Attitudes to transformation C-suite personalities

orgvue conducted research in September 2024 to explore senior executives' attitudes to change and risk in relation to organizational transformation. Our research identified **six personalities** among C-suite leaders with differing views on workforce transformation and organizational change.

From the change–sensitive to the change–agnostic, these personality types are quite revealing. Here's what we found…

ℹ Click on a personality type or job role to read more

Transformation Adverse — COO Stability Promoter — CEO Conservative Guardian — CFO CHRO Pragmatic Optimist — CEO Agile Trailblazer — CTO Innovation Catalyst — **Transformation Leader**

Adverse ←→ Leader

COO Stability Promoter

COOs recognize the organizational impact of transformation, but are apprehensive in taking action. They favor stability over reactionary business decisions. As the stabilizing force, they're slow to adapt to change and remain wary of taking steps that may unsettle the organizational status-quo. In doing so, they prioritize long-term planning and are the least willing to provide their teams with the autonomy to make ongoing transformation decisions.

Risk Appetite — Low ——●———— High
Change Appetite — Low ——●———— High

Key stats:
- COOs are the least willing (**61%**) to take ownership of transformation projects.
- **65%** would rather do performance reviews for their entire department than lead transformation projects at scale.
- They're the least willing (**66%**), by a significant margin to cut costs across the organization to address volatile market conditions.
- **17%** are unwilling to give their teams and individuals the autonomy to make risky decisions.

CEO Conservative Guardian

Conservative CEOs feel the pressure of organizational transformation and are sensitive to the reality of managing expectations towards change. They're reluctant to engage in transformation unless it's business critical. Their commitment to transformation wavers when faced with disruptive scenarios and challenges. More than any other C-suite leader, they have a greater sense of weariness towards transformation.

Risk Appetite — Low ——●———— High
Change Appetite — Low ●————— High

Key stats:
- Almost **1 in 5 (19%)** of Conservative CEOs are unwilling to dismantle traditional management tiers to optimize workforce efficiencies and **half (50%)** are ambivalent towards organizational change.
- **32%** are neither willing nor unwilling to lead the integration of emerging technologies into their organization's infrastructure and **1 in 10** are not willing at all.
- **1 in 10** don't want to be the figurehead that drives business transformation.
- **38%** are more likely to quit than lead a large–scale workforce transformation; this is 10% more than all other C-suite leaders.

CFO Pragmatic Optimist

CFOs look to balance practical business needs with innovative technology, delivering solutions to maintain organizational stability. As Pragmatic Optimists, CFOs recognize the benefits of long-term transformation, but will forego ambitious requirements to address market shifts. Their interest goes beyond practice discipline when customer demands and competitive positioning are at stake.

Risk Appetite — Low ———●——— High
Change Appetite — Low ———●——— High

Key stats:
- **79%** of CFOs are willing to make a short-term financial and operational loss if it brings long-term stability and agility.
- **60%** are willing to lead the integration of emerging technologies into their organization's infrastructure.
- **48%** ranked digital transformation in their top three initiatives. **44%** ranked AI transformation and **33%** ranked workforce transformation in their top three.
- **77%** are willing to cut costs across the organization to address volatile market conditions.
- **87%** agree that AI is making workforce transformation easier.

CHRO Pragmatic Optimist

CHROs have a vested interest in delivering organizational transformation, but remain marginally pessimistic towards the collaborative efforts of their teams. As the other Pragmatic Optimist, CHROs involve themselves in the organization's change narrative, but have a lower appetite to adopt new technologies as part of the process. Instead, they support strategically planned transformation more than rapid-response decisions.

Risk Appetite — Low ———●——— High
Change Appetite — Low ———●——— High

Key stats:
- **82%** of CHROs are willing to implement a continuous, iterative change process for their organization.
- **82%** are willing to be the figurehead for transformation with other C-suite leaders.
- **78%** are willing to make changes that address market pressures through radical transformation processes.
- **68%** are willing to give teams and individuals autonomy to make risky decisions, which is below the average among other C-suite leaders.
- **68%** are willing to make short-term financial and operational losses to bring long-term stability and agility, which is also below the C-suite average.

CEO Agile Trailblazer

Agile CEOs are comfortable delivering transformation projects, driven by a desire to lead all forms of change through individual and collective action. As the Agile Trailblazer, they're the most progressive of the C-suite and understand the importance of taking an approach to transformation that doesn't rely on "fire and rehire" tactics. Instead, they embrace change and are more accepting of innovative answers that enable them to better adapt in turbulent economic times.

Risk Appetite — Low —————●— High
Change Appetite — Low ————●—— High

Key stats:
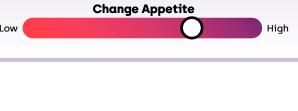- **97%** of Agile CEOs are willing to lead a major restructuring effort for their organization, compared to **29%** of all CEOs.
- **87%** are willing to give their teams the autonomy to make risky decisions, compared to only **64%** of Conservative CEOs.
- **97%** are willing to address market pressures through radical transformation processes, compared to only **70%** of Conservative CEOs.
- Only **24%** of all CEOs are very willing to be figureheads that drive transformation with the wider C-suite.
- **26%** of all CEOs are very willing to implement a continuous, iterative change process for their organization.

CTO Innovation Catalyst

By definition, Chief Transformation Officers are ready to deliver all forms of organizational change to drive better business outcomes. As the Change Catalyst, CTOs are transformation-agnostic and are willing to deliver disruptive initiatives, make use of new technologies, and be responsible for ambitious projects. They promote strategic growth and enhance business efficiencies through their transformation actions.

Risk Appetite — Low ———●——— High
Change Appetite — Low ————●—— High

Key stats:
- **79%** of CTOs are willing to take ownership of large–scale transformation projects, even though they know the risk of failure is high.
- **84%** are willing to lead a major restructuring effort for their organization.
- **More than half (52%)** are willing to dismantle traditional hierarchies and management tiers to improve workforce efficiencies.
- **Two thirds (66%)** are willing to lead the integration of emerging technologies into their organization's infrastructure.

How Orgvue can help

Orgvue is an organizational design and planning platform that empowers businesses to transform their workforce by understanding the work people do and the skills they have.

Our platform connects strategy to structure, providing clarity of vision, so you can build a more adaptable organization that thrives in a constantly changing world.

The world's largest and best–known enterprises and consulting firms use Orgvue to visualize and model current and future states of the organization and make faster, more informed decisions.

For more information, please contact:

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