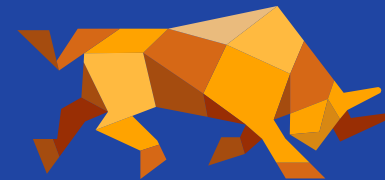


High Agency

Unlocking Internal
Audit's Strategic Edge



MAXIM ATANASSOV

OBJECTIVES



1

MINDSET

Inspire a mindset shift in Internal Audit

2

CAPABILITIES

Build practical skills for influence and partnership

3

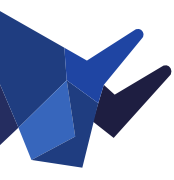
FRAMEWORK

Introduce the 5-pillar High Agency Framework

4

TAKEAWAYS

Provide practical tools and takeaways



POLLING QUESTION #1

How would you currently describe Internal Audit's role in your organization?

- Compliance enforcer
- Problem solver
- Trusted advisor
- Strategic partner



WHAT IS HIGH AGENCY?



HIGH AGENCY

is the ability and mindset to **take control** of your circumstances, **act decisively**, and **influence outcomes** - even when resources are limited or obstacles are significant.

THE 5 PILLARS OF HIGH AGENCY



1

OWNERSHIP

2

EMPOWERMENT

3

INNOVATION

4

PARTNERSHIP

5

INFLUENCE



HIGH AGENCY PERSON



- **Believes** they can alter their environment rather than just adapt to it.
- **Focuses on controllable actions**, not on complaining about external constraints.
- **Challenges assumptions** about what's possible and seeks unconventional solutions.
- **Executes creatively**, finding ways around barriers rather than being stopped by them.
- **Persists** in the face of setbacks, using obstacles as catalysts for innovation.

WHY HIGH AGENCY MATTERS IN AUDIT

- Evolving business environment → demands adaptability
- Compliance → strategic partner
- Post → real time
- High agency → outcomes → value and relevance

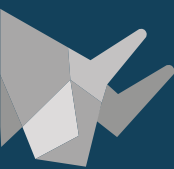




POLLING QUESTION #2

When you uncover a significant issue, what's your most common next step?

- Report it and move on to the next item
- Follow up later to see if it was addressed
- Partner with management to develop a solution
- Escalate to leadership immediately
- Other (please specify in chat)



PILLAR 1

OWNERSHIP

Taking accountability for our actions and outcomes is about owning not just the audit process, but also the impact of our work.

***“We don’t just report the issues.
We help management to fix them.”***

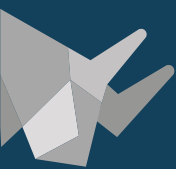
- **Take responsibility for actions and outcomes.**
- **Go beyond reporting issues. Drive to resolution. Ensure impact.**
- **Model accountability for the organization.**



POLLING QUESTION #3

Which approach best reflects how you engage stakeholders during engagements?

- Provide findings at the end only
- Share observations along the way
- Coach stakeholders on identifying and managing risks themselves
- Rarely interact outside of an engagement
- Other (please specify in chat)



PILLAR 2

EMPOWERMENT

“Greatness is in the agency of others.”

Our greatest accomplishments come from enabling those around us to succeed.

- Educate and coach → build psychological safety → mistakes are OK, just not repeat
- Give ownership to stakeholders → support, don't force
- Build trust through collaboration



**"GIVE UP,
TO GO UP!"**



PILLAR 3

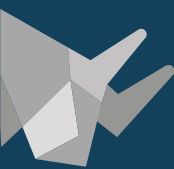
INNOVATION

The power of consistent small improvements adds up dramatically through exponential growth.

- 1% better every day = 3678% over a year
- 1% better every week = 68% over a year

“What could we do better everyday?”

- **New ideas → embrace and test**
- **New tools and techniques → adopt first, become Lean Six Sigma certified**
- **Show, don't tell → become an innovation partner in the organization**
- **Think like an owner → I want to [...] so that WE can [...] to drive value for the organization.**



PILLAR 3 - EXAMPLE

"IT'S YOUR
SHIP!"

At the age of 36, D. Michael Abrashoff became the much-admired skipper of USS Benfold, a troubled ship that, in a short 18 months, he and his crew transformed into the best guided-missile destroyer in the U.S. Navy.

