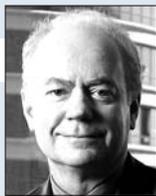


Change Smart

Make seven key shifts.



by Kevin Cashman

DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL election cycle, we heard countless calls for change! Barack Obama supporters rallied behind *change we can believe in*; Hillary Clinton offered: *ready for change, ready to lead* and *working for change, working for you*. In the GOP, Romney pronounced, *change begins with us*, and Ron Paul aimed to *change the world*.

Yet seasoned leaders know what matters most is not who draws up the most radical blueprint for change but who can steadily navigate through the change, frequent and far-ranging as it is.

The wisdom imparted 3,000 years ago by Greek philosopher Heraclitis—*You can never step into the same river twice*—comes to mind. It's easy to operate under the illusion that life remains constant. Even when we're aware of change, we tend to resist or at least ignore it.

Today, the top issue facing leaders is dealing with complexity and change. Research confirms that learning agility—the set of skills that allows us to learn from one situation and apply it in another—is more predictive of long-term leadership potential than raw IQ. In a frenetic change environment, nimble, adaptable leadership outperforms leadership that is single-mindedly smart. Yet many companies first look to intelligence when choosing potential leaders.

Novartis CEO Daniel Vasella told graduates of Mumbai's Indian School of Business: "Be comfortable with seemingly contradictory situations, feelings, and actions. Many people can't deal with ambiguity—they want simplicity, clarity, and clear direction."

Seven Key Shifts

We know that 75 percent of change initiatives fail; but why do 25 percent succeed? They execute seven shifts:

- **Shifting from a focus on problems to a focus on opportunities:** Effective leaders tend to perceive and to innovate on the opportunities inherent in change.
- **Shifting focus from the short term to the long term:** Effective leaders don't

lose sight of their big picture vision in the midst of change.

- **Shifting from a focus on circumstances to one on purpose:** Effective leaders maintain a clear sense of purpose, value and meaning to rise above challenging, immediate circumstances.

- **Shifting from a focus on control to one on agility:** Effective leaders know that controlling management yields limited results, but that being adaptable to internal and external needs sustains results over the long haul.

- **Shifting from a focus on self to service:** Effective leaders buffer their teams from the stress of change by managing, neutralizing and/or transcending their own stress.

- **Shifting from expertise focus to listening focus:** Effective leaders stay open and practice authentic listening to stay connected with the pulse of organizational and market needs. They listen, synthesize and act—then listen more!

- **Shifting from a focus on doubt to one on trust:** Effective leaders know the risks and downsides yet possess a self-trust that they can handle most anything that comes their way.

When introducing a major change, like a new strategy, the trick is not just to *tell* people, but also to *show* them. Change is more like a contagious virus than an order you give or a baton you pass forward. To advance the team, *be* the change you want to *see*. All meaningful change begins

with self-change. Managers try to *bring order* to change; leaders *inspire energy* to change.

Focusing on strategy and following operational successes don't have to come at one another's expense. You'll have to give up the degree of depth and detail related to daily activities, but that's different than abandoning it altogether. As you let go of some responsibilities and control, remember the people who trusted you to take on new responsibilities long before you were really prepared to do so!

As a leader, you must either aggressively step into the unknown or risk being destroyed by the status quo. Accelerating this destructive-creative process is at the heart of authentic, enduring leadership. LE

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ACTION: Shift your leadership focus.

