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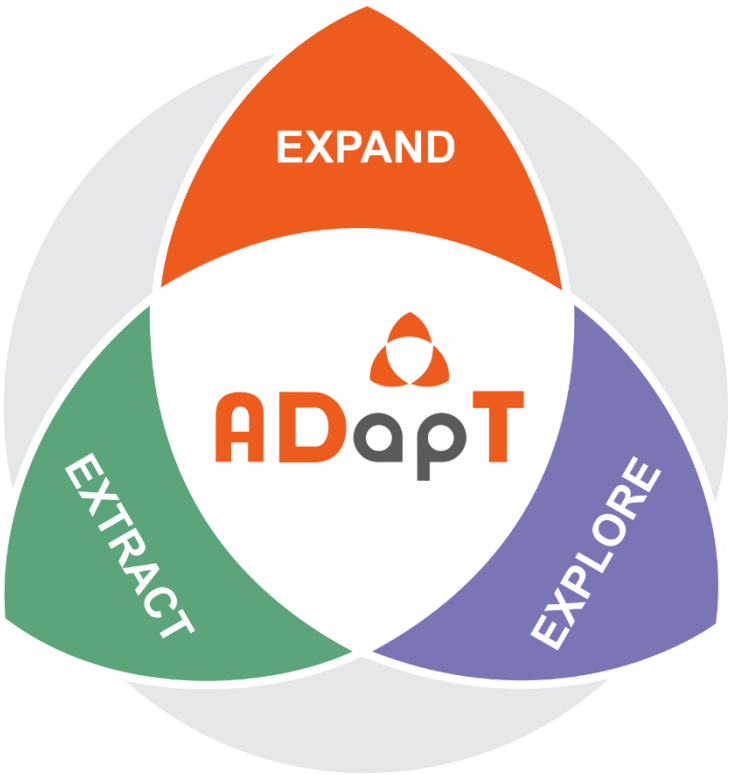


[1] The triquetra ADapT Logo, is a trademark of getITright BV

1 Introduction

Shortly after the release of Johann's books *Competing in a Digital Future* and *Out-Innovate the Competition* in 2022 & 2023, the world experienced a new wave of disruption. Advancements in artificial intelligence — and their rapid impact on how we work, think, and compete — took many by surprise. A truly transformational technology had been unleashed, and we are still only beginning to realize the scale of its implications.

The COVID-19 pandemic has already forced organizations to reassess their priorities, operating models, and core assumptions. The word "transformation" quickly became part of everyday business language, but often without a shared understanding of what it truly meant. And yet, everyone was talking about transformation, planning for it, or in the middle of doing it. Not because they fully understood the goal, but because it seemed to be what one *had* to do.

That sense of confusion and urgency was exactly what motivated us to write this book. We aim to bring clarity to the subject of digital business transformation, offering context, direction, and practical guidance. A clear and usable model that demystifies transformation in times of accelerating change can be a critical resource for anyone facing complexity, uncertainty, or inertia. Our conviction was — and remains — that **AD**ap**T**, **A**gile **D**igital **T**ransformation, provides that structure. Built on decades of experience from practitioners around the world, it is a model designed to illuminate, not complicate.

But our motivation runs deeper. We are fundamentally optimistic about human creativity, about our capacity for adaptation, and about our long history of evolving through change rather than being undone by it. So why do so many of us experience transformation as something imposed, something to fear or resist? What is this invisible force that makes us react with defensiveness instead of curiosity? And with all the activity we pour into "change," why not pause and ask whether we could approach it differently — more deliberately, more humanely?

While ADapT was initially created for professionals in large, established enterprises, we also realized how relevant it was to smaller, younger companies, especially those at risk of adopting the very patterns that legacy organizations are now struggling to undo. As we wrote this book and evolved elements of the ADapT model, we became even more committed to making our insights accessible to as many people as possible.

We believe that transformation isn't about adding complexity or change for its own sake. It's about fostering innovation, clarity of purpose, and real value for customers. That's what this book aims to support — for leaders, teams, and organizations of all shapes and sizes.

Evolving ADapT

One of the more significant evolutions in ADapT is the introduction of **Guiding Principles**. These nine principles define the mindset and behaviors necessary to lead a successful transformation in today's digital world. They serve as a compass, helping you assess progress and stay aligned with your purpose.

