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HOW CHANGING CULTURE CAN BOOST EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

By JEROME PARISSE-BRASSENS
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C HANGING culture is a critical element to long-term, sustainable improvements in employee engagement and human resources (HR) needs to understand what is happening beneath the surface of an organisation.

Engagement and culture are often confused with in transformation agendas. They are, however, quite different, and it is critical that HR is able to differentiate the two if they want to have a sustainable impact on the workplace.

DISTINGUISHING CULTURE AND ENGAGEMENT

Engagement can be defined as “the extent to which employees commit to something or someone in their organisation, and how hard they work and how long they stay as a result of that commitment.”

Culture, on the other hand, can be defined as “the patterns of behaviour that are encouraged, discouraged or tolerated by people and systems over time.”

Engagement provides a gauge on how individuals feel about their work, whereas culture is a measure of how people go about doing their work.

Other differences are that engagement is time-specific and quickly outdated. For many, by the time the results are communicated and cascaded, things will have changed, and the data no longer reflects the reality of the organisation.

Engagement is what you see above the surface and culture is what lies underneath.

Because engagement is sensitive to short-term activities designed to reinvigorate employees’ commitment such as new perks or salary increases, engagement measures can vary dramatically in a short period of time. On the other hand, culture is less sensitive to external influences.

One of the other differences between the two concepts is that engagement is based on an individual’s opinion. For this reason, results collected from an individual perspective have limited relevance and will not guide behaviour and influence what people do, how they interact and consequently how the organisation performs, lie in the lower part of the iceberg.

Understanding these drivers is fundamental to understanding and changing your culture, and in turn, your engagement.

HR directors who use engagement as proxy for culture run the risk of using the wrong measure.

Applying this principle, engagement is what you see above the surface and culture is what lies underneath.

With culture, the collective beliefs and assumptions of the organisation, which guide behaviour and influence what people do, how they interact, and consequently how the organisation performs, lie in the lower part of the iceberg.

HR directors who use engagement as proxy for culture run the risk of using the wrong measure.

WHY HR SHOULD MEASURE THE CULTURE PULSE

So, what does this mean?

Should HR drop the engagement survey and replace it with a culture survey? Not at all. Engagement is a powerful tool that monitors the extra effort that people are willing to make in the interest of the organisation.

As mentioned above, it can reveal deeper issues that are often cultural. This is why conducting a culture assessment adds value to your people survey.

Engagement used to be measured annually, whereas today, many organisations are conducting pulse surveys two or three times a year or even moving to ongoing measurement using specific apps or other tools.

Culture should also be measured on a regular basis. My advice to HR managers is to assess their whole culture every second or third year, but to also pull cultural attributes they are working on several times a year.

An ongoing measure of the shift happening in those areas where they are focusing their culture effort is indispensable.

Without it, it will be difficult to demonstrate that change is happening, and budgets may be reallocated to other areas of the business.

IN CONCLUSION

The people and engagement survey are a good indicator of what is happening in the organisation at the ‘visible’ level. With a measure of culture to provide an understanding of what drives people to do the things they do, HR teams will have all the data they need to pilot the organisation with the long-term in mind.
OFFERING TOUGH FEEDBACK

HERE’S HOW YOU DO IT

By ROSHAN THIRAN
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1 GO BEYOND THE PROBLEM

Let’s say your department is disorganised. Chances are, you’ll know your department much better than a senior manager or leader. While knowing the problem is valuable, having an idea of possible solutions is even more worthwhile. It gives you the chance to show your leader that, not only are you conscientious, you’re also a problem-solver. And as any leader will tell you, a good problem-solver is worth their weight in gold.

2 NOTHING CAN BE SEEN IN THE DARK

Most leaders are aware that people say, “Great, boss!” whenever they ask employees how things are going, and yet conversations crop up between employees where they share an entirely different message among themselves. As effective as your leader might be, it’s highly unlikely they’re a mind reader. We can’t focus on something we can’t see. Keep in mind that leaders can’t know everything that’s going on. We rely on our teams to be as open and up front as our teams expect us to be.

