

HEARTS AND MINDS

Employee engagement as an enabler
to successful transformation

JANUARY 2022

Almost every business is undergoing a transformation of some sort. Most of these transformations are being run as programmes with formal offices, recognising the significance, the opportunity and the difficulty of effecting the desired change.

Despite this professionalisation and management, we know that transformations are still failing, moving slower than hoped, or achieving a lower impact than predicted.

Why is that and what can we do about it as communicators?

There are two components to successful change: capturing minds (with logic and rationale) and capturing hearts (with stories, emotion and relevance). Impactful change narratives and communication programmes bring together the rational and the emotional. We want people to feel something, because they are more likely to act if they do.

Change management often focuses too much on managing and process and not enough on creating the connections, emotional resonance and meaning that will drive lasting adoption well beyond launch.

Internal communicators can help the transformation office to recognise, understand and mitigate concerns, resistance, confusion and apathy. And more importantly, we can help shift the emphasis towards the vision. Many change management programmes don't focus enough on the end state: the vision. We need to take people through awareness, understanding, belief to action and advocacy.

After a year and a half of lockdowns, anxiety and uncertainty, now, more than ever, change needs to be seen more as an experience to take employees through, and less as a process to be managed.



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HERE ARE 5 PRINCIPLES AND 5 QUESTIONS TO ASK, TO CREATE THE RIGHT CHANGE EXPERIENCE



PRINCIPLE 1 | COMMUNICATION ISN'T ENOUGH

Engagement, co-creation and experiences are more effective tools because they involve, they draw people in, they help them see their role in the change and then to take it on as their own. It's not just about telling but about conversation, exploration, co-creation. Find ways to involve colleagues, not just inform them.

QUESTION At every opportunity, review what you're about to do and ask yourselves: how can we do this differently to make it more of a shared experience?



PRINCIPLE 2 | USE EMPATHY AND RELEVANCE AT EVERY STAGE

...to move away from strategy and theory towards personal motivations. Business rationale and strategy may motivate an exec team, but can leave those throughout the business cold.

QUESTION Imagine answering a colleague who asks: "what's in it for me?" Think about the motivators and drivers.



PRINCIPLE 3 | BE CREATIVE

Whether you're writing a narrative, running a workshop or event, devising a line manager toolkit or creating a posters, be clear on what action you want to drive, rather than focusing on the message you want to communicate. Every intervention should feel like an experience and should be built around emotions such as pride, community, friendship, ambition, excitement.

QUESTION Ask yourself "what do I want people to think, feel and do" as a result of this communication or event?



PRINCIPLE 4 | BE HONEST BUT USE TRANSPARENCY WISELY

Don't communicate too early when the change is still theoretical, it will leave too much of a vacuum. That's not helpful transparency. But do set up an expectation that you'll be open and constructive and mindful of people's circumstances. Encourage questions and support leaders to respond and engage in conversation.

QUESTION "Are we saying something that's true and helpful?"



PRINCIPLE 5 | TAKE FEEDBACK CONSTANTLY

Whether in the form of questions, pulse surveys, manager feedback or event feedback make sure your messages are landed with the impact you hoped for.

QUESTION "What can people tell us that will make our programme better?"