

TransitionCollective

# Reimagining the Board

– as enabler of innovation  
and value creation

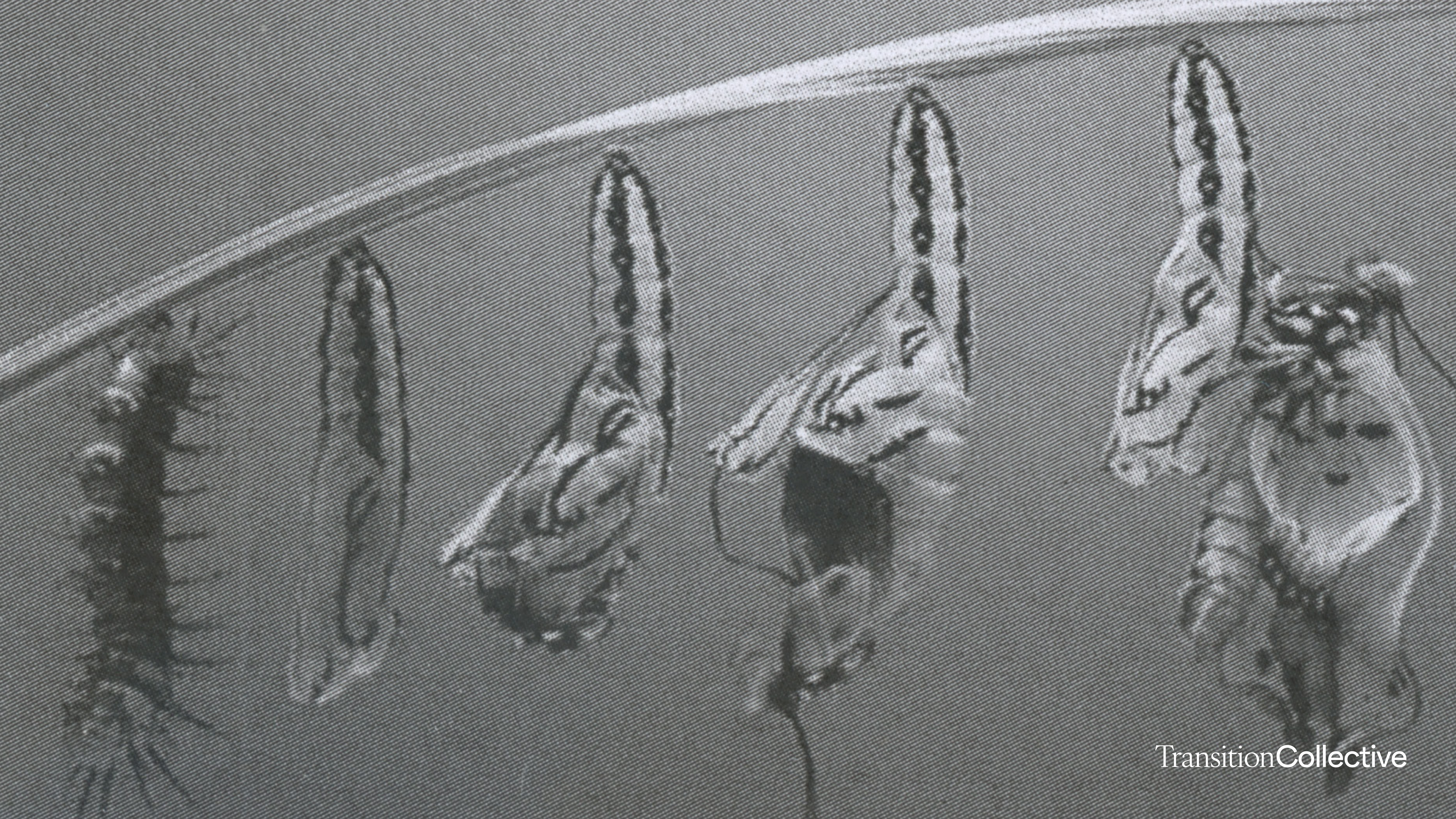
**Christian Bason, Ph.D.**

Co-founder Transition Collective

Adjunct Professor, UTS

Leader in Residence, Copenhagen Business School





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[Transition]

A period or phase in which a  
change or shift is happening

[Collective]

Something done by people acting  
together as a group

Let's start with an  
uncomfortable question.



