



Put Your Business in Pole Position

THE NETWORK
OF LEADERS

CRITICALEYE

*When an organisation seeks to transform its culture the end results are rarely attributed to just one factor. **Alison Esse** of The Storytellers outlines eight essential steps for change*

Transforming an organisation will take the constant and collective effort of leaders and employees to focus on the end game and to moderate their behaviours accordingly along the way. Those that can adopt the following steps will stand a good chance of seeing early results:

1. Create a compelling story of change

A clear and compelling 'story' of your transformative journey can create a clear rationale for decision-making and initiatives. Your story is what will help people change their beliefs around where the business is going and why, so they can adapt their behaviours accordingly. Create an emotional as well as a rational connection; a sense of pride, purpose and belonging will motivate people to participate.

2. Visible and authentic leadership

The senior team of leaders needs to be seen to be setting the direction, visible and united behind the journey. Engagement happens when people believe that senior managers have a sincere interest in their efforts and wellbeing, so leaders at every level need to work hard to maintain consistency by following through decisions. Constant changes of direction will create a loss of integrity and trust, along with fatigue and cynicism.

3. Go where the energy is

Change is all about managing energy. Identify your ambassadors/advocates and recruit them to the cause so that they can inspire others. Every organisation is made up of non-hierarchical clusters of individuals whose influence can be leveraged to help effect change.

4. Empowerment

Managers at every level need to empower their teams to identify, own and act on the changes they need to make in their part of the business. A command/control culture will not give people a sense of ownership. Involve employees, give them a voice and make them feel valued; they will only change if they believe that what they are doing is making a difference. Nudge them to take action in small, incremental steps. Encourage risk-taking and learning from mistakes.

5. Create a sense of urgency

Speed is important. Communicate the burning platform – the competitive and market realities – and, keeping your eyes firmly on the big opportunity and destination, drive the change through with a sense of urgency. Create milestones and measure your leaders on their team communication and milestone achievements. Don't wait until the perfect moment; create incremental changes and demonstrate that quick wins, however small, can create value.

6. Reinforce and reward

Recognise the efforts of your people and announce their achievements. Chart progress by celebrating the way in which people are responding positively. People will only change if they experience for themselves something that will validate the need for change, so provide evidence that new ways of working are contributing to success. Amplifying positive behaviours and sharing stories of success will help define and embed culture, and inspire and motivate others. Recruit employees who are likely to implement the vision, and reward those who are living it already.

7. Get rid of obstacles

Give a single manager direct overall responsibility for change to maintain complete objectivity. Change systems, processes, structures and policies that don't fit your vision or inhibit progress. Get rid of those who actively and consistently seek to undermine your efforts, yet listen to the cynics: try to understand their issues and involve them in working through solutions. The most hardened cynics could be your most positive advocates.

8. Communicate

Use every means to reinforce your messages, even if it means repeating them again and again, and even if they are developments that will be received with apprehension or negativity. Keep pointing to the vision and show how everything fits in along the journey. Different people respond to different methods of communication, so find out what works best for them, and employ the most appropriate channels to reach them. If managers need new skills to make this happen then give them the right coaching and training.

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Alison Esse

Co-Founder and Director
The Storytellers

Alison has a strong background in PR, marketing and communications, is an MA Hons graduate in modern languages from Edinburgh University and is a regular speaker on change, storytelling in business, engagement and emotional connection at conferences and events worldwide.

Contact Alison through www.criticaleye.net