3 BE COURAGEOUS

For those who might be reading this and thinking, “This all sounds good and well, but try telling this to my boss?” I would still encourage you to use your voice. For the most part, leaders appreciate it when important matters are brought to their attention. Yes, we’re busy and yes, we have many things to juggle, but we’d rather know what’s going on in our organisation and help solve any issues before they have a chance to grow. If your boss really is someone who doesn’t welcome tough feedback, speak out anyway. That way, should the problem come to light when it gets worse, no one can say you didn’t try to raise awareness.

4 IT’S OUR ORGANISATION

Especially in Asia, it’s easy to get caught up in giving too much respect to people in positions of authority or influence. While (mutual) respect is admirable, it’s worth noting that, without people alongside him, Jack Ma’s Alibaba wouldn’t exist. Mark Zuckerberg’s Facebook would have remained a college sharing space, and if Steve Jobs hadn’t surrounded himself with talented people, today when someone said, “Are you an Apple fan?” you’d perhaps reply, “No, I prefer oranges.” You’re an important part of the organisation because you contribute to its performance. With that in mind, should you use your voice with the realisation that you’re helping our organisation to improve and flourish. As for us leaders, a point of self-reflection is that we’d be nowhere without the great people who surround us.

Before I go into some reasons why tough feedback is necessary, it’s worth noting the importance of how providing feedback should be done, to make everyone’s life easier. Consider the following examples:

“My department is so disorganised. How do we do any work when we can’t even arrange our time properly?”

“My manager is such a pain. He expects us to work so many hours; we have lives outside of work, you know!”

“The system we use is terrible. Half the time it doesn’t work, the rest of the time it’s so slow. Seriously, it’s such a drain on time, it makes me so annoyed.”

“Hey guys, how’s it going?”

“Oh hey, boss – yeah, everything’s good, thanks!”

“Hey guys, how’s it going?”

“No, no, everything’s great!”

Leaders have, at one time or another, heard these complaints. Or, they might have even been the ones giving them early on in their professional lives. With these examples in mind, I’d like to shed some light on why offering tough feedback is vital, and how we can best provide it. This is not a1

Any leader worth their salt will know that it’s unlikely that everything is great all the time within their organisation. Of course, particularly in this part of the world, employees rarely like to make a fuss, and so they tend to keep quiet about any issues they might have. Or, worse still, they might fear upsetting the boss should they bring a problem to his or her attention.

Neither of these situations are ideal. Any organisation that claims to espouse awareness rarely deviates from the norm. We can’t focus on something we can’t see. Keep in mind that leaders can’t know everything that’s going on. We rely on the rest of the team to be as open and up front as our teams expect us to be. As effective as your leader might be, it’s highly unlikely they’re a mind reader. We can’t focus on something if they’re not aware that it’s broken.

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Roshan is the CEO of Leaderonomics Group. He believes that everyone can be a leader and make a dent in the universe in their own special ways. Connect with Roshan on Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter @lepaker for more insights into business, personal development and leadership.
“Entrepreneurship is a chance to trade a solution to someone who has a problem that needs solving. Solve more problems, solve bigger problems, solve problems more widely, and you’re an entrepreneur. It’s tempting to industrialise this work, to make it something with rules and processes. But that’s not the heart of it. The work is to solve problems in a way that you’re proud of.” — Seth Godin

All entrepreneurs have strong positive traits, but it is possible to have too much of a good thing. The key to finding a balance is self-awareness. Monitor your own emotions and understand how they affect you, your colleagues and your business decisions. If you can master that, you’re halfway there. To learn more click here: bit.ly/7traits-entrepreneur

NE of the real joys of what we chose to do in life is working with leaders across a wide range of companies, big and small, established and new. So many of the challenges and opportunities are similar.