If boards were not required  
by law, would organizations  
choose to have them?



**What is the most  
important question a  
Board can ask the  
management team?**



“How can we be of service?”



Too many boards see  
themselves differently



# Controllers?



# Strategists?



# Employers?



# Implementers?



Boards consist of people with  
the least insight into the  
organization yet they have  
the most power over it.



Could they still be of value?



# Reimagining the board

“The very essence of our humanity consists of the fact that we are self-conscious political actors, and therefore capable of embracing a wide range of social arrangements.”

Graeber and Wengrow  
*The Dawn of Everything (2021)*



# ORGANIZATION CHART of THE TABULATING MACHINE CO.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS - C-T-R- CO.

Alfred DeBuys  
George W. Fairchild  
Charles R. Flint  
A. Ward Ford  
Oscar L. Gubelman  
Samuel M. Hastings  
John W. Herbert  
Joel S. Coffin  
Clarence P. King  
Stacy C. Richmond  
Joseph E. Rogers  
Christopher D. Smithers  
Thomas J. Watson  
George I. Wilber  
Rollin S. Woodruff

## OFFICERS-C-T-R-CO.

Thomas J. Watson - Pres. & Genl. Mgr.  
George W. Fairchild - Vice-President  
James S. Ogsbury - Secy & Treasurer

COMPUTING-TABULATING-RECORDING CO.  
Offices - 50 Broad St. - New York City

## THE TABULATING MACHINE CO.

General Offices - 50 Broad St.  
New York City

### DIRECTORS

George M. Bond  
George W. Fairchild  
Thomas J. Watson  
James S. Ogsbury  
Gershom Smith  
Thomas J. Watson

FACTORIES - WASHINGTON, D.C.  
- ENDICOTT, N.Y.  
- DAYTON, O.

THOMAS J. WATSON *President*  
R.L. Houston *General Manager*

### OFFICERS

Thomas J. Watson - President  
Gershom Smith - Vice-President  
R.L. Houston - Treasurer  
W.D. Jones - Asst. Treasurer  
James S. Ogsbury - Secretary  
O.E. Braitmayer - Asst. Secretary

