonna progress through our topic today. Everybody take the leap into Agile leadership and we're gonna give you a bespoke link where you can go and get some some more resources. So if you've my website, Mike Richardson live. My website, Mike Richardson, live slash take the leap, all one word slash take the leap.

You'll find some resources waiting for you. So Mark, if we may, let's start with the first question I'd love to ask you. And that's why question? What, why do you sense that true agility, and I'm underlining the word true? Remains very elusive for most companies, almost more than it ever has been.

We've been hearing the word agile and business agility and enterprise agility for over 20 years now, and we're surrounded by resources and experts and all this. Why is it that it remains so elusive for most companies still? Would you think

**Mark:** I think it's a great question. I. If you wanted, you want a one word answer to that, Mike?

I think the one word answer is mindset. So because the mindset required to understand what's going on, to take a fresh look at. What's happening in the world and your company and the mindset to, to take a growth mindset, to understanding how you need to change. That's really hard.

So if you, if I wanted to, if you had to give one word, I'd say mindset is the thing that is. Hardest for people, but I've gotta say, when you say oh, we've been doing this for 20 years, this is still quite young. It's, isn't it? So when I think about when I think about business agility, I go back to where Spotify took the Agile manifesto from 2001 and started to apply those principles to business.

That was 2012. Yeah. That is 20 years ago. But like in the grand scheme of things. That's not long. So I feel like I, I've out of great privilege in the last few years of working with some brilliant companies, right? All over the world that are doing it and are showing like the value and the impact that it can have.

So I sit here with a perspective that says, yeah, long way to go. But but in what is quite a young. A young methodology and framework, like some amazing things have been achieved.

**Mike:** It's still relatively speaking a. Paradigm as it were. And yes, the software industry's been doing it for 20 years or more.

And startups have been using various approaches for that period or more. And now more and more bigger corporations. And we'd love to hear more about your experiences of being a chief transformation officer, stepping up to it. But now Mark, you and I are focused on the mid-market zone aren't we of small to medium sized enterprises, where still it's a relatively young, immature, confusing, confounding. Paradoxical kind of paradigm isn't it, of what is this agility thing? How do I do it? And most importantly, how do I lead it? If I may, take us back through some of the transformations that you've done and tell us a little bit more and what did you learn, along the way, which I'm sure is huge.

Tell us a bit more.

**Mark:** Yeah. And it's really interesting because when you talk about the mid-market, I think that what really interests me is individually and the conversations we've been having Yeah. Is like what we are learning from some of the most forward thinking companies on the planet. The Spotifys of this world. Yeah. That, that, thir 12, 13 years ago jumped into something. We've learned so much and I what, like what? What I'm personally really invested in now is to take those learnings and scale 'em down. Because the awesome thing is you don't need to be a billion dollar company and you don't need to have multimillion dollar consultants in the door, okay.

To actually adopt and benefit from the principles we've learned. So I think that's really that's what drives me personally. Yeah. I'm lucky that I get to sit in boardrooms with big companies and, in beautiful offices. In beautiful cities. But it's I'm really I'm really well aware as of you, Mike, that it's the mid-market that I think stands to benefit hugely.

Yeah. So that's exciting. But to answer your question, like I've. The transformations I've been tra chief Transformation Officer for, have been across three sectors, three industries. That's interesting. The first I did was Telco. Yep. And they're always good transformation candidates, right?

Because they're legacy businesses. Most have been around for a hundred, 150 years. They've still granny's, still got a landline. And it's and granny doesn't want the landline anymore. So these telcos are going, oh goodness me, we've got like hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue just disappearing every year.

How are we gonna change what we do and how we do it to make up for that loss? So I did telco, I then did banking, and then my, my, the third of my three was retail. And why I think that's given me a very privileged kind of perspective is different industries, but common. Problems to solve. Yeah.

