

BUILDING CAPABILITIES FOR CHANGE : THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF RESILIENCE

Building internal capabilities, especially resilience, for change is important to give people the ability and confidence to create, anticipate and respond to changes more efficiently and effectively. In addition, building capabilities helps to motivate people to make the required behavioral shifts necessary to achieve objectives and successfully implement and sustain change. It ensures people receive consistent messages about what is important in the organization, serves as a reminder that people are accountable for what they do and helps people see that their contribution is recognized.

In a survey investigating the attitudes and experiences of executives across the main regions of the world (Benson-Armer et al, 2015), half of the respondents say that they see organizational capability building as one of their top strategic priorities. However, they also emphasize that their companies need to improve how they do this. Only one-quarter of the respondents describe their organization's capability-building programs as very effective, with slightly over half saying that they are somewhat effective. There is evidently room for improvement.

Building capability is about maximizing the contribution of people for the benefit of the organization and individuals within the organization in a planned and managed way. The two main elements are:

1. Learning and development: this involves acquiring and applying the desired behavioral capabilities (skills, knowledge and attitudes) to enable the organization to achieve its vision and objectives.

2. Managing people performance: this is about ensuring that people performance strategies and HR policies and practices are aligned with, and support, the strategic business objectives.

The value of building capabilities for change for organizations can be broken down into several benefits including:

- an increase in competitive advantage for an organization;
- an improvement in the ability of an organization to execute a greater number of changes more effectively; and
- a reduction in the costs of change.

Even fully-loaded with training costs, employment costs and so on, an organization will still save money by having the capability to plan and implement change themselves and will increase the ability and motivation of people to sustain change (Hodges, 2016).

Identifying particular capabilities

When a group of Executive MBA students from across the globe were asked what capabilities they thought were necessary to lead and manage change, their responses were both considered and practical, as shown in Table 1.0. There were a number of capabilities that were identified for both leaders and managers, which are outlined in the right- hand column in the table.

Table 1.0. Capabilities required for leading and managing change (adapted from Hodges & Gill, 2015).

Capabilities required to lead change	Capabilities required to manage change	Capabilities required to lead and manage
Strategic management and	Coaching of others through	Communication to different

vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation and articulation of a vision • Setting of objectives • Choice of measurement tools 	change	audiences using different media.
Business Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing the competitive landscape • Delegation to the right people • Alignment of politics and competing interests 	Project management	Emotional Intelligence
Ability to influence and persuade	Listening	Flexibility and adaptability
Translation of the change vision into clear performance expectations	Empathy	Credibility
Behaving in a way that causes others to trust you	Providing feedback	Reflection and learning
	Focusing on outcomes with a 'big-picture' view	Celebration of success
	Anticipation and surfacing of conflicts	Resilience

To effectively build such capabilities involves firstly identifying the gaps.

Identifying Capability Gaps

The gaps in the capabilities for change need to be identified not just for managers and leaders but also for staff across the organization. A capability gap is where the change requires people to work in a way which they do not currently have the ability to do. To identify and address gaps involves diagnosing the gaps, identifying development needs, designing and delivering appropriate interventions and sustaining and monitoring how the learning is being applied.

Data can be gathered in a variety of ways, such as through interviews, surveys, focus groups and assessment tools. Whatever approach is used to identify the gaps the diagnostics should also determine a) the strengths and development needs of individuals and b) who should

participate in specific interventions. Starting with leaders is usually a good idea as it establishes a set of role models for the change. But, beyond that, the approach should be to move through the organization in a way that best supports the business needs. That might mean focusing on people in specific roles or key positions affected by the change. Once the specific change capabilities have been identified, a capability matrix is a useful approach to assess individual strengths and areas for development against each capability. One of the most critical capabilities required for coping with change by all people in all organizations is resilience.

Resilience

Resilience helps people to respond to and cope with all changes more efficiently and effectively. It can help individuals to maintain higher performance levels, improve their sense of wellbeing and cope with fluctuating emotions. Resilience also helps people make sense of change more quickly, so that they understand the impact on themselves and others. At the same time, resilience can help people deal with multiple changes without being overwhelmed.

Resilient people are not, however, immune to change; they experience the effects just as anyone would, but they will move through the transition faster and respond more positively. They may come to terms with the change quickly, and experience much less turbulence.

Characteristics of resilient people (Proctor, 2014) include:

- Optimism. Resilient people believe that change will have a positive outcome. They are able to analyze change in a positive way that gives them hope for the future.
- Self-assuredness. Resilient people have a strong but realistic belief in their own capabilities. As a result they tend to control change, rather than the change controlling them.

- Focus. Resilient people have the focus needed to be able to prioritise activities effectively. They can pursue goals successfully, even in the face of adversity.
- Open to ideas. Resilient people are open to new ideas. They look for opportunities to be innovative and to take risks.
- Ask for support. Resilient people actively ask for support from others during times of change. They look for opportunities to learn from the experience of others as well as their own.
- Structured. Resilient people are able to analyze the situation and create an effective plan to implement and sustain change, with enough flexibility built in to cope with any internal or external environmental changes.
- Proactive. Resilient people are prepared to step out into the unknown and take the action necessary to make change happen.

These components of resilience all play a vital role in enabling people to cope with change. They can help people to manage the stressors of change in a more proactive, adaptive and positive way. Resilient people are able to draw on these qualities at the right time. Leaders can become more resilient by building the organizational capability to anticipate, prepare for, cope with and survive the effects of transformations. Developing resilience takes time, but there is, according Alexander Proudfoot and colleagues, (2009) evidence that resilience training can boost individual and organizational confidence.

References

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