Almost every company struggles in some way, shape, or form to stay focused on what’s really important. Holding tough conversations is a real issue for most managers around the globe.

And, attracting and retaining the right talent for your key positions and culture never goes away.

There are also some challenges that seem to trend with company maturity and size.

With start-ups, there’s usually a scrappy, “How can we?”, attitude that makes the folks at every level thirsty to own the U.G.L.Y. and make things better. Love that. Of course, there are usually some operational challenges and growing pains, but that’s another post.

We’ve had some exciting opportunities recently to cross-pollinate some of the mindsets and best-practices we’re seeing from our start-up clients with some of the leaders in more established cultures with legacy operating norms (and vice versa). Of course, this is big fun for me since I spent 20 years at Fortune 50, Verizon, and now run our own fast-growing entrepreneurial start-up working to make a global impact.

Here are just a few of my thoughts on how to think like an entrepreneur:

**1. MAKE EVERY HIRE MATTER**

I’ve never met a successful entrepreneur who’s staffing strategy was putting people in seats. They’re hiring for values alignment, key skill sets, creativity and gung-ho. People are pricey and there’s no margin for a bad hire.

Now running my own company, I know there’s nothing more vital than building an A-team.

**2. ACCOUNTABILITY IS THE FABRIC OF SUCCESS**

What I see in these scrappy, successful companies is a tenacious focus on executing the plan. When necessary pivots occur, there’s a quick huddle and smart decisions around what’s got to go to accomplish the next strategic move. ‘I didn’t get to it’, doesn’t go over really well when the visionary CEO is staring at you wondering why.

**3. OWN YOUR OUTCOMES**

When you’re an entrepreneur, you can look around for someone else to blame for your problems (e.g. the market, the economy), but at the end of the day, they’re still your problems. Entrepreneurs know the blame game just wastes time.

Entrepreneurial thinking is about where we place the responsibility for our experiences. Although it’s not realistic to think that we have complete control of all our experiences, it’s martyrdom to think that we have none.

An entrepreneur is someone who is deeply engaged in his or her experience of life and willing to do the daily work of transforming it. Very successful entrepreneurs take the time to analyse their lives and to look closely at their vision and their purpose in life.

**4. PUT A STOP TO UNPRODUCTIVE MEETINGS**

I learned this one fast.

As an entrepreneur, when you calculate the hourly rate of everyone in the scene, yikes, it adds up. Learn to make your meetings the very best use of everyone’s time.

**5. PILOT NEW IDEAS AND FAIL FAST**

My experience at Verizon is that we stayed at initiatives too long, riding that horse way past its death for political reasons, face-saving reasons, inertia reasons...

I don’t see that in the start-ups I admire. They experiment and are willing to get over the sunk costs to do what really makes sense.

Karin Hurt is a keynote speaker, leadership consultant, and MBA professor. She has decades of experience in sales, customer service, and HR which she uses to help clients turn around results through deeper engagement. If you want more opportunities to win well, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.
A new senior chief human resources officer (CHRO) from operations reflected on his first 90 days as a CHRO. He noted that people from human resources (HR) seemed consumed with improving talent processes. He observed that they had developed many good disciplines at bringing people into the organisation and helping them be productive. He said that he felt they were 65 to 75 per cent up the ‘S-curve’ of managing talent. But he realised that the challenge in his organisation was not about talent alone, but about building a culture. He shared that his organisation was changing its business focus, and merely getting good people into the organisation was not enough; the organisation needed to create a more adaptive culture.

He believed the tagline, “culture eats strategy for lunch” and he felt that HR had the expertise available to help leaders create culture. He noted that people from human resources (HR) seemed consumed with improving talent processes. He observed that they had developed many good disciplines at bringing people into the organisation and helping them be productive. He said that he felt they were 65 to 75 per cent up the ‘S-curve’ of managing talent. But he realised that the challenge in his organisation was not about talent alone, but about building a culture. He shared that his organisation was changing its business focus, and merely getting good people into the organisation was not enough; the organisation needed to create a more adaptive culture. He believed the tagline, “culture eats strategy for lunch” and he felt that HR had the expertise available to help leaders create culture.

