



We Try Hard to Change, But It's Still the Same

We don't believe you can successfully change people's behaviour for good without controllable environments—and the right pieces in play. Unfortunately, many companies try very hard, spending a tremendous amount of resources, to modify employees' behaviour within their own corporate context. And, despite the outlay of time and money, they fail miserably in the long run.

Why organisations repeat this failed experiment, over and over, is difficult to grasp. Millions of reasons might explain why management teams try again and again to modify the behaviour of their workforce, yielding only incremental results at best. But the most likely rationale always points to self-interest, either of a particular group or perhaps of an individual within a group. When organisations experience such one-sided behaviour, the hope and potential for real and genuine change fades away.

The Real Trouble Behind the Effort

Our work with clients has illuminated several factors involved in unsuccessful leadership attempts to forcefully

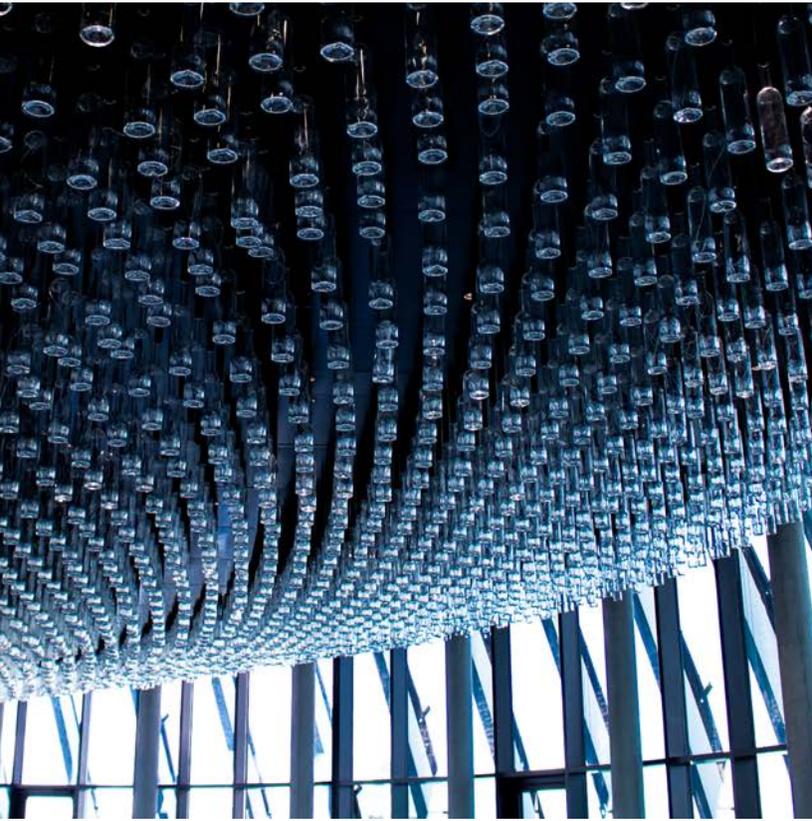
change people's behaviour. Essentially, management does not address or understand the root causes of the problem of people's adaptability to change.

Factor 1: Decision Making

People make decisions based on their values, not based on facts. Often, leaders fail to hire and retain talented people who share the organisation's values. Consequently, they continue to waste time and money in trying to change employees' behaviour to align with the company and perform in the way that management wants them to do. Since this type of effort will never be sustainable in the long run, don't do it. Corporate resources are far better spent if leadership focuses on building organisational values that are truly and widely accepted by the workforce, rather than using costly incentives to change people's behaviour for a specific objective for a specific short-term period.

Without shared values, it becomes almost impossible to expect people to pursue and ultimately achieve the same outcomes. There is a strong link between behaviour and values, so that you cannot change behaviour without

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understanding what people truly value. If you want to transform your business, the place to start is discovering your employees' values, nowhere else.

Factor 2: Knowledge

Knowledge without interest does not last. If you train your employees and upgrade their skill base without truly understanding what makes them tick (or, in other words, what they value), you will again be wasting a lot of time and money trying to convince them to acquire knowledge that they don't necessarily value. This point always leads to failed endeavours for the individual, as well as the organisation.

Leadership needs to invest in the right training programmes for the right people to make the right real change happen. And the only way to achieve this goal is to find out what employees' desire in their careers, how you can help them reach their personal goals through knowledge and training, and how their goals can mesh with the company's mission.

Factor 3: Self-Motivation

Self-motivation is the key to lasting change. It all comes down to self-awareness and personal leadership.

If individuals do not truly understand themselves, what they desire, and how badly they desire it—and then refuse to take ownership of their lives and careers—they will stagnate. If an employee is not self-motivated, any task performed for the company is likely to be mediocre. Their attitude will reflect a simple get-the-job-done without going the extra mile or taking pride in achievement of goals, whether personal, professional, or organisational.

Hiring and retaining the right self-motivated employees is a key ingredient that allows leadership to introduce, implement, and continue transformation to keep the organisation viable in the long-term. Such individuals are willing to consider change and contribute positively to their teams, their work units, and to the organisation overall.

Factor 4: Common Sense

People are more open to change if you articulate the reasons for change with common sense, which always prevails in convincing others to change. There is no need—or time—for wishful thinking, especially with regard to business outcomes. Shareholders don't invest in an organisation because leaders "wishfully think" that people will change and adapt to new ways of work, simply because the



management group decides to implement those changes.

This scenario is particularly evident in merger and acquisition (M&A) deals. For the most part, M&A opportunities initially take place with very good intentions in mind. Typically, however, at some stage of the process, most management groups lose track of what makes the deal more successful and desirable than others. They quickly begin to arrive at abstract conclusions about the end result and lock their thinking on executing the deal as fast as possible to achieve the outcomes they highly anticipate.

That's where the trouble starts. When desire and emotions get in the way, management teams also lose their common sense. And when common sense is lost, if the facts are not clearly articulated and communicated, the end result is that you also lose people in the process—through attrition, lower motivation, reduced productivity, and indifference. You start pushing unrealistic and impractical deadlines, objectives that no one shares, and messages that, eventually, no one believes.

Transformation Needs the Right Ingredients

The bottom line is simple: Successful leadership teams

become successful, not because they do only one thing right in making change happen, but because they do all necessary things right. They understand the need to incorporate shared values, desired knowledge, self-motivation, and common sense.

Most important, when businesses start compromising on values, they think that somehow they will save the day. But, in truth, by doing so, they end up sacrificing their integrity, which can only doom the organisation's future to failure. No matter the circumstances, leadership must avoid sacrificing its values if the goal is to make a lasting change in the company, while building a successful and sustainable business. Work with employees, not against them, and they will work alongside you.

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