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CONNECTIONS TO GROWTH

HARNESSING—AND LEVERAGING—THE POWER OF CHANGE

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By developing a culture that anticipates change, you build a team that's more agile and adept at productive, profitable transformation.

The Leader as an Agent of Change

For business owners, change can arrive in the form of challenge or opportunity. The market leader in your space launches innovative products or services, and you have to scramble to remain competitive. Your biggest customer calls to announce a huge hike in orders, effective immediately, and you have to sort out staffing, outsourcing, and strategic alliance options to keep pace. Whether you're building change into your roadmap for growth or facing an unexpected development, your company's future depends on your ability to lead the team through its next phase of evolution. And while you can't know which changes are coming, you can prepare your organization to know how to deal with change and provide your employees with the tools, training, and support they need to contribute productively to your efforts.

"No matter what the change is, the conversations are going to be the same. Just the content is going to be different," says change management specialist Braden Kelley, author of *Charting Change: A Visual Toolkit for Making Change Stick*. "It can be a huge competitive advantage if your organization is better at managing and adopting change more quickly than your competition."

But leading—as opposed to managing—change involves more than simply establishing systems and processes. There's a strong psychological dimension at play that allows your team to be prepared not just procedurally, but mentally and emotionally. By giving proper attention to those elements, you can reduce the risk that your managers and employees feel blindsided in the face of an unanticipated shift in the business. Instead, they can be prepped to respond positively to the "opportunity to morph," says Cheryl Cran, a future of work and change leadership expert and author of *The Art of Change Leadership: Driving Transformation in a Fast-Paced World*.

"I look at change leadership as an opportunity for the hero's journey," she says. "If we are individually constantly becoming more flexible and adaptable, then change doesn't seem to be something that's happening to us. It's something that we respond to strategically because we've built the capacity in advance of that change happening."

Leverage Your Culture

To achieve that goal, think of change leadership as something that can be dispersed throughout your organization. As the business owner or CEO, your role is to lead communication of the vision, mission, and strategy. But you want employees to embrace the change, not simply submit to it, and successful implementation will depend on people throughout your organization. Seek out informal leaders whose insights may play a role in refining that strategy and whose support may be invaluable in securing the participation of team members who resist the change.

"It's not just about talking at people and communicating something to them. It's about really helping them to understand how they fit in," says Kathy Gersch, a founder and executive vice president of Kotter International. "Many companies leave a lot of the horsepower in the garage."

To optimize organization-wide support, make sure that your change messages include information about what you expect of individuals and how they can expect the change to affect them. "A really good leader is a really good coach, able to relate how the change benefits the individual," Cran says. "Typically, when we communicate change, it's about increasing profits. It's rarely linked back to the employees. Explain what's in it for them so that they're inspired to want to make the change. You want to create a culture where the majority of people are your change leaders."

That need for one-on-one communication may extend to the tools you use for message delivery. Gersch notes that people's communication preferences may differ by department, by their level of tenure in the organization, or even by generation. Adapting to those preferences may increase your overall productivity and performance both while you're navigating the change and over the long run.

With that in mind, she advocates creating teams and task forces that are representative of the entire organization and can offer you the full spectrum of points of view that you need. "These cross-functional teams can help with strategic shifts so that you have a mechanism to engage the organization when you need to," she says. "It's about having those things ongoing, always at the ready, because there's always something you're trying to change—no organization is ever standing still."

Provide Tools and Training

Technology isn't a panacea or a substitute for planning, but there are tools that can help your team work through change more productively and in a more

collaborative environment. (*See the "Team-Changing Technology Checklist" sidebar for an overview of software, apps, and platforms that can support your change initiative.*)

"Useful software empowers the employees, the line workers, and the people who are customer-facing or are doing most of the actual work rather than the management side of things, says Jason Hong, associate professor at the Human-Computer Interaction Institute in Carnegie Mellon University's School of Computer Science. That can mean enabling them to access information more quickly, be more productive, communicate more effectively, or break down barriers that could impede progress.