So yes, they're different, but you know what, they're not that different because when you think about companies are full of people, I. People are humans. Humans need things, okay. To be able to do their best work. And actually, when you think about the principles that you and I really embrace, it's about how do you create the conditions in a company for your people to feel inspired, engaged, and to do great work.

Yeah. If you, and that's about leadership. It's about lots of different things, but like when we talk about transformation, billion dollar transformations of multi-billion dollar companies, it's the same. It's just you're doing it to 30,000 people, not a hundred people. I.

**Mike:** Yeah, it's just more zeros, right?

It's zeros

**Mark:** zeros,

But the principles are the same and that's why I think this is such an interesting conversation.

**Mike:** Yeah. And just tell us a little bit more, mark. So whether it's lots of zeros with big corporations like you've been talking about, or fewer zeros with mid-market companies, small to medium sized enterprises, what's the outcome?

Going agile. In other words, perhaps even, can you, from your insights that you've accumulated, describe what is agile? What does it mean? It means the ability to adapt the workflow, the engagement, the inspiration that you were just talking about, but just double click on that a little bit more.

What does it mean to be agile?

**Mark:** Yeah. So the key thing for me here is, in a constantly changing business environment, and the reality is it doesn't matter how big your company is in and what business it's in, right? Stuff is changing all the time and it's only gonna get quicker. If that's the reality of the business environment.

Your company and your people, and your teams have to be adaptable, right? They have to be able to embrace change and to. Perform and grow. Whatever you wanna do with your business, like your people, your teams, your leaders have to be able to do that. And we know now, Mike, having done this for the past 10 or 15 years, that there are certain things about the way companies plan and execute and deliver work.

Okay. That need to be true for these teams to be adaptable. Yeah. Okay. And it's so if you say what's agility about? What's business agility? It's about creating teams that can respond to change and can be successful. By really and for me it's all said a second ago. It's all about people.

Like how do you like unlock the true potential of the people in your organization? And I'm working with. Companies today that are 25 people. Yeah, exactly. And I was on a, I was on a call this morning with a company and we got 15,000 people that we need to try and change. Exactly right.

It's it's the same stuff.

**Mike:** So it doesn't matter everybody, whether you've got lots of zeroes or fewer zeroes and that, that's just why I was so looking forward to having this conversation with Mark today and comparing notes because he is really touching on. The nerves. And so the ability, agility is the ability to adapt everybody and to pivot, and pivot some more to not only respond to change, but proactive change.

In other words, everybody, it's about out innovating your competition and the future. And by the way, the future is only gonna move faster and faster. With more disruptive change. And so if you think that you've got, five years, three years, a year and a half you are likely to be unpleasantly surprised that things are moving faster than that.

And, it's a myth. Everybody we're talking about mindset, it starts with mindset. Everybody, it's a myth. Small to medium sized businesses are naturally agile. They are categorically not. They are typically frenetic hair on pop fire seat of the pants that is not agile. Lots of people think it is.

But it actually isn't. That's disorganized chaos. And we know that life is gonna be chaotic 'cause it's moving so fast these days. How could it not be chaotic? But there's a world of difference markers. They're not between disorganized chaos and organized chaos. The flow of organized chaos, everybody is agile.

It's adaptive, it's innovative. You just can't hang out in disorganized chaos. Can you mark? 'cause that just categorically is not agile.

**Mark:** And I think that's such an important point, right? Like you can't I know 20 person teams that are disorganized shit show, right? Can I say that? It's

**Mike:** oh we'll bleep that bit out, but that's okay.

And

**Mark:** I've met teams of 5,000 that are like. Organizations that are incredible. So it's got nothing to do with size. It is a byproduct of of other things that need to be true, right? So that you can, as you say, you can do things like grow because growth doesn't come from, like it's not just about ambition.

It's if you wanna grow, you've gotta actually do things to to create the conditions in which your company can move forward. Yeah. Hope is not a strategy. Right?