Aspect	Details
Problem	Frequent repainting needed due to rusting iron bolts, wasting time and lowering morale
Proposed Fix	Replace iron bolts with rust-resistant stainless-steel bolts and nuts
Action Taken	Bypassed Navy supply system; purchased supplies from civilian stores using ship's funds
Outcome	Reduced repainting workload for almost a year, improved morale, freed up time for training, fleet-wide adoption of stainless fasteners

TOOLS + AI

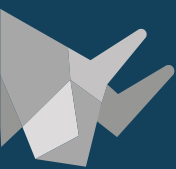
Aspect	Tools	Why It's Disruptive / AI-Enabled
Transcription	Fathom , Otter.ai, Fireflies.ai	Real-time AI meeting capture, auto-summarization, sentiment tracking, and searchable archives.
Writing	Grammarly Business , Jasper, Wordtune	AI-driven grammar, tone, and clarity checks. Jasper adds generative AI for report drafting and rewriting.
Process Mapping	Lucidchart + AI , Interfacing, Miro AI	AI-assisted process mapping, control library integration, and automated documentation updates.
Risks & Controls	Onspring AI , AuditBoard, LogicGate	Automated risk scoring, AI-driven control gap analysis, predictive risk trends, and integrated compliance workflows.
GRC	OnSpring , MetricStream Intelligence, Resolver, IBM OpenPages + Watson	AI-powered GRC dashboards, continuous monitoring, and NLP-based policy mapping.
Continuous Monitoring/Analyt.	MindBridge AI , Alteryx Auto Insights	Anomaly detection, predictive analytics, and automated audit sampling using AI.
Agents / Automation	UiPath AI Center , Microsoft Copilot, Automation Anywhere	AI-powered RPA to automate evidence gathering, testing, reporting, and follow-ups.
Collaboration	Atlassian Intelligence , Notion AI, ClickUp AI,	AI summarization, action extraction, and goal alignment across audit projects.
Knowledge Search & Insights	LLMs for Public knowledge and Microsoft 365 Copilot, Glean, Guru AI for private	Semantic search across all enterprise data to surface relevant evidence and past audit insights instantly.



POLLING QUESTION #4

What's the biggest barrier to Internal Audit being seen as a partner in your organization?

- Perception as a “policing” function
- Our lack of understanding of the business
- Limited resources or tools at our avail
- Resistance from or overlap with other departments
- Other (please specify in chat)

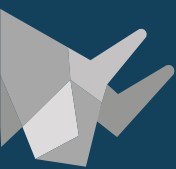


PILLAR 4

PARTNERSHIP

Moving from an “us vs. them” mentality to a “we’re in this together” mentality with our stakeholders.

- **Build strategic relationships**
- **Understand the organization’s strategic goals**
- **Align audit plans with business objectives**
- **Collaborate with management to achieve those goals**
- **Provide advisory input while maintaining objectivity**



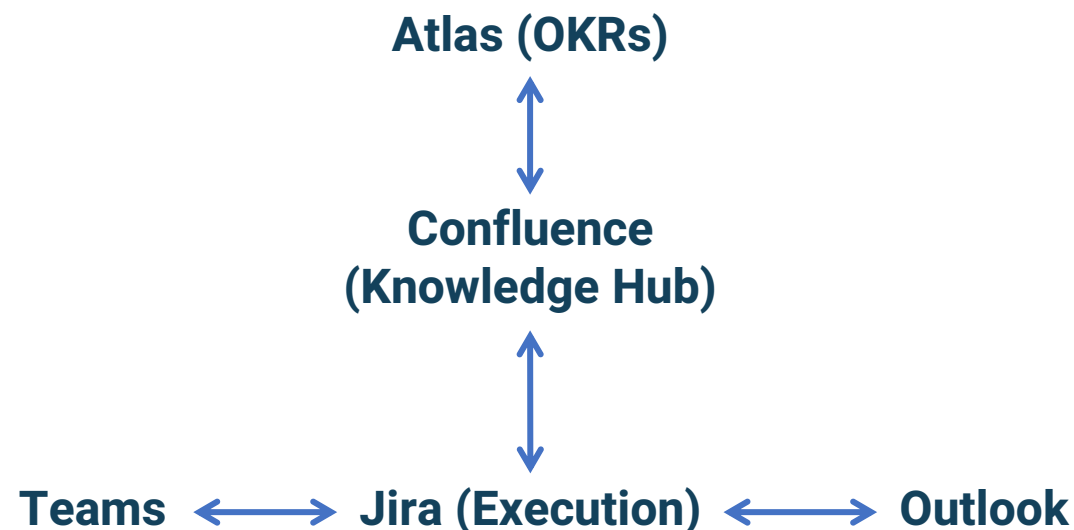
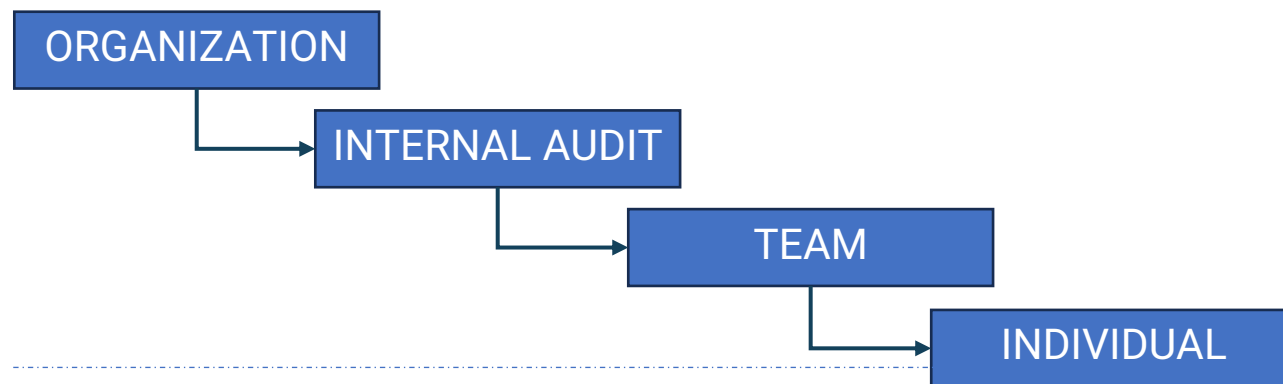
PILLAR 4 - EXAMPLE