To select the right technology for your organization and its employees, "study how people are already trying to do things, and then look at how to streamline those existing processes," Hong says. Then, as you evaluate your technology options, make use of what's called participatory design: "As you're designing or deploying these systems, you want to get feedback and do iterations with people who are actually going to be using them."

CHANGE MANAGEMENT RESOURCE LIST

Every organization faces its own set of challenges in facilitating successful, sustainable, and replicable change. Refer to these online resources for expert advice and examples on adapting your organization, your employees, and your own mindset to the change targets and obstacles you face:

■ **10 Critical Questions for Change Leaders.** Published by the American Management Association, this article guides you through the process of setting the stage for change; soliciting and tracking employee perspectives; communicating not just the change vision, but what it offers to all stakeholders; and developing emotional literacy.

■ **To Create Change, Leadership Is More Important Than Authority.** This *Harvard Business Review* article notes that "while authority can compel action, it does little to inspire belief." Change initiatives often fail when their leaders disregard the need to gain support; this resource can help you learn to beat the odds.

■ **Change Leader, Change Thyself.** Research conducted by McKinsey & Company suggests that "half of all efforts to transform organizational performance fail either because senior managers don't act as role models for change or because people in the organization defend the status quo." Here, the company offers guidance on aligning your mindset with your change targets.

■ **Real Change Leaders: How You Can Create Growth and High Performance at Your Company.** McKinsey & Company also offers an excerpt from this book, which stresses the importance of recruiting middle and front-line managers as change leaders.

■ **8-Step Process for Leading Change.** Kotter International developed this process because "organizations that do not or cannot evolve will not last." From this page, you can view a chart of the process and access a download of the company's free *8-Step Process for Leading Change* e-book.

■ **7-Day Leadership Mastery e-course.** The free resources available on Cheryl Cran's website include a download of this e-course, which guides you toward the ability to "pinpoint your technological strengths, zero in on your areas of improvement, see how to use technology to your advantage, and discover more about yourself as a leader."

■ **Change Planning Toolkit.** Braden Kelley has developed more than 50 frameworks, worksheets, and other tools in support of change planning. Among these, he has made 10 available for free download on his website, including the Visual Project Charter, Motivation Ability Worksheet, and PCC Change Readiness Framework. Each tool is accompanied by an article that also is available for free download.

TEAM-CHANGING TECHNOLOGY CHECKLIST
From social media to corporate e-learning, these tools help your team prepare for—and master—change.

Technology can't replace the human components of change leadership. But software, apps, platforms, and social media can support your message delivery, aid team-building and collaboration, and help you to track and make the most of employee insights as your change initiative progresses.

Equally important, they make it possible to share information, updates, and news of milestones in a variety of formats. This allows you to deliver messages by the means most likely to generate a positive, productive response from each individual, optimize employee engagement, and promote organization-wide commitment to shared goals.

Among the technologies that you may find helpful as you lead change are:

■ *Document sharing platforms*: Tools such as Microsoft Office 365 allow you to disseminate information to all stakeholders and receive comments and suggestions on the strategies you present.

■ *Data visualization tools*: Sometimes graphics are better suited than words to communicate ideas or goals, and you probably already have data visualization technology within the software that's already on your desktop. Enabling the Power View add-on in Microsoft Excel 2013 or in Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010, for example, can add data visualization capabilities to Excel.

■ *Enterprise social networking*: By using a private social network such as Yammer, you can create a virtual space in which employees can share information, ideas, and lessons learned throughout the change process. A similar option is to create an internal Facebook page for the company.

■ *Video conferencing platforms*: Internet-driven systems like AnyMeeting and Cisco WebEx can help foster feelings of increased connection among employees who work remotely or in different locations.