### MANUFACTURING

O.E. Braitmayer  
Swift Boykin - Chief Clerk

### SYSTEMS

Gershom Smith  
Pierre Bontecou

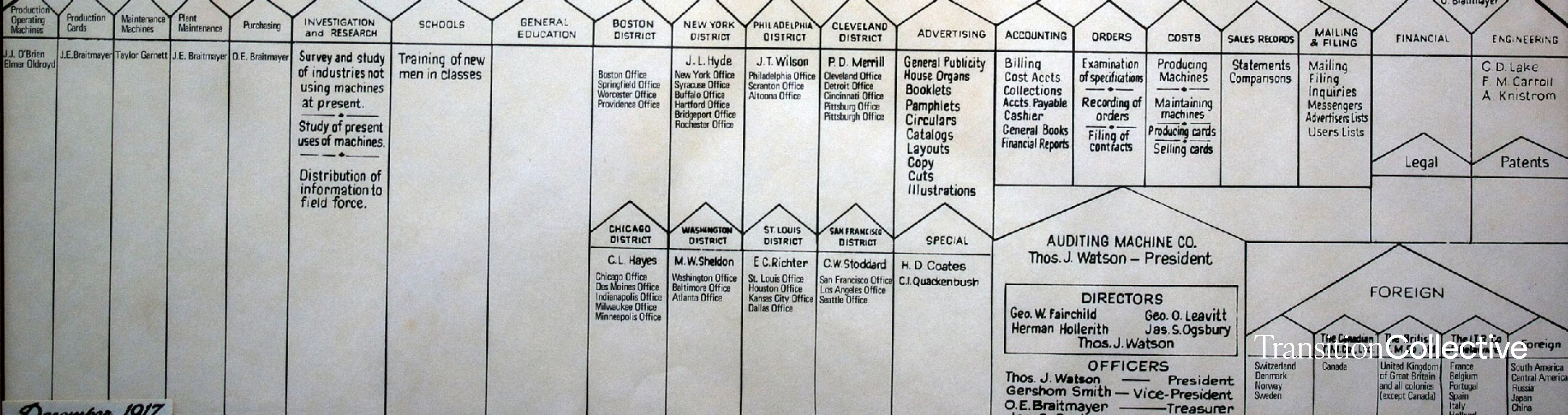
### SALES

G.W. Spahr

### OFFICE

W.D. Jones  
Wm. MacLardy

ADMINISTRATION  
R.L. Houston  
O. Braitmayer

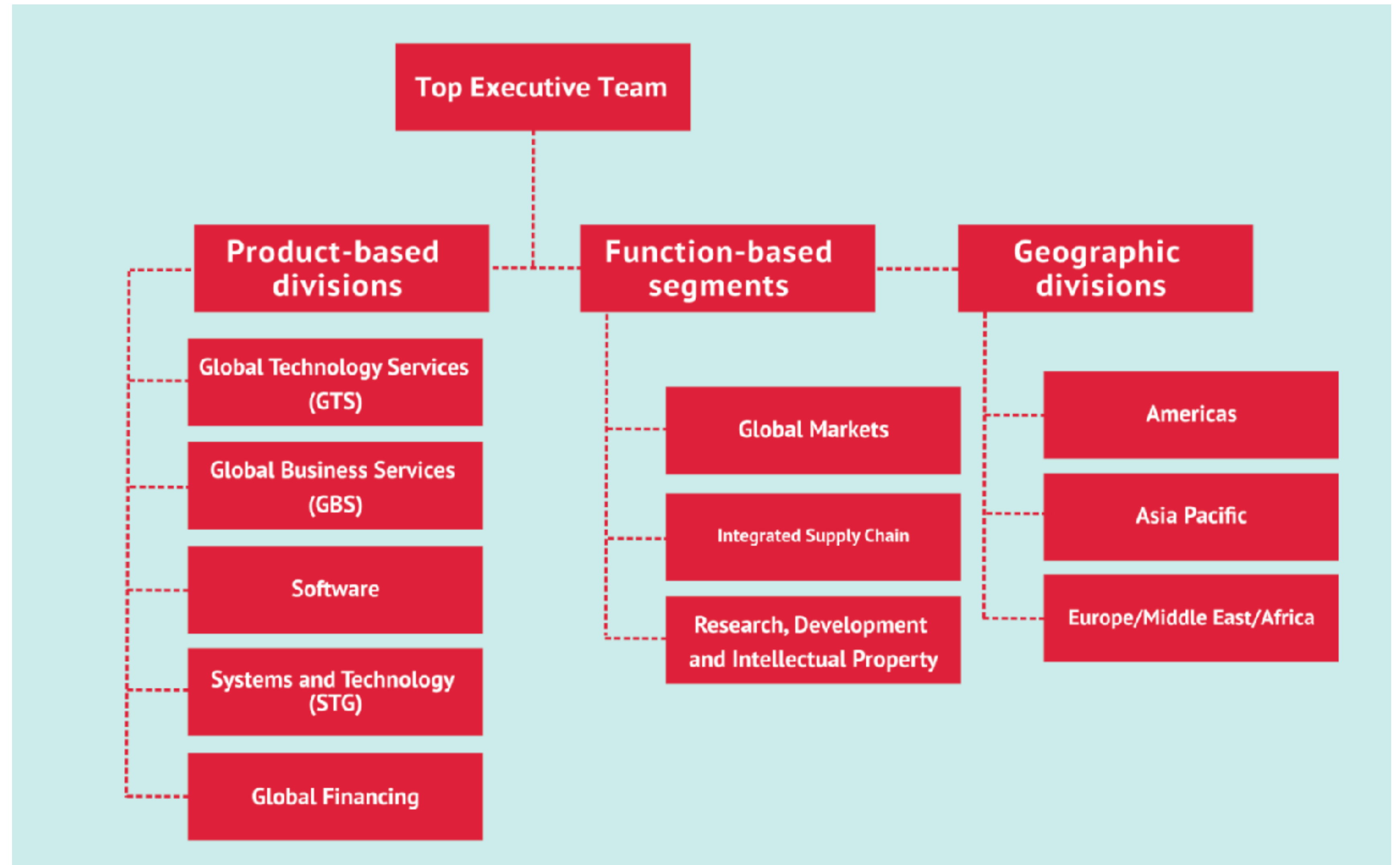


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IBM, 1917

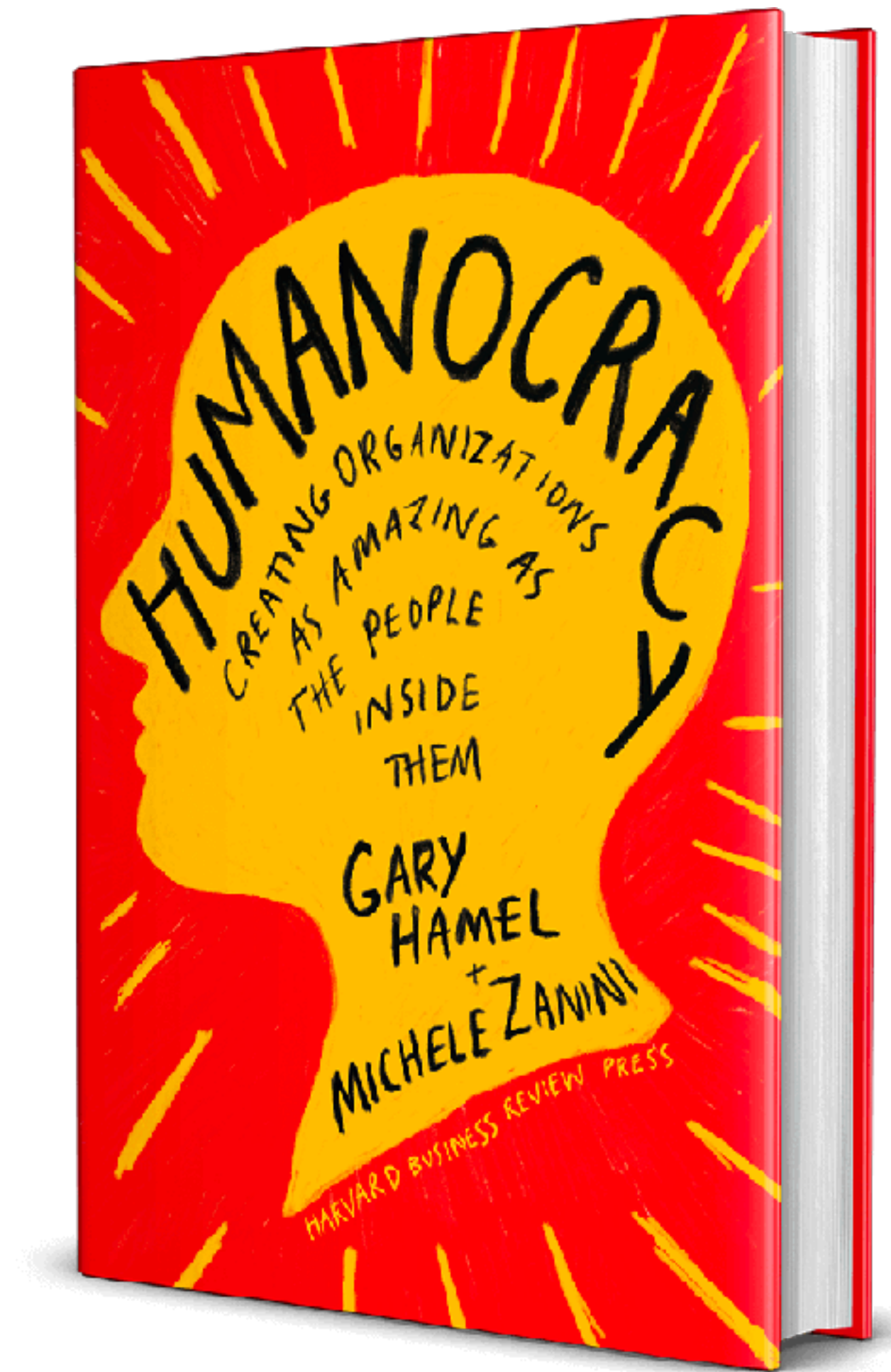


# IBM, 2025





“Bureaucracy is incredibly persistent and deeply entrenched ... as an organizational model, it will take a systematic effort to dislodge it.”



Why is our organizational  
imagination so limited?





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# A world of opportunity

A person stands in silhouette on a dark, rocky ridge, looking up at a vast night sky. The Milky Way galaxy is prominently visible, stretching diagonally across the frame from the bottom left towards the top right. The sky is filled with numerous stars, and the overall color palette is dominated by deep blues, purples, and oranges from the galaxy's light.

**The workforce has never been better educated**

**People are ready to take responsibility — under the right conditions**

**Innovative ways of organizing and managing are gaining ground**

**Technological innovation and AI provide new opportunities to rethink organizations**

**Covid-19 showed us how adaptable we can be – if we have to.**



# **What type of board, and by extension – organization – fully reflects the challenges of our time?**

A context of complexity and turbulence

Need for agility, innovation and sustainability

