

Managing in the Age of Disruption: People, Organizations, and Algorithms

Disruption has become the baseline condition of contemporary organizational life. What was once described as a period of exceptional turbulence – the pandemic, the inflationary shock, the rapid automation of decision-making – has quietly settled into the new normal. Managers, policymakers, and researchers are no longer asking how to survive a crisis; they are asking how to build organizations that function well precisely because disruption is permanent, not episodic.

This question sits at the heart of the research gathered in the present issue of Manager Journal. The contributions span macroeconomic governance, human resource development, entrepreneurship, and digital marketing – domains that rarely share the same stage. Yet they converge on a common concern: the gap between institutional design and organizational reality. Rules, frameworks, and systems are built for predictable environments. People and organizations, however, must perform in environments that are anything but.

One of the most persistent illusions in management thinking is the belief that structure alone produces resilience. Organizations invest in processes, hierarchies, and compliance frameworks, and yet remain fragile when confronted with volatility they did not anticipate. The research presented here suggests a different logic: resilience is not a property of structure, but of people and of the intangible assets – knowledge, reputation, trust, relational capital – that accumulate through sustained human effort. Tangible resources matter, but they are rarely the decisive variable. What organizations do with what they have, and how quickly they learn to do it differently when circumstances change, is what separates those that endure from those that do not.

The human dimension of this challenge is equally demanding. As work itself is restructured – distributed across geographies, mediated by screens, measured by outputs rather than presence – the social fabric of organizations is being quietly renegotiated. The skills that matter most in this context are not technical but behavioral: the ability to communicate across distance, to lead without proximity, to adapt without losing coherence. Organizations that treat these competencies as soft add-ons to the real business of management will find themselves poorly equipped for a world in which coordination and trust have become primary competitive assets.

And then there is the algorithm. Artificial intelligence is no longer a tool that managers choose to deploy; in many domains, it is the infrastructure within which decisions are already being made – about which advertisement reaches which person, about how budgets are allocated, about which signals matter and which do not. This introduces a new and underexplored accountability problem. When an algorithm

produces an outcome, who is responsible for it? When a system optimizes for a measurable proxy, who verifies that the proxy captures what actually matters? The answers remain contested, but the questions are urgent, and ignoring them is no longer an option.

What unites all these challenges is a single underlying demand: the capacity for coherent action under uncertainty. This is not a new demand – it has always been the core task of management – but its difficulty has increased as the sources of uncertainty have multiplied and accelerated. Macroeconomic volatility, distributed workforces, algorithmic decision-making, and institutional voids do not arrive one at a time; they arrive simultaneously, and they interact. Managing well today means holding complexity together without pretending it is simple.

The contributions in this issue do not offer a single answer to that challenge – nor should they. Management research is most useful when it resists the temptation of universal prescriptions and instead illuminates specific mechanisms in specific contexts, with enough precision that practitioners and scholars alike can build on them. We hope the pages that follow offer exactly that: rigorous, grounded, and generative work that advances our collective understanding of what it means to manage well in an age that has made disruption its permanent condition.

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