

Change is Necessity for Successful Business

Change is not about organisations but about people. which is exactly why it is such a challenge to leaders.

The challenge of Leadership



You have just taken over a major division within a multinational and your excitement soon turns to dismay, when you see a raft of issues that are facing you. Poor production, disgruntled staff, lack of management systems and poor quality delivery are all undermining performance.

You've personally enjoyed some big wins in the past and have learnt how to lead successfully in some complicated situations. You have beaten adversity before. But things don't get any easier and somehow the interventions that seemed so successful in past situations do not seem to be having the desired affect now, so what do you do? How do you take a step in the right direction?

The focus for the new era of leadership is on how to influence the way that people work, think and feel about the business and this requires more than rational decisions and processes.

There are many factors that make the difference between success and failure in the new paradigm of leadership and we have found that there are four elements that tip the balance in your favour.

The Elements of Successful Change

1. Make Change personal

People are influenced far more powerfully by their desires than they are by other factors such as authority, rationality or repetition. And our desires are driven by our emotions. We need therefore a compelling reason to make a change. Your job as leader is to create a compelling reason for change and explain the benefits to your people.

2. Provide a map of the journey

Whilst people have an in-built resistance to change, this is likely to lessen dramatically if they can see where they are going and why. This is not just about communicating a high level set of aims, but also the nature of the journey, how it will affect them and what the change will feel like to them in their work role

3. Being part of the change rather than a victim of it

People engage in change when they can see the advantages to themselves and in order to do this they need to be engaged in the process of defining that change. They then need support to learn the skills required to implement that change.

4. Managing the process of change, not the content

Too many organisations spend time developing detailed project plans that provide structure, timetable and milestones and then find it is out of date as soon as the ink dries on the page, because they have failed to consider the human element.

Making Change Personal

In order for people to want to take the step toward a different way of working - you need to persuade them to want to change. For people to want to change, they have to personally connect with the objectives you are trying to achieve, emotionally as well as rationally.

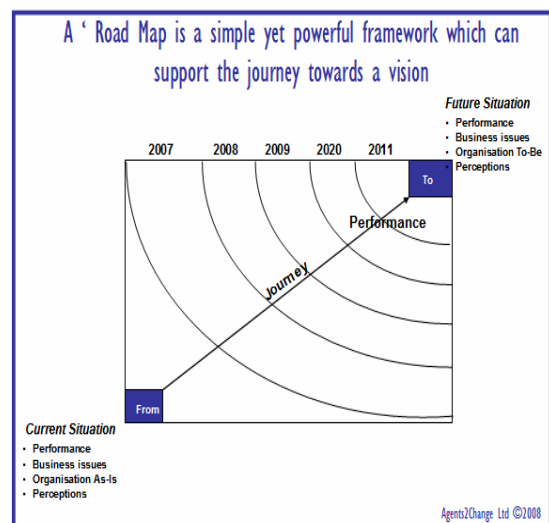
Of course you could parachute in a team to do this for you, but the curve of benefit to your organisation sharply rises and then as dramatically tails away when they leave. An alternative to this is to bring in the skills to develop people in managing the change, in real time, dealing with real business issues, but with some element of risk being eradicated by having professional change coaches to help them at each step of the way. In that way you have the double benefit of reducing the risk of failing and the added benefit of home growing your own change agents for the future.

Provide a map of the journey

Communicating the desired future state in a rich and tangible way will engage people in the journey. Depicting the change merely as a plan or high level mission statement has a high risk of alienating the very people that need to be with you each step of the way. The danger is that communication has no meaning at all to most people's roles.

What is much more meaningful is simply to tell the story of what has happened to reach the current situation, and what we think the future looks like. In this way people can not only see the context for the current change, but can relate it to their own role. They are able to understand what the business is trying to achieve and what success will look like.

Once you have a strong vision of the future state, it is possible to create a transformation roadmap which defines your journey over the next few years in clearly defined milestones which everyone can understand.



