



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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What Lies Beneath!

Unleashing the power of quantum change ...

Picture this

Joshua Briggs is a senior copywriter at Ideas and Images, a USD \$4 million advertising firm. Owing to his creative prowess Joshua has immense credibility not only in the firm but also across the industry. Joshua's decade long career has been rather smooth.

Enter the demon! The ad firm appointed a new creative head, Martin Woofer with credentials that not many in the industry can flaunt. However, Joshua was uncomfortable with Martin's style of working. Martin was a hardcore micromanager and did not encourage Joshua's take on any assignment approach. Moreover, he expected Joshua to follow his work methodologies. Being a new generation creative writer Joshua prefers more innovative and smarter ways. He was however hesitant to express his apprehensions. How could he tell a man with experience that people in the industry swear by the fact that his way of working was unproductive and time-consuming?

Every workplace has "Joshuas". Most managers and executives, especially generation "Y"ers face such professional conflicts. However, very few managers take the initiative to meet the problem head-on.

How can managers alleviate the misery of such situations? How can they make their professional relationships more flexible and satisfying? What exactly are employee responsibilities in these cases? The answer lies in maximizing the positives of a situation such that the overall health of the company gets a boost. In short employees have to strike the right balance between the long-term renewing change and the short-term deliverables.

The solution is two-dimensional. The first part deals with the embedded practices of a corporate while the second part addresses enhancing readiness to change.

The right approach

At the very onset employees would have to lock their horns with the "tacit" and unwritten rules of working. Every organization is a reflection of its people and their thought processes. In due course these thought processes metamorphose into the "work culture". The entire organization starts to cherish the comfort zone created over a period of time. This in fact is a positive aspect of corporate management. Therefore, in the absence of a defined framework it is impossible to have streamlined processes, well-timed deliveries, product launches and innovations. Therefore it's not the constructs of organizational working but its rigidity that needs to be addressed. Organizations prefer to follow practices that are time-tested and have been deeply embedded in their spirit. However, the current dynamism of corporate stubbornness and rigidity would hardly pay. Hence employees who seek to accomplish paradigmatic change should focus on the very basic aspects of doing business before moving upwards.

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The task is rather challenging. Most corporations provide managers with opportunities to bring about “tactical change”, which largely deals with fine-tuning existing business practices. Paradigmatic change though is more radical and calls for attitudinal overhaul. Thus managers and executives aiming for paradigmatic change need to direct all their energies towards changing the way day-to-day activities are executed.

The next step towards accomplishing successful radical change is to gauge and alleviate resistance to change. Readiness to change is a critical parameter for bringing about quantum change.

Managers need to gradually move into the comfort zone of others in the company and introduce them to better and more comfortable working methods without compromising on the overall organizational productivity. The following guidelines would help employees in effective change management:

Shoot for the root cause

As mentioned earlier a company’s culture is reflective of its “thinking” mechanism. It also indicates the successes and failures encountered in the process of evolution. A company’s present-day actions are invariably an extension of its past. It’s these experiences that dictate company practices and build a construct around which a company begins to operate. Hence, to accomplish quantum change, employees should go back to company history and analyze the various changes, the reasons that prompted the change and the consequences thereof. While researching for clues, employees should bear in mind that certain practices may not be very obvious but they govern the way things move in the workplace. These are tacit indicators of the disconnection between ‘what is’ and ‘what should be’.

Support professional ties with personal bonds

Managers aspiring for quantum change should make an effort to build a personal rapport with colleagues, seniors and subordinates. A friendly and cordial personal relationship enhances the other’s readiness to change. Thus building a sound base of professional and personal ties is fundamental to paradigmatic change.

The more the merrier

Unlike tactical change, paradigmatic change calls for organization-wide involvement. The involvement may not be in action, but mental involvement of managers across the board is a must for quantum change to happen.

Learn by doing

Managers in a quantum change project should engage in creating a showcase of the intended change. Unlike a pilot study where implementation of a new practice is already committed, showcase is an open-ended experiment where new practice can either be rejected or accepted depending on the consequences when conducted on a smaller scale.

Have options



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Putting all eggs in one basket is unwise. Hence, managers seeking paradigmatic change should propel the change movement with multiple change initiatives rather than one single change initiative. Multiple options would prevent the change initiative from going slack even if one or two of the initiatives fail.

The acid test

Finally, after making all the right moves, there is only one factor that would determine the ultimate outcome of the change initiative - the upper management reaction. If upper management is receptive and ready to make changes in a company's resource allocation, key performance and behavioral drivers and other support factors, the effort is worth the sweat.

Managers and executives seeking to make a positive difference must realize that it is this balance that will maximize the company's long-term well being without compromising on its short-term deliverables. Thus it would be prudent to strike the right balance between proximate and fundamental actions.