■ *Online project management platforms*: Basecamp and similar Web-based tools create a virtual space in which team members can work together regardless of where they're located.
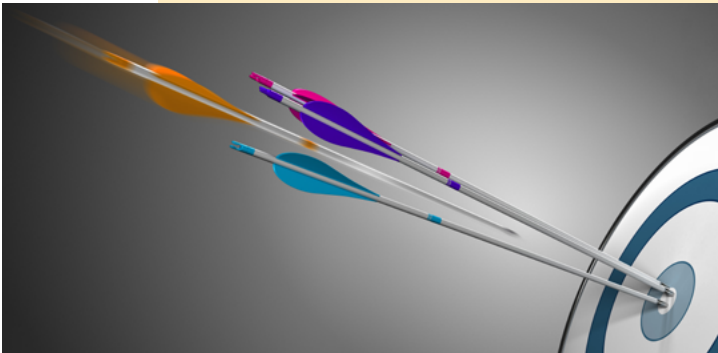
■ *Email and instant messaging*: Employees who are resistant to change are often equally reluctant to begin using new or unfamiliar technologies. To help them to grow comfortable with your company's evolution and contribute successfully to your change initiative, it may be helpful to build redundancy into your communication strategy by recapping major message points in emails, texts, or even inter-office memos. At that point, it might make sense to introduce a simple application, like Slack, which offers a simple way for teams to instant message each other at any time.

■ *Corporate e-learning platforms*: Don't forget to use technology as a means of delivering benefits to the members of your team in the form of professional training and development. An e-learning platform, like CourseMill, Docebo, or Litmos, can help your employees to master new skills and create a connection between organizational change and their personal growth.

Apply that same approach to making sure that your employees know how to use the new tools at their disposal. Failure to provide them with adequate technology training can sabotage their ability to use the tools, make them more resistant to future technology implementations, and therefore imperil your current and upcoming change initiatives.

Sustain Your Evolution

As you establish your plan for the current change, create a living document that you can update as implementation progresses. There's no need to overcomplicate this aspect of your planning. All you need is a simple one-page document that captures "how you're going to overcome barriers and how you're going to validate assumptions to make sure they're correct, so you can have a more successful change effort," Kelley says. "Make change a capability of the organization, and establish a process or methodology that you want to follow."

Cran finds it helpful to use a checklist as you work through change. "Have we met with the group? Have we done our creative solution brainstorming session with the group? Have we met with everybody one-on-one to make sure they have resources for what we're doing? You're creating a checklist in anticipation of unforeseen change, but you're also documenting everything as it happens, using a project management tool so that it is replicable," she says. "You can't replicate unforeseen change, but you can replicate the process and the approach."

Those documents can then provide a foundation for creating your blueprints for future change. In the same way, each initiative helps you to identify the people who are best equipped to take on leadership responsibilities as you face new challenges and opportunities. Try to be fluid in the way you define

leadership, Kelley advises. Not everyone will be the authority figure or the sponsor of change; some will play their roles by helping to design the change or encouraging buy-in and support among their colleagues.

"If we start to take a more roles-based approach to change, we find that everybody has a role to play, and it's not just about the change agents or the quick wins," he says. "It's more about making sure that you have all the roles occupied and that you're working to sustain a momentum and a pace that is digestible for the organization."

This strategic approach to planning for change—even change that has yet to be defined—is a form of capacity building that equips the company to respond productively to whatever challenges and opportunities it encounters. By developing an organization, a culture, and a workforce that knows how to respond rather than react, you establish a strong competitive advantage that promotes performance, profitability, and sustained success.

CASE STUDY

Managing Change Starts on Day 1

Grant Jenkins introduced a visionary product and learned that change is a constant.

One evening, following a college football game in Grant Jenkins' hometown of Indianapolis, Indiana, he and his wife Erica, were strolling down the street, lamenting the lack of recycling bins. And then it hit him: An idea for a smarter waste solution. It would be the genesis of his company, eCeptacle, and the PowerBin, a self-compacting trash bin that could do much more than handle waste.

