



Aaron's biography

Aaron Dignan

Author, digital strategist and co-founder of Undercurrent

Everywhere he looks, Aaron Dignan sees the same phenomenon. Our most trusted and important institutions—in business, healthcare, government, philanthropy and beyond – are struggling.

Aaron Dignan's Background

They're confronted with the fact that the scale and bureaucracy that once made them strong are liabilities in an era of constant change. For the past ten years, he has studied organizations and teams with a new way of working that prioritizes adaptivity and autonomy over efficiency and control. Aaron contends that teams everywhere need to join them in the [future of work](#).

As the founder of The Ready—a global organizational transformation and [coaching](#) practice—he helps companies large and small adopt new forms of self-organization and dynamic teaming. Clients include GE, Kaplan, Lloyds Banking Group, Microsoft, Citibank, FreshDirect, Hyatt, Airbnb, Bloomin' Brands, Charles Schwab, PG&E, Fidelity, New York Public Radio, and charity: water.

Dignan is an active angel investor and helps build partnerships between the startups and end-ups he advises. He's also a co-founder of Responsive.org. And he has sat on advisory boards for GE, American Express, PepsiCo, and Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, as well as the board of directors for Smashburger. He is the [author](#) of Game Frame (Free Press, 2011) and Brave New Work (Portfolio 2019).

Aaron's talks

- **The Ever Better Organization Managing Complexity and Uncertainty in the 21st Century**
We sit at the precipice of a completely new world. Exponential technologies are transforming our economy in unpredictable ways – democratizing power, concentrating wealth, connecting everyone and everything, and challenging our assumptions about rights and privacy. In response, new ways of working and organizing are gaining popularity, spurred on by Generation Y entrepreneurs who are willing to question everything about what an organization is and how it

should operate.

The change we face technologically and culturally is nothing compared to what's coming. To be ready, Dignan contends we need to focus on making our teams and companies more adaptive, more exponential, and (perhaps counterintuitively) more human. In this presentation he offers a path to readiness that applies to anyone, from the new hire to the chief executive.

- **Strength of Digital**

Showing viewers how digital companies dominate every industry, Aaron Dignan explains that digital doesn't necessarily have to be software in the most literal sense of the word, but a mindset for business, in his digital keynote.

Dignan walks us through an innovative way of looking at how companies operate and orient their organizations, agendas and initiatives, and how if we change the way we think about them and structure them more efficiently they are likely to make more of an impact.

Taking advantage of this trend in his digital keynote, Dignan shows examples of leading digital companies and what we can learn from them. He also points out that the operating system that seems to work best in literally every industry is digital — the dominant players and fastest growing companies that shape the market place of every industry are always the digital companies.

- **The Responsive Organization**

Tesla, the fastest-growing stock in the automotive industry and maker of the safest car ever made, is run by a software engineer. Amazon has a market cap three times bigger than Target, in spite of the fact that it operates at a loss. Valve is able to run a multi-billion dollar gaming company with a few hundred employees without job titles or managers.

What is happening? Technology—particularly software—has had a destabilizing effect on legacy organizations everywhere. Today's fastest growing, most profoundly impactful companies are using a completely different operating model.

These companies are lean, mean, learning machines and are organized around a new pattern: the ability to evolve in real time. In this presentation, Aaron Dignan will speak about his research on organizational responsiveness, his work on the front lines with companies like GE, American Express, and PepsiCo, and why companies everywhere need to change the way they work and organize in order to succeed in an age of uncertainty.

- **The Game Frame Workshop**

The Game Frame Workshop will take your company through a crash course in tackling challenges at work from the perspective of game design. Participants will workshop existing business challenges and walk away thinking like a game designer – equipped with the seeds and buds of solutions. This two day workshop is broken up into three sections: Play, Learn and Design.

- **Making Work into Play**

In this skill-building keynote, games researcher and author Aaron Dignan discusses how to integrate gaming principles into work life. Gaming has had mass market success, and as Dignan explains, games have a fun, addictive and satisfying nature. Games are in fact not frivolous at all but are nature's learning engine. Dignan then goes into the principles of creating a great game, which can then be applied to businesses in order to make work interesting.

Principles such as how games create a wanting, a need to seek out and complete a task. While the other is how games create a state of flow. This concept is that when the challenge is high but the skills are low then games form an anxiety, but low challenge and high skill games become boring, but games that find a balance and force people to be on the top of their game create dramatic sense of flow.

After discussing these principles, Dignan provides practical behavioural games that can help solve business issues. One of the examples is Mike Monteiro meeting tokens that attempt to turn

long winded inefficient meetings to make them short and productive.

- **Brave New Work**

We sit at the precipice of a completely new world. Exponential technologies are transforming our economy in unpredictable ways—democratizing power, concentrating wealth, connecting everyone and everything, and challenging our assumptions about business as usual. In response, new ways of working and organizing are gaining popularity, spurred on by radical entrepreneurs who are willing to question everything about what an organization is and how it should operate.

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