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Ambidextrous Organizations

Michael Tushman and Charles O'Reilly, California Management Review, 1996

How to keep winning today while getting ready for tomorrow.

The big idea

Tushman and O'Reilly argued that successful organisations often get trapped by their own success. The habits that made them winners make it harder to change. The answer is to be ambidextrous: to keep improving what you already do well while also making room to try something completely different.

The famous example

Ambidexterity means doing two very different things at the same time.

EXPLOIT	EXPLORE	AMBIDEXTERITY
Improve	**Experiment**	**Both**
Get better at what works	Try something new	At the same time

They called the trap the success syndrome: the better you get at one way of doing things, the harder it is to see when it's time to change.

Why it matters

It's the challenge facing any team at the top. Ireland can keep refining the game plan that's served them well, but they also need room to try new things before the rest of the world catches up.

Featured in

Ireland vs South Africa: Farrell, Erasmus and the Need to Evolve

Read the original

Tushman, M. L. & O'Reilly, C. A. (1996). Ambidextrous Organizations: Managing Evolutionary and Revolutionary Change. *California Management Review*, 38(4), 8–30.

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