In 2012, after meeting with engineers to help create a prototype, he left his high-profile finance position at JPMorgan Chase to form the new firm. Rapid change has been a constant in his life ever since.

eCeptacle's flagship product, the PowerBin, is a public trashcan like nothing you've ever seen.

Standing at about five feet tall, the sleek, self-compacting container can hold up to three times the amount of the average public trash bin, serve as a Wi-Fi hotspot, display ads, and allow users to report crimes through a dedicated smartphone app. It also transmits data to municipal and other managers to let them know when it's full, features a public safety app, and more. In Jenkins' words, "we've built the world's smartest trashcan."

Building momentum

Jenkins and his team—college friend Terrill Krigger (COO), Jonathan Pollack (chief counsel), and CEO Scott Fankhauser—have spent the past few years developing design, manufacturing, and production resources, getting eCeptacle's name out there, and building momentum. Because the PowerBin is designed to serve larger facilities, commercial real estate developments, municipalities, and related properties, they've been working to carve inroads into those markets.

"At the beginning of the process, all four of us worked together to build partnerships, solicit help and funding, and sit in on key calls, etc.," says Jenkins. "Once we began to ramp up, we realized we needed to implement guidelines around responsibilities, not just for now, but as a corporate entity going forward.

While they've made good progress in identifying and beginning to work with a range of prospective clients, it was taking a booth at the recent Consumer Electronics Show (CES), in Las Vegas this past January, which took them to the next level.

"We went out there at the last minute on a shoestring budget, and it absolutely has catapulted us to a different level, in terms of audience and the people who have approached us," says Jenkins. "We were judged to be in the Top 10 of digital products, among the likes of Corning and Panasonic. Not only is it propelling us domestically, but we met potential partners from Dubai, Ecuador, and Canada. So while we're still trying to grow here locally, we're also building those relationships outside the United States."

The CES appearance has led to greater coverage in business journals, the introduction to and entrance of a nonprofit business accelerator, ProjectSV in Silicon Valley, and of course, orders.

Success breeds change

In fact, just two months after CES, eCeptacle landed its first significant project, securing a national real estate trust (REIT) with 121 properties in 20 different states. And more are on the way. In fact, the company is slated to produce 250 to 400 PowerBins over the next few months.

"While we've been dealing with change since we started, this definitely pushes us into a higher gear," notes Jenkins. He adds that managing change has meant thinking both reactively and proactively and that much of that management has taken place in a couple of core areas:

■ **DEFINING ROLES.** "At the beginning of the process, all four of us worked together to build partnerships, solicit help and funding, and sit in on key calls, etc.," says Jenkins. "Once we began to ramp up, we realized we needed to implement guidelines around responsibilities, not just for now, but as a corporate entity going forward. We needed to be more effective at divvying up tasks, with the realization that we need to work with our strengths. Scott can't be on sales calls, and I can't work on contracts with manufacturers."

■ **KEEPING THE VISION IN MIND.** While the PowerBin is certainly a technologically advanced trashcan, Jenkins knows that eCeptacle can't stop at its current, robust list of capabilities. "The market isn't going to stand still, so we know we need to actively manage change that the market presents," he says. "We have competition out there, so we need to make sure the PowerBins don't become the dinosaurs of trashcans. When we started this a few years ago, Wi-Fi wasn't everywhere. Now it is. So we need to constantly be looking to the future. And we're thinking not just about technology, but social issues. For example, we're now looking at what it would take to make our bins electric vehicle charging stations. We can't stand still."

The biggest change eCepatacle is managing right now is the imminent influx of customers and revenue. "Not only have our personal roles intensified, but we're now looking at beefing up our staff, finding deeper production resources, and broadening our overall infrastructure," Jenkins adds. "We want to stay ahead of the curve, not get caught behind it."