Being Part of the Change

Organisations don't change, people do. People change by gaining a new insight, a new understanding or responding differently to a set of circumstances. For business, this requires them to learn how to respond to familiar things in different ways. Only by responding differently, is it possible to achieve different (i.e. higher) levels of performance.

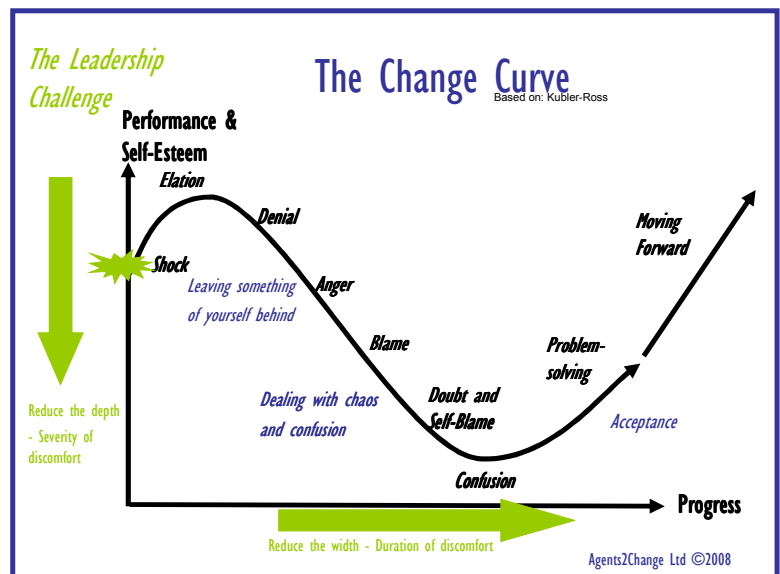
Learning to intervene differently determines whether results are improved. For it to be sustainable, it requires both the rational and emotional learning to occur. Just as it is hard to achieve better results without new capability, so it is very difficult to develop new skills without the challenge of achieving a new target or goal. It is the imperative to learn that will drive action.

For this reason, capability development and formal training needs to be in the context of the real time challenges. But what often happens is that people receive leadership and management training that is removed from their day-to-day reality, built around hypothetical examples and based on topic areas that aren't related to any current and urgent need. However the best learning environments are 'real life' and your change programme will bring insights and opportunities far richer than any training programme. In real time, with real deliverables, the real learning takes place, as long as you put in the additional support for that learning to occur.

Managing the process of change

Since all change is essentially about implementing a new way of working, organisations today increasingly recognise that it needs to become a core skill. In doing this, they are acknowledging that implementation requires specific knowledge and skills that go beyond straightforward project management.

Whilst it is understandable to put great store in a project plan that has a rational and tangible path to follow, it assumes that exhaustive planning will provide the right answer. It also fails to recognise that the most important component in your change efforts, your people, might not correspond to the very neat parameters that a gantt chart creates. These plans often make sweeping assumptions about the readiness for change, the skills of the individuals and the speed at which they can respond, which often bears little resemblance to the reality. Many leaders when they reflect on the competencies and skills within their team find that they have no track record of successful change to support such assumptions.



An alternative approach would be to acknowledge the skills and experiences of your people and use these to provide targeted support to accelerate local learning and solutions that are unique to your situation.

Leaders can fulfil the essential role of providing the wider context, opportunity to test out alternatives and coach their people through the change process rather than just tell them how to move forward.

Supporting people as they find their own solutions is more motivating and sustainable. It leaves behind more capability than simply giving them the answers.

If all of this sounds a little familiar, it is because it is founded on the concept of the learning organisation. Agile organisations know that to improve year on year, they have to be constantly learning; and to do this people need to feel able to take the risks and reap the benefits associated with the learning journey. Facilitating this as a leader is probably the biggest challenge you will ever face, but without doubt it will also be the most rewarding one.

For more information about how Agents2Change can help you visit us at www.agents2change.com

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