**Mike:** Yeah. And as you've said, you everybody to be able to grow. You've gotta keep up with that growth curve. If not, get ahead of that growth curve with your systems, with your processes, with your platforms, with your leadership, with your culture, and the overall architecture of your business so that you don't outgrow your architecture and you don't start, experiencing those growing pains which start to degrade and decay into disorganized chaos again, which will cause the growth curve to flatline or at least become unprofitable. And all of a sudden you've got a cashflow problem.

**Mark:** But that's I just, you just triggered something in my mind.

Michael, I was chatting to somebody the other day and it's like they are growing okay, but like they're adding so much headcount to grow, right? So what's happening to margin's gone. Their margin has halved and they're going, the answer to growth cannot be hire more people. And this isn't a comment, by the way, about employment, and that's not the point.

The point is like you have to be a well-oiled machine to grow profitably. Yeah.

**Mike:** So let's just double click on that a little bit more. Mark. So let's. So what is the widening gap between the contrast? I like to put, I like to put people in two buckets. The agile and the fragile. The victors and the victims the best and the rest the worst, and the first, right?

What's this? What are you sensing Is this is driving this widening gap between those who can be agile and those who can't? What's your experience of that?

**Mark:** I don't think. You'll meet many leaders or business owners that would disagree with any of the logic, Mike. I just, because it's like the logic's kind of irrefutable.

Yes. Now so then you have to say, so what stops people doing something? And I think that's actually like one of the most interesting barriers that, that is in this space now. I'd say the beauty of business agility is that the principles are easily deployed.

And you don't have to, 'cause the other thing come my mind's racing here, but the other thing is the concept of transformation for a lot of people is very scary. Like I you talk to some business owners and you say, oh, what are you doing to transform your company? And the first thing they do is quite often is they go into full defense mode.

My company's fine. I don't need to transform. I'm like this. And then in the back of their mind, they're going, this is very scary. Because I can I'm trying to, I'm trying to figure out how to make payroll. Like transforming isn't really a priority. I. So when you combine those two things together, it feels quite quite big and scary.

But I guess the opportunity is to, is for people to understand that there are things you can do, right? Like at small scale, medium scale, or large scale. Thank you. That really start to unlock like the concepts of agility within any business. Yeah. And it doesn't take three years and it doesn't cost 50 million bucks.

**Mike:** Everybody mark and I we talk about what we call t-shaped transformation journeys, and there's the top of the t the horizontal bit, which is the top down part and absolutely a transformation journey needs to have a top down element where the c-suite understands that it needs to be shifting gears and to start showing up in more agile ways.

And then the vertical of the. Is drilling deeply into, what are the most mission critical processes in the business, product development, production, factory floor, customer service, those kinds of things where we can start bottom up and start unlocking. Workflow, productivity, inspiration, engagement, empowerment, and really start to see the ability of the business and the team to shift into a next gear of traction on a tra, on a trajectory of growth and profitability.

And then gradually over time, the top down and the bottom up. Start to meet in the middle and merge together and blend and so everybody, yeah think about this. Not as, we're not gonna try to boil the ocean all of a sudden and go through this massive, transformation journey to agile.

Mark and I talk about being agile. With agile, which means start simple, start small. And then get the snowball effect rolling from there, which then becomes more of a self-fulfilling self-funding. Journey because you start to experience the early wins, the benefits the productivity starts to flow.

The cash starts to flow, and you can reinvest, reinvest, and then bite off the bigger things. Yeah. What would you add into all the mix of all of that Mark, about how to get rolling? No,

**Mark:** I, I, yeah, I agree. I think like they really shouldn't be. Any reason for companies to think about the way they work to fulfill their growth agenda?

Like I, I get, I used to be CMO at a telco as well, right? And like we used to have a saying, it's if we've got a $10 million EBITDA gap, right? We used to say, I can't sell myself to that. If you think you can sell your way to growth all the time, it's just not possible.

I'm looking at the business environment, right? I'm looking at the, like the global economic un uncertainty and I'm saying, oh, I think top line's hard, gonna be hard. Like it's not gonna be easy for a couple years. So I think the call to action for business owners and business leaders is to think about like, how do you just get that growth from from liberating.