Throughout this book, you'll find a variety of tools, techniques, theories, and frameworks to support your journey. However, it is the Guiding Principles that provide enduring direction.

For example, if you're struggling to *"**ALIGN** Customer Value with Your Purpose to Drive Meaningful Innovation,"* it may be wise to revisit the previous principle that urges you to *"**CLARIFY** Your Purpose and Objectives to Inspire Direction and Focus."* The principles should give meaning to your actions. Even if you follow nothing else, adhering to them can keep your transformation on course.

Initially, ADapT was structured around nine "steps" grouped into three phases. While those phases remain relevant and referring to "steps" is still valuable for day-to-day discussions, we now view them more as action points that align with the Guiding Principles. Steps provide structure, but we caution against viewing them as a strict sequence. True transformation is not about following a checklist—it's about aligning every action with your purpose and principles.

While reassessing ADapT and writing this book, we were also reminded that the entire model was built on the powerful concept of First Principles Thinking (FPT). This approach encourages us to eliminate assumptions, ignore superficial noise, and begin from a clean slate—asking, *what is fundamentally true?*

GB1: First Principles Thinking: A Foundation for Real Transformation

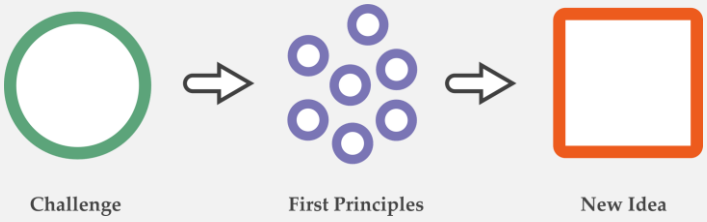


Figure 1: *FPT-From Challenge to New Ideas*

First Principles Thinking has its roots in classical philosophy, most notably in the work of **Aristotle.** It is a problem-solving and decision-making approach that involves breaking down complex problems into their most basic, fundamental elements—truths that cannot be reduced any further—and then building solutions from there.

Rather than relying on assumptions, analogies, or conventional wisdom, FPT encourages a ground-up, original way of thinking. In times of change—technological, organizational, or cultural—defaulting to "how things have always been done" is often counterproductive. FPT helps individuals and organizations challenge outdated models, cut through complexity, and identify what "really" matters. It's a method of reasoning that unlocks innovation, clarity, and better long-term decision-making.

How It Works

1. **Identify the problem**
   Clearly define what you're trying to solve, without jumping to solutions.
2. **Break it down into fundamental truths**
   Ask: What do we know for certain? What assumptions are baked in? Strip everything down to indisputable facts or core principles.
3. **Reason upward from first principles**
   Rebuild your understanding and approach based solely on those core truths, rather than relying on analogies or inherited models.

Example:

Instead of asking, "How can we improve our existing product to better compete with competitors?" FPT would ask, "What is the core value our product delivers, and what's the simplest, most effective way to deliver that, regardless of current form?"

ADapT is built upon the mindset of First Principles Thinking. Each of its steps and Guiding Principles is designed to help you challenge assumptions, clarify, and transform in a way that is *unique to your context and organization.*

ADapT embodies this mindset and doesn't just address surface-level challenges—it helps you uncover and solve the root causes behind them (see GB1 below). We would be remiss not to highlight this foundational concept, as it's what gives ADapT its depth, clarity, and long-term effectiveness.

To support your journey, we introduce First Principles Thinking early on as a companion to studying the ADapT model. Later, in Chapter 6, we revisit and deepen this concept. By then, you will have explored the complete ADapT approach, making it the ideal moment to solidify your understanding. This final step brings the model full circle, fully grounding First Principles Thinking in the context of your transformation.

What is ADapT – a framework or a model?

While ADapT incorporates many of the characteristics of a modern transformation framework—flexibility, principle-guidance, and tool agnosticism—it is best understood as a model**.** The distinction is essential.

