



Evolving Leadership

What do we mean by ‘evolving Leadership’? We’re not only talking about making the most of the skills and talents of our employees. We are also talking about leadership style in a changing environment!

To perform well at your job is one thing. But to lead others, to lead those high-performers, is quite another thing. Leadership is about managing the internal and the external – about getting the most from your people while at the same time adapting to the continually changing demands of the external environment.

And it is this ability to lead effectively, to adapt to new or emerging circumstances and to manage the necessary internal change which we describe as ‘evolving’ leadership.

Why Evolve?

First, let’s examine, why must we continually adapt and change as leaders? Surely, the old adage of, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” holds some truth.

True, but “The world stands still for no man”. Change is all around us and our business environment is in a constant state of flux. These days, the rate of change and sheer disruption caused by elements such as political instability, new technologies or even natural phenomena is potentially overwhelming and as a result the need for leaders to identify opportunities and threats and steer their organisations in new directions is paramount. Tactical adaptation to change must be executed quickly, smoothly and in-line with organisational strategy.

But in these circumstances, a leader cannot be purely reactive. “After the fact” is sometimes too late. Adapting to change that has already happened means implicitly that your organisation is not in first place. There is a need for proactive innovation – to be the one creating the change.

It is easy to think of great innovators, for example leaders who have spotted a gap in the market. After all, their fame is a direct consequence of their success. These individuals have not stood still or stagnated – they have evolved as leaders and in turn, their organisation has evolved too.

Equally, it is not difficult to think of examples of organisations who have “missed the boat”, who have failed to evolve and who have paid dearly for their stagnation.

The Evolving Leader

Leadership is present in various forms, throughout most tiers of an organisation from the top-tier executive who directs organisational strategy down through the manager to the front-line delegate who actually implements the change.

Our experience at TTM associates proves that there is a big difference between an individual’s skills and their all-important external behaviours. This leads us to the concept of ‘Behavioural Leadership’ which allows us to describe those behaviours which an effective, evolving leader should exhibit. It is interesting to note that these behaviours focus not only to the external environment but also internally on interpersonal aspects.



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At the top, our executive leaders should be creating change which fits within a shared organisational vision. They should be forward-thinking and imaginative, agile and proactive. They may take risks and should definitely understand the practical impact of their changes which will resonate throughout the organisation. They should influence others and genuinely appreciate the emotional reactions which their colleagues will have to the changes they create.

Managers should drive the change and facilitate others to make the change happen, they should derive results from the changes, inspire and harmonise their teams and also understand the emotional dimension of the change.

Those at the delegate level must be agile, knowledgeable about how to actually implement the changes and must 'live the change', they must understand the impact of the change upon the clients with whom they work so closely and they should also be interpersonally adept and open to challenge the way things are done.

These behaviours are wide-ranging but at all levels, they touch upon two main areas – the people and the process.

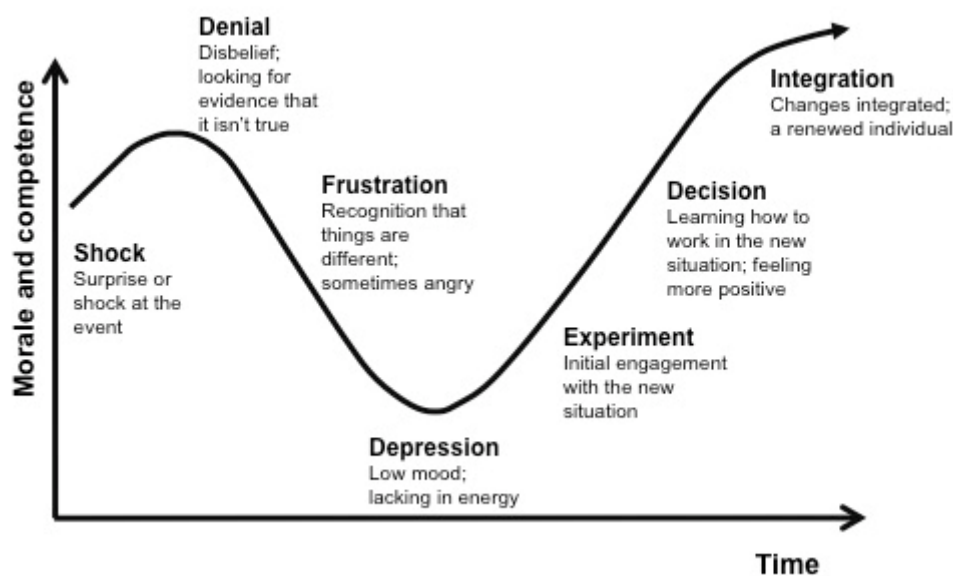
How We Evolve

A common failing of many managers is to view change purely as a process. A series of decisions and steps to be executed programmatically in sequence in order to achieve the desired outcome.

