

NO PAIN GLORY



In the last decade alone, India Inc. has proved its mettle on the global center stage through its value creating expertise. There have not only been a series of acquisitions, but significant zealous efforts to turnaround the companies acquired through sustained change management efforts. It is worth paying attention to, as to what the turnaround champions do differently to make the change efforts succeed...

■ BY DR SUJAYA BANERJEE

Shifting markets, global competition, emerging technologies, new products, mergers and acquisitions are only a few reasons why companies across the globe are attempting to institutionalize change and remain viable in today's turbulent markets. But, however critical the change might be for the survival of organizations, the instinct for maintaining status-quo is but natural. This is the core reason why most change efforts fail despite resources committed to transform.

So what do turnaround champions do differently to ensure that change efforts succeed?

Turnaround champions identify a burning platform for change and build a keen sense of urgency around the change efforts: They bring people out of their comfort zones to focus on areas of vulnerability for the organization- like competition, flat earnings, decreasing market shares or losing talent. Change management efforts usually fail unless the organization is able to build a sense of urgency where at least 75 per cent of the leaders believe that doing business as usual is not going to give them new results.

Turnaround champions create a group of change sponsors: Sponsors are managers and supervisors who ensure that everyone does what is necessary to accomplish the change. This group must contribute to experiences which can further drive change efforts and energies

in the right direction. Turnaround champions build coalitions of influencers who help drive change and handle naysayers successfully.

Turnaround champions create a vision for change: It is the key to create and define an easy-to-understand vision that helps test the rationale for change and keeps all change efforts aligned. It is imperative that the vision for change to be comprehensible in itself and communicated to all.

Turnaround champions engage through communication: Turnaround champions are great at advocating the vision for change and evangelizing it throughout the organization. The communication process has to be exhaustive in this regard. Most people must understand and appreciate the change in order to participate, appreciate and remain committed to the reason for change.

Turnaround champions know that people empowerment is key: They encourage their organizations to remain agile by encouraging employees to participate in decision-making. This is not the same as having the authority to make decisions. There is a difference between delegating and empowering. Delegating is the act of giving someone else the authority to make decisions specific to an assignment or a point in time. Empowerment on the other hand is the process through which employers can influence key decisions. An empowered relationship is where the power is

mutually shared. 'Empowerment' is a trendy management jargon and often a contemporary expectation from Leadership of our times. However, it must be preceded by education, coaching, training and management.

Turnaround champions ensure employee empowerment particularly in uncertain times as it increases commitment by involving employees across levels and functions to support change initiatives. By fostering mutual trust, greater credibility and setting the stage for greater co-operation and team work, empowerment can enhance vertical and horizontal communication within organizations and create an environment where conflicts are resolved.

Turnaround champions celebrate early successes and wins: They ensure that early signs of progress are communicated and celebrated to keep the energies around the change initiatives going. They understand that real transformation efforts take time and there can be a loss of momentum and early onset of disappointments, unless people see evidence of their efforts bearing fruits. When people realize that real change takes a long time, the urgency around change efforts may drop and the intensity and efforts may get reduced. It is therefore imperative to keep the motivation for change going while using the opportunities to reflect and revisit the vision for change.

Turnaround champions keep a continuous improvement focus to change: They know that their efforts will take a while to explore changes in the basic culture of the organization, in the systems, relationships within organizations which may need some tuning before moving people committed to doing things in a new way to perform new roles. Until change efforts sink in deeply into the organization's 'way of doing things', all change efforts are fragile and susceptible to bounce back to old ways. Change champions understand this well and use early wins to delve deeper into the cultural issues, which may adversely impact

the sustenance of change efforts. **Turnaround champions ensure behavior-based rather than the activity-based change:** Change must finally impact 'the way in which we do things around here', which signifies the culture of the organization. Turnaround champions acknowledge this and until change efforts are rooted in the social norms and shared values of the organization, they remain superficial. Turnaround champions help people make connections between efforts and outcomes. Change sponsors embody the new ways so that that employees adopt and remain committed to the new approaches, behaviors and attitudes that can help the organization achieve its vision for change

The change trap

This has been an existential question for many change champions and all of us know what Herachitus told us in the sixth century BC: "The only constant is change." Despite this, organizations find themselves trapped in the belief that they need to prepare by investing resources, time and energy preparing for change rather than achieving its desired outcomes.

Even with pressures of turbulent times, some organizations recognize the need to change, create a vision for the same but go about meticulously preparing the organization for the change, believing that the organization's readiness is the key to successful change efforts. Turnaround champions demonstrate boldness and new ways of thinking and acting. They demand that the outcomes be achieved quickly with a sense of urgency- not after months and years when everyone finally becomes 'ready' for change.

When leaders focus on the desired outcomes (vision for change) and make requests for rapid advancements, two things happen:

- 1) The organization responds faster by achieving early victories, improving performance and building confidence.
- 2) These initial successes



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demonstrate what can actually work- and help build credibility making long-term changes possible in systems, structures and processes. **Are turnaround champions better leaders or managers, or both?**

This question has always loomed large for those who initiate change efforts within their organizations. The general belief is that successful change efforts need strategic visionaries who can study the macro environment, identify the business case for change and create the change vision for the organization to gain a competitive edge (price advantage, product innovation, customer satisfaction).

'Strategic capabilities versus execution or managerial prowess', is a strong debate on deciphering the style and approach of a successful turnaround champion. If both visionary strategic leadership and managerial capabilities are found wanting- change efforts go nowhere. **Turnaround champions and the human factor**

Change is tough to handle, is

unpredictable and demanding. It can shake up people and generate fear that can threaten the success of the organization in the marketplace.

Building organizations that are agile and nimble to manage change involves being quick to market-- designing and delivering more creative solutions for the customers, developing new business while retaining existing customers. Turnaround champions hire and retain people who are resourceful, motivated and focused on ensuring the success of the organization at all times. They ensure people know and understand the boundaries and know how to work within them while challenging the system, understanding the dynamics of change but coming to expect the unexpected at all times. Employers must be prepared to handle the relentless and complex changes that are prevalent and flooding the marketplace and the business. The trick is to remain change-ready and constantly challenge the status-quo.

To succeed in unpredictable

environments, organizations need to be nimble by implementing changes more effectively and efficiently than the competition and being prepared



to pro-actively drive change to achieve greater success. The alternative of remaining nimble still does not exist.

Turnaround champions drive their energies for managing change, successfully rooted in the wisdom that 'the price of doing nothing is failure'. **HC**