Your organization and I just wanna connect some dots here, right? Yeah. Because this is a conversation I had yesterday, and I think it, it might help bring something to life when, so we've all heard the last couple of years about talent shortages and how hard it is to get people to stay to to attract and retain talent, right?

And then people, then we had this whole back to work mandate thing. CEOs like, I need everyone back in the office. And you go, okay. This is business agility. So just think about this for a second. The issue with bringing everyone back into the office for some of these larger companies is that the reason they enjoyed being at home was because being in the office sucked.

And unlike a lot of the things that they experienced in the office in terms of the way they work. Really wasn't very fun. And if I can do 80% of the job at home, like that's better for me. 'cause I don't have to deal with all other stuff. And the fix for that is to think about when people are in the office and are working as teams, how do they feel inspired?

How do you get them to feel to, to be more accountable for work? How do you get them to collaborate better? That's business agility. So if you think we're talking like a different language, we are not

**Mike:** academically, theoretically

**Mark:** we're not.

**Mike:** No. This is a very practical practice.

**Mark:** Same thing.

**Mike:** Yes. How do you get, how do you get, how do you take the leap everybody? How do you get the ball rolling? And then how do you get that sort of snowball effect to kick in where you can really spiral up? That's how transformations occur is when you were operating at one level and. And all of a sudden, through the snowball effect, you've spiraled up to a whole different level, which is now the new normal.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Mike:** And the new foundation on which you can stand and then you can do it again and again. And I think you've segued us beautifully. Mark to the last question that I wanted to ask, and that's about, we've covered the why so far. We've covered the what and now we're gonna cover the who, everybody.

And the question here, mark, is who can our listeners be as leaders? In taking the first step into their future workplace culture to bridge this gap this widening gap. Of agility and agility, everybody to a large degree is your ability to futureproof yourself so that you are somewhat immune from whatever happens in the future with artificial intelligence and this, that and the other.

Mark, there is this sort of courageous leap of faith as they're not onto this trajectory, the snowball effect of an agile transformation. Who do our lead, our listeners need to be as leaders. To get that journey started.

**Mark:** Yeah, so look, I think change is always quite. Requires courage, right?

And to be honest, I have a huge amount of admiration for senior leaders that that, that are pioneers, right? Because it takes it takes real courage and you gotta put yourself out there. So that said, though, like I would say if you are a leader and executive and owner in any business today think about where you have pain.

And because there will be aspects of agility that can directly address your pain. I've just given you an example of that, talent. Okay. For last year, all I heard was HR as company owners and HR executives saying this whole talent thing is still a nightmare. I can't keep people, I can't find people.

I'm, like this was becoming just about pay and it can't be just about pay. It's if that's a pain for you. Think about how some of the principles that we've been discussing today, we've just touched on them, but think about how those can help you with that problem. 'cause this is about solving business problems, right?

Solving problems for your customer, solving problems for you and your company. So I would always say, Mike talk to me about how is, yeah what's painful, what's hard?

**Mike:** Has business and what's, where are you going? Where are things going? Were they not going so well? Yeah. Are you in traction?

Where are you spinning your wheels? Where are you losing sleep?

**Mark:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Mike:** Beautifully said Ev, everybody, and of course, mark, as we know, the reality in small to medium sized businesses in particular is that there's quite a list of those things, right? Typically speaking. Our product development isn't going as fast as I hoped it would.

That market entry into that new geography isn't going as well as we wanted. The new software system we're trying to roll out and we're trying to do CRM and we're trying to do leadership development and training, and it's my gosh, I'm taking on so much. And that exactly everybody is what Agile is about.

Agile is about building the capacity and the capability to, to be in the flow. Of multiple streams of change, multiple levels of change, multiple angles of change, all at the same time. Because the reality of the future, everybody is that's only gonna get worse. It's not gonna get better. You will have to be changing at a higher speed on more fronts simultaneously than ever before.