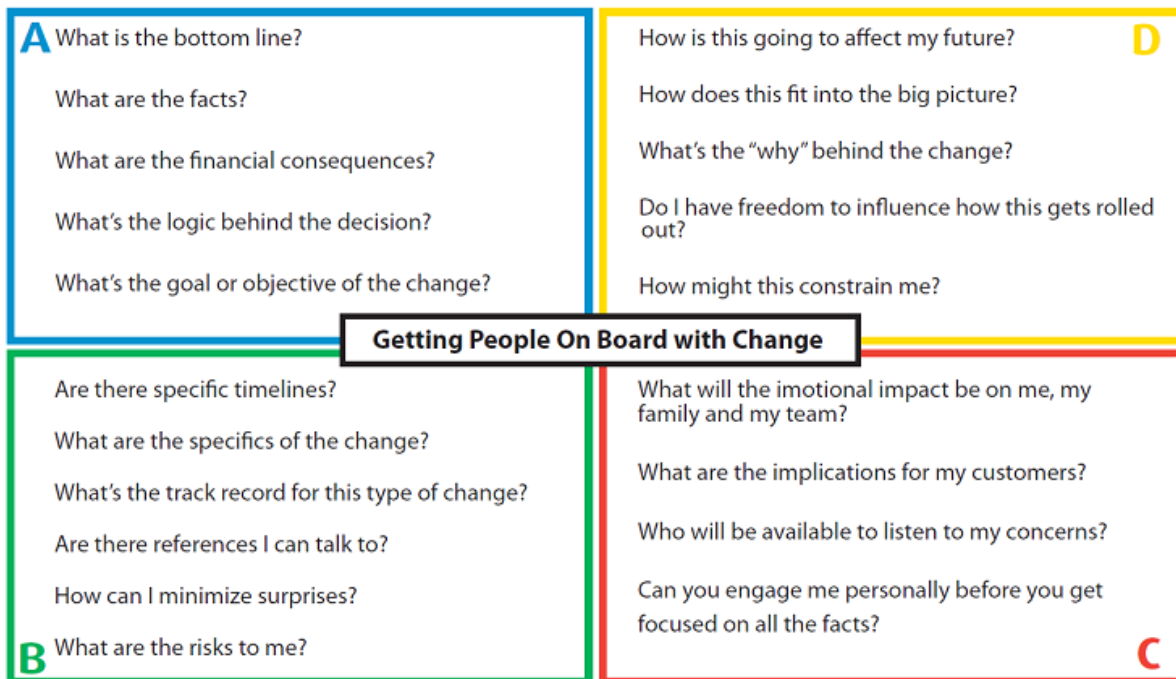
While there can be no denying that change must be carefully planned and executed, it is vital to realise that the process is only part of the story; people are critical to every organisation and their behaviours are partly governed by emotions which will typically arise in response to change. So the emotional side of change must be understood and handled with due care and attention and blended into the process.

John Kotter (Harvard Business School) says that "The central issue for business is never strategy, structure, culture or systems. The core of the matter is always about changing the behavior of people."

This sentiment is true for people internal as well as external to an organisation. People are often inherently resistant to change as the famous Kübler-Ross 'Change Curve' (below) depicts by illustrating the "rollercoaster" of different emotions which develop during the journey through change.



At TTM associates, we encourage leaders to follow and WHOLE BRAIN approach when it comes to spotting, creating, initiating and sustaining change! The Herrmann Whole Approach naturally pays attention to both aspects of change – the planned, sequential, fact-based part and the holistic, interpersonal, 'feelings-based' part, as we can see in the diagram, below.



A leader who is aware of both parts and who develops change appropriately will therefore:

- Understand the change – not just as a series of steps but from many different viewpoints including the emotional side of change and the big picture (sustainability) into which the change fits.
- Create the change – as diligently as possible in response to the environment
- Implement the change – be that as a top level influencer or a 'change champion' who is living the change and setting an example for colleagues
- Sustain the change – implementing change and maintaining its momentum are very different endeavours. Once a change is implemented we must ensure that it is no longer perceived as being new but as being a valid part of the organisational culture or "business as usual".
- Disturb the change – which brings us back to 'Why evolve'? As conditions change, this cycle needs to be repeated to successfully implement new changes and maintain effective organisational performance.

References

- "Know Change...or NO Change Will Happen", Michael Morgan & Ann Herrmann-Nehdi [\[Link\]](#)
- "The 8-Step Process For Leading Change", Dr John Kotter, Kotter International [\[Link\]](#)
- "Talent Management in Motion: Keeping Up With An Evolving Workforce", Richard S. Wellins, PhD, Allan Schweyer, DDI [\[Link\]](#)