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*Author of **Leading Change** and **A Sense of Urgency***

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BUILDING STRATEGIC AGILITY FOR
A FASTER-MOVING WORLD

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PREFACE

We are crossing a line into a territory with unpredictable turmoil and exponentially growing change—change for which we are not prepared. Here I describe what some pioneers have successfully done to win, and win big, in this emerging environment.

Accelerate is about how to handle strategic challenges fast enough, with agility and creativity, to take advantage of windows of opportunity which open and shut more quickly today. It shows how people in some leading, innovative organizations move ahead of fierce competition, deal with unprecedented turmoil, and cope with the constant threat of technological discontinuities—all without sacrificing short-term results or wearing out their workforces.

My conclusions as presented here are fundamental. The world is now changing at a rate at which the basic systems, structures, and cultures built over the past century cannot keep up with the demands being placed on them. Incremental adjustments to how you manage and strategize, no matter how clever, are not up to the job. You need something very new to stay ahead in an age of tumultuous change and growing uncertainties.

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The solution is not to trash what we know and start over but instead to reintroduce, in an organic way, a second system—one which would be familiar to most successful entrepreneurs. The new system adds needed agility and speed while the old one, which keeps running, provides reliability and efficiency. The two together—a dual system—are actually very similar to what all mature organizations had at one point in their life cycles, yet did not sustain (and have long since forgotten). There is a practical way to create this dual operating system, and it can be done very inexpensively. Results come quickly. I have seen people do it. It works.

The origins of this project build on previous research I have done on large-scale change: work funded by the Harvard Business School, where I have been teaching for many decades. A report on that research was first published in my book *Leading Change* (1996) and extended with follow-up reports in *The Heart of Change* (2002), *Our Iceberg Is Melting* (2006), *A Sense of Urgency* (2008), and *Buy-in* (2010). That work, in turn, was built on my early examinations of leadership, which go all the way back to 1974, with perhaps the most important report on that subject published in 1990 as *A Force for Change: How Leadership Is Different from Management*. I am sometimes amazed at how robust the conclusions from these studies remain today—how they still speak