

Is your Adaptability Quotient high enough for you to be able to open Jurassic Park?

*Dinosaurs and man, two species separated by 65 million years of evolution have just been suddenly thrown back into the mix together. How can we have the slightest idea of what to expect?
Alan Grant, Jurassic Park.*

Temps de lecture : minute

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In the startup world, there is one type of quotient that might be more important when it comes to the survival of the startup species: the adaptability quotient. You may have an astonishing Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and coded the most incredible software, you may have a prodigious Emotional Quotient (EQ) and won over customers in no time, but, when it comes to scale and exit, the Adaptability Quotient (AQ) is what the executive management of a startup will require to truly excel.

Great, so we just need to recruit people and invest in CEOs with high AQ and success will be guaranteed! After all, this is exactly what Nathalie Fratto, an investor at Goldman Sachs does. But what is AQ exactly?

"How do you know they're all female? Does somebody walk into the enclosure and look under the dinosaur's skirt?" Ian Malcolm, Jurassic Park

In 2012, Jo Ayoubi, CEO and co-founder of Track surveys, outlined four

main factors of the Adaptability Quotient:

- Ability to appreciate when change is happening (or even before it starts) and to respond quickly
- Capacity to test and experiment quickly and often with products, services, business models, processes and strategies
- Ability to recognise and effectively manage stakeholders in complex relationships and roles
- Capacity to motivate and lead in a rapidly changing environment

The good news is that most of these skills can be taught and honed with practice over time, some people might have them naturally but most of us will need to work for it.

The first thing you should do is to teach your brain to think in “what if scenarios”. Much like playing chess, it forces your brain to be ready to act and react hastily, thus giving you an undeniable advantage when changes do materialise.

Insider tip: dedicate a small meeting room to the *what-if* boards and invite a squad team (ideally already showing signs of high AQ) to participate actively in identifying problems that may occur. For example, what if a competitor gets a new set of features, or sets up in a market before you do or *what if* some major environmental changes affect the industry that is your niche market...

Nevertheless, the actions you take in the present are what matters the most. When you play chess, you must have visibility to the short term and long term future but you must remain in the now as you play your pawns.

Ian Macolm: God creates dinosaurs, God destroys dinosaurs, God creates man, man destroys God, man creates dinosaurs...

*"Dinosaurs...eat man. Woman inherits the Earth." -
Dr Ellie Sattler, Jurassic Park*

Joking aside, the consequences of lacking agility are countless: missing out on life-changing opportunities, losing market share to the competition, massive delays in time to market...

*"All major theme parks have had delays. When they opened Disneyland in 1956, nothing worked!"
- John Hammond, Jurassic Park*

*"Yeah John, but if the Pirates of the Caribbean breaks down, the pirates don't eat the tourists." -
Ian Malcolm, Jurassic Park*

This new decade has started with an unprecedented level of uncertainties, so for once, you may want to drop the scholar books, and let go of traditional frameworks. "Active un-learners seek to challenge what they presume to already know, and override that data with new information," Nathalie Fratto said in a TED talk, "kind of like a computer running disk cleanup."

This is counter-intuitive.

How can you process new data while unlearning old information that guaranteed your success? Well, this is what people with a high adaptability quotient do, this is Darwin's evolution and what the Dinosaurs clearly did not see coming. Now, the more you try to do it, the easier it becomes.

"All major changes are like death. You can't see what is on the other side until you get there." - Ian Malcolm, Jurassic Park

When an environment is unpredictable, traditional forecasting, analysis and strategic planning might not be the right path to follow. Startup founders tend to be heavily influenced by the past success of scale-ups, drawing upon books written by successful founders to replicate their strategies.

While it is natural to look at what worked, proceed with caution or you may end up in complicated situations with your employees, but also with your customers and potentially your investors.

"Mr Hammond, after careful consideration, I've decided not to endorse your park." - Alan Grant, Jurassic Park

Don't forget to explore the conditions -possibly highly different- in which you evolve, are you putting processes in place that work because you believe they are the best for your industry, your people, your company and your customers or simply because someone else was successful in applying these methods?

Don't muffle your agility, if you were lost in the jungle, it would be your primary instincts that would save you from potential death.

Marc Benioff of Salesforce did not let anybody tell him what to do when he started a CRM in the cloud, and Marc Roberge hardly had the traditional experience expected in a CRO when he scaled Hubspot from 0 to 100

million.

"If there's one thing the history of evolution has taught us, it's that life will not be contained. Life breaks free, it expands to new territories, and crashes through barriers painfully, maybe even dangerously, but, uh, well, there it is." - Ian Macolm, Jurassic Park

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