He noted that HR professionals are the experts at building the right culture. He believed the tagline, “culture eats strategy for lunch” and he felt that HR had the expertise available to help leaders create culture.

Leaders can facilitate capability audits to determine if the organisation has prioritised the right capabilities to win. Leaders then have habits (organisation culture or patterns) that determine how they approach life. Psychologists say that 50 to 80 per cent of what people do come from habits or routines.

These habits show up in how people think (cultural intellectual agenda), act (cultural behavioural agenda), and manage emotions or sentiments that signal and sustain behaviours (cultural process agenda).

Talent is NOT enough

In today’s rapidly changing business world, the challenge of building the right organisation complements and supersedes the talent challenge. It is interesting to note that the Chartered Institute of Auditors has prepared documentation to help auditors monitor culture. Getting good people into the organisation falls with creating a culture where people work hard on the right things.

One of the challenges for HR professionals to facilitate building the right organisation is that there are related concepts, terms and prescriptions that require clarity.

Are organisations to be thought of as resources, core competencies, health, climate, processes, values, shared mindsets, organisation types or systems? With these confusing concepts, no wonder leaders have difficulty in creating competitive organisations. The concept clearly matters, but it seems impossible to articulate or define with any precision.

Let me propose a three-step process for leaders to bring discipline to creating victory through organisation.

1. Capability of the organisation

Organisation capabilities represent what the organisation is known for; what it is good at doing, and how it allocates resources to win in its market. Organisations should be defined less by their structure and more by their ability to establish the capabilities required to win – that is, to serve customers in ways that competitors cannot readily copy.

Organisation capabilities might include the ability to respond to or serve customers, drive efficiency, manage change, collaborate both inside and outside, innovate on products and business model, access information, and establish the right culture.

In today’s rapidly changing business world, the challenge of building the right organisation complements and supersedes the talent challenge. Leaders can facilitate capability audits to determine if the organisation has prioritised the right capabilities to win.

2. Effects of culture

Culture represents the pattern of how people think and act in the organisation. While organisations can have many capabilities, culture is likely the key for future success. The right culture takes what the organisation should be known for by key customers and uses this external identity to shape internal thought and action. Leaders can audit the extent to which an organisation has the right culture.

3. Action through agendas

Management actions can be identified and implemented to create and sustain the desired culture. Leaders can audit the extent to which an organisation has the right culture. The three dimensions in this organisation logic parallel psychologists’ understanding of individuals.

Individuals then have habits (organisation culture or patterns) that determine how they approach life. Psychologists say that 50 to 80 per cent of what people do come from habits or routines. These habits show up in how people think (cultural intellectual agenda), act (cultural behavioural agenda), and manage emotions or sentiments that signal and sustain behaviours (cultural process agenda).
BECOMING A HYBRID LEADER

CAN HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL LEADERSHIP CO-EXIST IN THE SAME COMPANY?

BY LEONARD BRODIE

DO you keep finding your leadership constant balancing act? Do you find that you’re giving people flexibility far beyond normal expectations? But then, you’re pushing them to the limit, demanding next-level results.

It’s a tough balancing act, and you also want discipline and vertical responsibility to still be in place. Where do you draw the line?

So, how are you going to be in place? Do you have that balance?

In order to be successful, you need to have that balance in place.

McChord identified three critical groups for organizational effectiveness:

1. The team of teams
2. The hybrid organization
3. The culture

BECOMING A HYBRID LEADER

The team of teams

A team is a group of people who work together to achieve a common goal. A team of teams is a group of teams that work together to achieve a common goal.

The team of teams is the foundation of any hybrid organization.

The hybrid organization

A hybrid organization is a combination of horizontal and vertical structures. It is a company that is both flat and hierarchical.

The culture

The culture is the set of values and behaviors that are shared by the employees of an organization.