And so this problem is only going to get worse.

**Mark:** And mike. The superpower of prioritization overlaid on that is the trick, right? Yeah. So it's so it's yep, you, if you own a business, you're gonna have 25 things that you that are urgent, right? But it's like, what are the three, the two, the one thing that you can fix this next quarter, right?

You have to that creates material value for you. I guarantee you that business agility will unlock that Exactly like literally.

**Mike:** Exactly and Mark knows that, one of my favorite words, everybody is in the agile space, is triage. Exactly. You've got a long list of things to, to work on.

What's the short list of things you're gonna super triage and unlock and as we've been talking about, get the snowball effect to kick in from there. And it was interesting, mark, I was having a great conversation with a very successful business leader. The other day that's built a very successful business and he was telling me, he says, actually things are going pretty well.

We're growing very fast, things are going pretty well. The team seems to be working pretty well. I'm not sure that I have any fires to fight, he said, and I'm worried about what fires I might have to fight. In the near future that I haven't even thought of yet that haven't even presented themselves to me yet, and that's really what we mean by being future-proofed everybody.

Yeah, it's anticipating what might be coming next. It's doing the scenario thinking. About what if this happens and what if that happens and what if the other happens? It's that idea of luck is where preparation meets opportunity. And the problem everybody is that so many businesses are unprepared.

Luck is where preparation meets opportunity. Yeah. Bad luck is where a lack of preparation meets, opportunities to stumble and fumble and to falter. And so it's all about being ever prepared, everybody for what's coming next. And that's what Agile is. And again, if you're looking for a few extra little resources and inspirations, then go check out the the bespoke link for this episode.

Everybody go to my website, Mike Richardson, do live. Mike Richardson live. L-A-V-I-R-L-I-V-E. Mike Richardson live slash Take the leap, all one word slash take the leap mark, what final thoughts would you have for our listeners who want to take the leap to be more agile and future-proof themselves more?

What final thoughts do you have?

**Mark:** Oh, look, I, for me, it's just breaking this mythical barrier that, that this is too hard. Yeah, it's not too hard. And, your example of the business leader's got a great business, right? Like when we speak to leaders with great companies, right?

They're there, they're already there. 'cause they're going, how do I get better? So whether you're at the top of your game, it's like, how do you get better? Whether you like, whether you need to stay or whether you need to stay at the top or need to get ahead, or whether you've actually got a business where you feel there's a lot of opportunity, there's a lot of growth there.

If you can just unlock it. My encouragement would be like, don't be scared of this stuff. It's just people, it's just understanding how people work, how they, how leadership. Is most effective and how you can actually organize the way of working to liberate all of the potent, all of the potential in your company.

So don't. This is not something to worry about. This is something to say lean into it, understand what it can do for you, because as we said at the start we've seen companies create massive amounts of value using some of these principles. So it's exciting though, right? I feel like I'm in, I feel like we work in a great area.

In a very exciting time, because guess what, like change is gonna get faster. Like we've got a whole generation of people, right? We got these Gen Z guys coming into the workforce. They don't look like Gen Xers, right? They need stuff, they need constant growth. They need dynamic working environments.

They, so if you think your team looks pretty good today, the guys that, that you're gonna wanna hire tomorrow. They don't look or feel like that. So it's really exciting. Really exciting time

**Mike:** Indeed everybody. So Mark and I are working more and more together. On these t-shaped transformation journeys, top down and bottom up simultaneously being agile.

With agile, start small, finish big, get the snowball effect rolling. Come on over to that link. Mike Richardson live slash take the leap. Nothing to fear here, only guidance and support an opportunity. To take those first few steps, take the lead to a more agile future, indeed being more future proofed.

Everybody. There we are. Another episode of The One Advantage podcast. We look forward to having you with us next time. A huge thank you once again to Mark Greg Grave, thank you so much for being with you. We will see and hear you next time everybody.