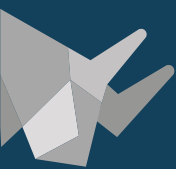
"BE ON POINT"

Why This Structure Works

- **Clarity & Alignment:** Confluence makes OKR definitions visible and collaborative. Atlas ensures strategic tracking via visual scoring and alignment tools.
- **Seamless Execution:** Jira connects goals with tasks - ensuring that OKR progress directly reflects the day-to-day work.
- **Adaptable & Scalable:** This setup can support small to enterprise-level teams.

DRIVING STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT USING ATlassian





PILLAR 5

INFLUENCE

We have to cultivate influence – the ability to persuade and facilitate action – to truly be effective.

“Would you rather be right, or be effective?”

- **Focus on effectiveness and change, not ego**
- **Use communication and empathy to gain buy-in**
- **Influence outcomes for lasting impact**



BEING RIGHT VS. BEING EFFECTIVE



"BEING RIGHT WINS THE ARGUMENT.
BEING EFFECTIVE WINS THE OUTCOME."



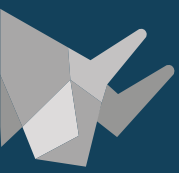
OBTAIN A CHANGE
MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION



POLLING QUESTION #5

When stakeholders push back on audit recommendations, what's your typical reaction?

- Stick to the report as written
- Adjust recommendations to be more practical
- Defer the implementation timelines
- Seek a compromise to ensure action is taken
- Drop the point if resistance is too high



PILLAR 5

INFLUENCE

"The way you speak shapes the way you're heard—and the way you're heard shapes the change you can make."



USE AI TO HELP YOU
COMMUNICATE BETTER

☆ Pro

August 04 - August 10

Your Weekly Writing Update

Your dedication to consistency shines through with every new achievement. Check out your stats below and keep setting those high standards.



Pro
Suggestions
Last Week

14,845



All-Time
Errors
Identified

82,050



Your Area of
Focus for
Next Week

Correctness

Grammarly writing streak

146 weeks



Next achievement badge
Week 156



Productivity

Grammarly analyzed **531,904 words**. You were more productive than **99%** of Grammarly users.



Accuracy

Grammarly showed you **1,391 alerts**. You were more accurate than **89%** of Grammarly users.



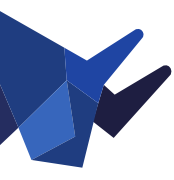
Vocabulary

You used **13,044 unique words**. That's **99%** more unique words than other Grammarly users.



INTERACTIVE CASE STUDY

HIGH AGENCY IN ACTION:
APPLYING THE 5 PILLARS



INTERACTIVE EXERCISE

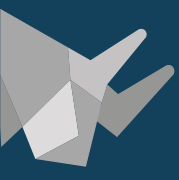
GROUP DISCUSSION:

Which pillar is your biggest challenge?

WHY?

**SHARE EXAMPLES
OR OBSTACLES**

**DISCUSS
SOLUTIONS**

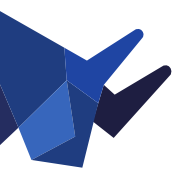


PRACTICAL SKILLS



MINDSET TO CULTIVATE

- 1 GROWTH MINDSET
- 2 BUSINESS ACUMEN
- 3 PEOPLE + INFLUENCING SKILLS
- 4 TECHNICAL + ANALYTICAL SKILLS
- 5 CRITICAL THINKING + PROBLEM SOLVING
- 6 EXTREME OWNERSHIP + INITIATIVE



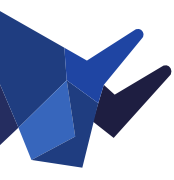
KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ HIGH AGENCY TRANSFORMS AUDIT FROM ENFORCER TO ENABLER
- ▶ APPLY THE 5 PILLARS DAILY TO DRIVE OUTCOMES
- ▶ PRIORITIZE IMPACT OVER EGO
- ▶ BE THE CATALYST FOR ORGANIZATIONAL GREATNESS



TOOLS + RESOURCES

- MINDSET SHIFT CHECKLIST
- STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP PLAN



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- www.atlassian.com/team-playbook/plays/okrs
- www.maximatanassov.com/insights
- www.futureventures.ca/insights
- www.iuvo.ca/blog

Thank you for your time!