Fostering a culture of innovation

In order to foster innovation, a leader needs to create a culture of innovation that is both horizontal and vertical. This means that the leader needs to create a culture that encourages both horizontal and vertical collaboration.

In conclusion, becoming a hybrid leader is essential in today’s fast-paced and ever-changing business environment. Leaders need to create a culture of innovation that fosters both horizontal and vertical collaboration to achieve success.
THE SILENT INFLUENCER IN YOUR ORGANISATION

IT CAN LIBERATE OR LIMIT YOUR BUSINESS

By CAROLYN TAYLOR
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There’s a silent power within your organisation that’s quietly moulding the patterns of behaviour that will determine your culture. A survey probably won’t detect it but identifying and shifting it will have a significant impact on performance. We’re not talking about values or behaviours here, but something far less universal and more specific to individual organisations. The dominant, but back, influence that has the capacity to both limit and liberate a business: our shared organisational beliefs.

I spent many of my early years as a culture consultant focusing on values and their relationship to culture. It is only in more recent years, however, that my colleagues at Walking the Talk have dedicated significant energy towards identifying and understanding the impact that beliefs have on culture. Although limiting beliefs can be more challenging to locate and shift, when it comes to business outcomes, the process is well worth the effort.

WHAT IS A BELIEF?
A belief is a conclusion about how the world works. Once formed, we use our beliefs to direct our future actions. For example, if I believe that coaching helps people to become more effective, then I will invest in coaching for myself and my employees. However, if I believe coaching is a waste of time and money, then I will not invest in it.

My beliefs about coaching may have been formed by a negative personal experience, or from something that I read about coaching, or even by what my peers have told me about coaching—based on their own experience, or what they themselves have heard from others.

Beliefs become particularly potent once we have persuaded ourselves that our beliefs are actual truths, rather than our opinion.

When this happens, we tend to close off from new information that could challenge or negate our belief. Once I have formed the belief that coaching is a waste of money, then if someone tells me about a good experience they have had with coaching, I might conclude that they have been brainwashed, or that the benefits won’t last.

But few organisations describe the beliefs on which they want to build their organisation. Fewer still can describe the beliefs on which they are currently operating.

Beliefs are subtle and often invisible, but they can be very persuasive when it comes to directing group behaviour.

CAUSE AND EFFECT (ON CULTURE)
The shared organisational beliefs that impact performance can take many forms. Over the years, we’ve uncovered some that were particularly powerful in shaping behaviour. Here are a few anonymous examples. Do any of these sounds familiar to you?

“We can do anything we put our minds to” – this belief generated a willingness to experiment and move into new markets. Sometimes with unrealistic goals and plans.

“We are too big to fail” – this shared organisational belief bred arrogance and a lack of customer empathy.

“Sweat willpower and brute force will allow us to push things through” – although this led to strong execution, it also produced bullying behaviour both internally and externally.

People either have what it takes, or they don’t” – created an “up or out” culture with little development or coaching.

More is always better” – this belief brought about continuous stretch, as well as poor prioritisation and high burnout.

Beliefs can be about trivial things, such as the best restaurant in town, or they can be more deeply embedded, such as the belief that “I am not good enough” or “if you want something done well, you have to do it yourself”.

Either way, our beliefs are the framework on which we base our day to day decisions and the way we behave.

From a cognitive point of view, beliefs can be incredibly useful. If we were to evaluate every situation with brand new eyes, then we would never get anything done. Beliefs free up mental real estate because they offer us a go-to shortcut for knowing the right thing to do.

Whilst beliefs are applied by individuals, they are also formed and applied by groups. And it is in this regard that they play such an important role in organisational life and culture shaping. Most organisations have a set of values that describe the aspirational features in the culture: integrity, teamwork, customer focus, accountability, innovation, and so on.

If you don’t change your beliefs, your life will be like this forever: Is that a good thing? – Somerset Maugham

DIAGNOSING BELIEFS
Identifying core beliefs takes patience and forensic diagnostics.