Balancing the long-term versus fast decision-making

Attracting, retaining and nurturing talent

*Organizations that unleash the full creative potential of people*

# Three roles for boards to enable innovation and value creation – by design



Role #1

Give peripheral vision



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Executives, immersed in operations, often miss “weak signals” at the edge of an organization’s periphery. Boards—being more detached and typically more diverse—are well positioned to counter this myopia via broader scanning and consideration of alternative futures.

Day and Shoemaker, Wharton Business School  
*Peripheral Vision*

# #1 Peripheral vision

## Helping the C-suite look around corners

### The opportunity

**Board members should leverage their experience and wider networks to sense and inform management what is happening in society, technology and markets**

### What it takes

- A **diversity** of competencies, cultures and outlooks across the board composition
- Dedication of **time** to elicit insights from board members
- **Foresight** and scenario work done systematically *with* the board



# Role #2

## Lift the ambition



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When an executive team leaves a board meeting it should feel energised and believe that it has all the backing it needs to execute its vision and tasks at hand.

Senior board consultant  
*Anonymous*

# #2 Lift the ambition

**Take the team's energy, vision and ideas – and lift it further**

## The opportunity

**Board members should provide their full backing and support to the management's visions and strategies**

## What it takes

- **Humility** that it is the top management that knows the context and the organization best
- Ability to reflect and engage in **appreciative inquiry**
- If the top management does not deliver the energy, vision and ideas you wish and can lift further – then **find another top management.**



# Role #3

# Enable learning



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“When a group is higher in psychological safety, it is more innovative, do higher-quality work and enjoy better performance... one of the most important reasons for these different outcomes is that people in psychologically safe teams can admit their mistakes.”

Amy Edmondson, Harvard Business School  
*The Right Kind of Wrong*

# #3 Enable learning

## Create a safe space for deep learning

### The opportunity

**Board meetings should be reflective spaces where people feel safe to work on hard problems together**

### What it takes

- Truly **trusting** that the top management and wider organization does its best
- Encouraging **smart experimentation** across the organization
- **Psychological safety** in the board room
- Deep **listening** skills, facilitated by the board leader
- **Celebrating** when top management shares its challenges and failures
- Systematic learning over time – calls for high degree of board **continuity**



“You never really change things by fighting the existing reality. You change things by building a better model.”

Buckminster Fuller  
Architect and futurist

Tak!

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