A framework typically provides a flexible structure or lens through which to analyze. It helps you think about problems and options. A model, by contrast, is a structured, systemic representation of how something works, with interrelated components, a defined sequence, and an internal logic that can be repeated, refined, and scaled. Models are designed not just to inspire action, but to drive consistent, repeatable outcomes**.**

ADapT is a model because it is a complete system for transformation.

It defines three interconnected transformation phases—EXTRACT, EXPLORE, and EXPAND—each comprising specific, purpose-driven steps, grounded in nine Guiding Principles. These are not just thematic categories; they form a sequenced, iterative operating rhythm for continuous transformation. Each step builds on the one before it, and each principle provides the behavioral compass that ensures coherence across teams and time.

The most compelling reason ADapT is a model lies in this structured cause-and-effect relationship: It doesn't just guide how to think—it enables organizations to act, adapt, and evolve in a repeatable and purposeful way. This structure—designed through real-world practice and validated through application—makes ADapT a transformation model that organizations can operate on, not just think within.

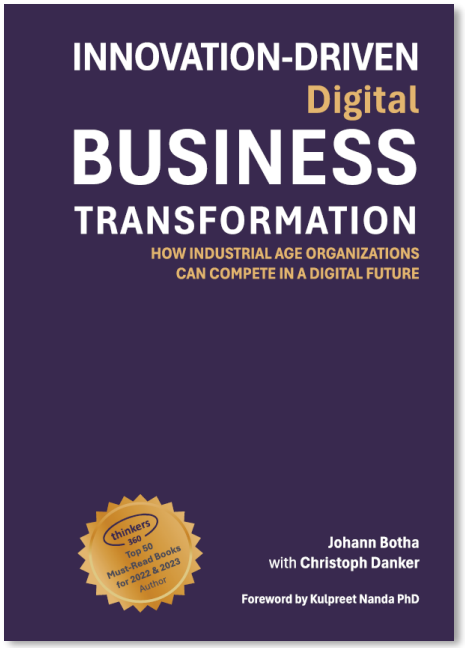
This brings us to the definition of ADapT:

ADapT is a principle-driven model for continuous business transformation.

And while the terms *agile*[2] and *digital* are part of the model's name, let's make no mistake about what ADapT actually helps you do:

Transform your business.

[2] **"Agile" with a capital "A" (noun):** Refers to a set of principles and practices originally developed for software development but now applied across various fields. It emphasizes iterative work cycles, continuous feedback, and the ability to adapt quickly to change. **"agile" with a lowercase "a" (adjective):** The ability to move quickly and flexibly; the capacity to think, understand, and respond swiftly and effectively.



Johann H. Botha, Christoph Danker

Paperback, 322 pages

Innovation Driven Business Transformation is a thought-provoking exploration of how organizations can stay relevant in a world of constant change. Rather than offering rigid frameworks or buzzword-heavy strategies, the book takes a principle-based, human-centered approach to transformation.

At its core, the book is about rethinking how we deal with complexity, innovation, and change – not as one-time projects, but as an adaptive continual cycle. It challenges traditional ways of working and encourages leaders to embrace uncertainty with curiosity, clarity, and courage.

The book calls for a shift:

- From control to co-creation
- From rigid plans to adaptive cycle
- From surface-level change to deep, cultural transformation

Innovation Driven Business Transformation is not a step-by-step manual – it's a mindset shift. It invites organizations to become more aware, more authentic, and more aligned with their purpose, people, and potential – the ADapT way.

eBook available on Amazon

Paperback Coming Soon!

This book is not just about a model - it is a call to action. It invites leaders, teams, and organizations to treat transformation as a continuous discipline. Whether you are navigating uncertainty, scaling innovation, or rethinking your role in a rapidly evolving world, it will inspire you to lead with intention, experiment boldly, innovate with empathy, and transform with courage.

Dr. Kulpreet Nanda |Global Emerging Practices Leader, Capgemini

It's brilliant - discover a common-sense approach that reimagines tried-and-tested methods, removing complexity to make innovation and transformation easy.

Dr. Suzanne Van Hove | Retired Business School Professor & Author

It cuts through all the noise and provides a straightforward, common-sense approach to strategy, technology, innovation, and transformation. It's obvious, it's simple, and their thought leadership is profoundly relevant.

David Cannon | Executive VP, nfinity3 & Best-selling Author