Unlike behaviours and values, people find it hard to articulate beliefs because they are often simply seen as the truth. Sometimes you need an external eye to spot them.

At Walking the Talk, we have not found surveys to be effective at uncovering the most powerful shared beliefs. Instead, we favour qualitative research techniques to extract the subtleties of deeply held organisational beliefs.

When we do unearth a core belief, we know it, because it engenders two strong responses: some gasp in shocked recognition, others start arguing that it is not a belief, but rather “just the way things are”.

The strength of both reactions is often the test of how close you are to a core belief.

WANT TO CHANGE BELIEFS? GET MARKETING!
Changing beliefs requires time and a coordinated process of communication, conversation, education, and presentation of new evidence. We liken this process to a successful marketing campaign.

Following good research, you’ll need to form a ‘campaign’ – one with very clear goals. Once the new, or reframed belief has been defined, you can then enrol a large group of leaders, opinion influencers, and viral techniques to seed new thinking in the organisation.

This is not an easy process, which is why it is important to treat it with the seriousness with which the marketing department would treat a major campaign.

IN CONCLUSION
Changing the shared beliefs held within the culture is just as difficult as changing beliefs that customers hold about a particular brand or its products.

And if the beliefs do not change, neither will the behaviours that they drive. The culture will continue as it did before. How will you know that shared beliefs are shifting? Evidence comes in the form of changing behaviours and decisions, as the new beliefs start to drive a new approach.

That approach then starts producing a different outcome in the market. In this way, a force that was once insidiously limiting can become an agent for transformation and growth organisation-wide.
SHIFTING TO EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY

By GREG SATELL

to JP Morgan Chase and Barclays have joined IBM’s Q Network to explore quantum computing, even though it will be years before that technology has a commercial impact. Leading tech companies have formed the Partnership on AI to better understand the consequences of artificial intelligence. Hundreds of companies have joined manufacturing hubs to learn about next generation technology.

It’s becoming more important to prepare than adapt. By the time you realise the need to adapt, it may already be too late.

BUILDING A PIPELINE OF PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

While the need to explore technologies long before they become commercially viable is increasing, competitive pressures show no signs of abating. Just because digital technology is not advancing the way it once did doesn’t mean that it will disappear. Many aspects of the digital world, such as the speed at which we communicate, will continue. Therefore, it is crucial to build a continuous pipeline of problems to solve. Most will be fairly incremental, either improving on an existing product or developing new ones based on standard technology.

Others will be a bit more aspirational, such as applying existing capabilities to a completely new market or adopting exciting new technology to improve service to existing customers.

However, as the value generated from digital technology continues to level off, much like it did for earlier technologies such as internal combustion and electricity, there will be an increasing need to pursue grand challenges to solve fundamental problems. That’s how truly new markets are created.

Clearly, this presents some issues with resource allocation.
Senior managers will have to combine the need to move fast and keep up with immediate competitive pressures with the long-term thinking it takes to invest in years of exploration with an uncertain payoff.

There’s no magic bullet, but it is generally accepted that the 70/20/10 principle for incremental, adjacent and fundamental innovation is a good rule of thumb.

EMPOWERING CONNECTIVITY

When Sloan designed the modern corporation, capacity was a key constraint. The core challenge was to design and build products for the mass market. Long-term planning to effectively organise plant, equipment, distribution and other resources was an important, if not decisive, competitive attribute.

Digitisation and globalisation, however, flipped this model and vertical integration gave way to radical specialisation.

To survive, leadership should understand that when the game is up, you need to learn how to play a new one.

Because resources were no longer concentrated in large enterprises but distributed across global networks, integration within global supply chains became increasingly important. With the rise of cloud technology, this trend became even more decisive in the digital world.

Creating proprietary technology that is closed off to the rest of the world has become unacceptable to customers who expect you to maintain API’s that integrate with open technologies and those of your competitors.

