

# Organisational change shouldn't be left to consultants

## CEO should instead take over direct reins in managing such a transformation

Transformation in any company requires extraordinary resolve on the part of all stakeholders. The management must re-shape the business by ensuring a complete review of their preparedness.

A powerful transformation story only works when employees buy into the idea of change, thus answering their biggest question — “How will change transform the company and affect them?”. The transformation impact is always dependent on many factors, but answering your employees on the above question is critical.

One of the key factors is the CEO's willingness to personally engage with all stakeholders and to relentlessly highlight the successes as well as emerging challenges. This should unlock the much-needed support to the initiative and make it successful across the board.

Once this version of the “change management” narrative is made visible, the CEO should take it to the employees, encouraging them to debate and speak freely on the steps involved. These initiatives will make the process achieve the maximum reach. While the narrative should have clarity, it should also be adaptive in its implementation and must be convincing to all stakeholders.

Selling the story of transformation is itself a mammoth task. It is further compounded with the challenge of reinforcing it within the company. Avoiding repetition and bringing clarity is important in the process as employees are involved in their routine responsibilities and won't always take the time to apply their thought in assessing the impact. It is important that select strategic messages that sum up change management and its story-line needs to percolate throughout the company.

It is also necessary to highlight success stories. Sharing these helps crystallise the meaning of change management and gives people confidence about its effectiveness. Leading and running campaigns highlighting certain key successes is an effective way to embolden the change.

Learning from mistakes alone should not be the approach for improvements. The management culture should learn from doing more things collectively. Within a team, discussion on errors often leads to a sense of blaming the person responsible, which in the long run results in resistance to change. Attention to corrective steps is more effective.

Role modelling and behavioural changes are necessities rather than an option. CEOs should lead by example as employees always weigh the actions of their CEO to determine their decision and perception about believing the story.

Typically, a personal change management journey involves holistic feedback on leadership behaviour relevant to the goals and need analysis to reveal progress. It also requires a commitment to a shortlist of objectives and necessary professional coaching needed to meet these ends.

It is more emphatic when all members of an executive team pursue their change management journeys individually, but collectively discuss and reinforce the objectives. One of the best ways to undertake explicit announcements is to develop and execute a series of symbolic decisions. This signals to employees that they should condition their behaviours in ways appropriate to the change management and support these types of attributes in others.

The reason of these symbolic announcements is to ensure the impact is felt throughout. That helps employees understand how people are reaping the benefits of transformation.

CEOs should be able to share a meaningful story and articulate the right role to get the team on board. However, it is also important to invest time that is needed in building the team.

The CEO needs to dive deep to explore the abilities of individual members and act swiftly on the success measure and its results. It is always useful to map the team's capability on a matrix, through the process of role-modelling the desired behaviour. Those in the high-performance category are the stars and those with overall low scorings should be motivated, developed or eased out.

When a definitive action is taken to improve or remove underperforming managers, this helps in sending a clear message to other team members that role-modelling and teamwork matters. It is also important for CEOs — from an impact management perspective — to roll up their sleeves and get involved when significant interests are at stake.

This boosts the much-needed acceptance of the change management process among stakeholders.

Change management's biggest challenge is to acclimatise those who are not prepared for the desired model due to mindsets and behaviour. To make it successful, every stakeholder has a role to play in the process. But the role of a CEO is most crucial in leading from the front on behalf of all others.

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