Over the next decade, it will become increasingly important to build similar connection points for innovation. For example, the United States military set up the Rapid Equipping Force that was specifically designed to connect new technologies with soldiers in the field who needed them.

Many companies are setting up incubators, accelerators, and corporate venture funds for the same reason. Others have set up programs to connect to academic research.

What’s clear is that going in alone is no longer an option and we need to set up specific structures that not only connect to new technology, but ensure that it is understood and adopted throughout the enterprise.

THE LEadership CHALLENGE

The shift from one era to another doesn’t mean that old challenges are eliminated. Even today, we need to scale businesses to service mass markets and rapidly iterate new applications.

The problems we need to take on in this new era of innovation won’t replace the old ones – they will simply add to them. Still, we can expect value to shift from agility to exploration as fundamental technologies rise to the fore. Organisations that are able to deliver new computing architectures, revolutionary new materials, and miracle cures will have a distinct competitive advantage over those who can merely engineer and design new applications.

It is only senior leaders who can empower these shifts and it won’t be easy. Shareholders will continue to demand quarterly profit performance. Customers will continue to demand product performance and service. Yet, it is only those who are able to harness the technologies of this new era – which will not contribute to profits or customer satisfaction for years to come – who will survive the next decade.

The one true constant is that success eventually breeds failure. The skills and strategies of one era do not translate to another.

To survive, the key organisational attribute will not be speed, agility, or even operational excellence, but leadership that understands that when the game is up, you need to learn how to play a new one.
4 STEPS TO STAY FOCUSED

By ANDREW GRIFFITHS
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‘Never underestimate the power of priorities and focus in achieving your big life goals.’

Over the years I’ve learnt a simple process that ensures I stay focused on what’s important in my business right here, right now.

It’s a simple way of setting business priorities and I’m going to share it.

1. ESTABLISH A PRIORITY FOR THE MONTH

At the beginning of every month, I establish a very clear priority and theme for what I need to focus my attention during the month ahead.

For example, if I know that a major project is about to come to an end, it’s pretty clear that I’m going to need some time to replace that income during the month ahead.

If you start to neglect your priority early in the month, it will fall by the wayside within a few days and nothing will happen. The priority theme needs to be given the attention it deserves and this takes discipline and focus.

2. DEFINE EXACTLY WHAT NEEDS TO BE ACHIEVED

Next, I define exactly what I want to achieve on that priority theme for the month ahead. What are my goals, objectives, reasons for achieving them, etc.? I really spell these out in detail to make sure they are super clear in my mind.

3. SCHEDULE IN QUALITY TIME

Every day I allocate quality time (not leftover time at 10 p.m. at night) to working on the priority.

Generally, I make it the first few hours of the day. This can be really tough because everything else pops up wanting your attention.

If you start to neglect your priority early in the month, it will fall by the wayside within a few days and nothing will happen. The priority theme needs to be given the attention it deserves and this takes discipline and focus.

4. MAKE FOCUS A HABIT

In the early days of doing this, I used to have Post-It notes all over the place reminding me what to focus on.

Today when I’m planning my day ahead or week, it’s the first thing I schedule in. It goes into my calendar on a daily basis. It’s everywhere. I don’t give myself the chance to forget about it or for other demands to push it out of the priority spotlight.

IN CONCLUSION

I have a number of monthly themes. They can include anything from recharging my batteries, developing new products, systemisation, marketing, client projects, personal development, learning a new skill and so on.

The process is the same, get clear on the priority for the month, name it and be specific about what it needs to be and treat it as a priority. I start every day with a focus on the theme for the month and investing as much time as I need to make it happen.

I do this religiously every month and I certainly feel a lot more in control of my business.

It helps me to get and stay focused. I get the important things done, not just the things that cry out for my attention and, most importantly, I feel like I’m making progress – not just spinning a pile of plates, day after day. Sometimes, the simplest of ideas can have the most profound impact on our business (and life). This might be one of those for you, it certainly has been for me.
HOW TO BUILD WINNING TEAMS

They are also more likely to strongly agree that they like what they do each day. When people are untethered from management, their strengths can rise.

THEY CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The immute test of team effectiveness is psychological safety, the ability of group members to think and act without worrying about social repercussions – in essence, to just be themselves.

Google discovered this first-hand when it studied 180 of its own teams to learn why some were successful and others were not. After a series of trials, research analysts turned up only one reliably consistent pattern of high performance: psychological safety.

Managers can promote psychological safety by modelling vulnerability. When leaders acknowledge mistakes, ask for feedback, and demonstrate a willingness to listen, they show that failure is just the first step towards progress.

THEY RALLY AROUND COMMON GOALS

Great teams need a shared road map for success. What does it look like, are the challenges, and how will they get there?

Developing a common vision means that all team members know what's expected of them and how their role fits into the team's larger purpose and priorities.

Naturally, managers are at the centre of this – it's their job to help challenge and develop their reports to identify and practise these values. When managers pay attention to their employees with greater frequency, providing just-in-time feedback, and holding regular conversations focused on coaching and development, the better their teams will perform.

TYING IT TOGETHER

There’s no secret formula for winning teams. They are built over time and assembled from the ground up. With the right tools – a focus on strengths, safety, and communication – managers can design something that's built to last.

Joe Hirsch specialises in helping organisations apply behavioural science to strengthen the way leaders lead, train, support, and empower their teams for success. As managing director of Semaca Partners, Joe has helped a diverse set of clients, including Fortune 500 companies. To connect with him, send an email to editor@leaderonomics.com.
LEARNING and development can be thought as having two aspects: horizontal (what you know) – increasing knowledge, and vertical (how you think) – increasing complexity.

Horizontal development can happen without vertical development, but vertical development can’t happen without horizontal development. People can know a lot of stuff without being able to use it to resolve complex problems or make complex decisions. To become a complex thinker, you really need to know your stuff!

When I talk about vertical development, I’m really talking about both horizontal and vertical. Vertical development can’t be taught. You can’t just add another topic or class and expect vertical development.

It happens when we reflectively apply our knowledge in the real world. Three things help people develop vertically faster and better (optimally):

- Learning through continuous cycles of goal setting, information gathering, application and reflection
- Deliberately building personal skills for learning, thinking, and deciding
- Working in environments that encourage the use of decision-making and collaboration tools that support iteration

These activities and conditions are essential supports for vertical development, but they work best when the learner knows where to start! To identify a growth edge, we need a reliable measure of vertical development.

MEASURING VERTICAL DEVELOPMENT

An ideal measure of vertical development can tell us about an individual’s current level of performance, identify their growth edge, and provide suggestions for activities and practices based on that growth edge.

This makes it possible to tailor coaching or training to meet the specific learning needs of each individual.

I have found two tools that meet these requirements, while still being highly practical and relevant in the business context: Lectical Assessments and Immunity to Change Map.

Lectical Assessments make it possible to go one step further, it can be used to match people to roles by determining both the thinking complexity of individuals AND the complexity of workplace roles.

This capability makes it possible to fill people to roles with unprecedented precision and has implications for the entire Talent Management value chain – from role design to recruitment to succession planning.

INTEGRATING VERTICAL DEVELOPMENT INTO L&D

Now that you understand the relationship between horizontal and vertical development, you might be wondering “where do I start?”

Here are three ways to get started integrating vertical development into your organisation’s learning and development programs:

1. Evaluate how well your learning and development programmes create the three things that help people develop vertically faster and better (optimally) – What are you doing already? What are the opportunities?
2. Use the opportunities to create a continuous cycle of learning for yourself as you integrate vertical. Your continuous learning cycle might look something like this (refer to Table 1).
3. Reach out to a certified vertical development expert to explore integrating vertical development measures to support your leaders and organisation.

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By REBECCA ANDREE
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