

#Culture

The third lever of business transformation is in employee engagement


The architecture of a successful change management and business transformation journey has three levers, of which the third lever is the most essential. Read on, to know more about the third lever.



There are two things that are common to all business entities, big or small: seeking better business results, and worrying about the future. Exactly for this reason, here is this 'one' word that can't escape leaders. It contains both a dream and the nightmare; in the corporate world, we call it **'business transformation'**. It carries the most anticipated promise as well as the most terrifying insecurity. Its biggest paradox is: damned if you do, and damned if you don't. Simply put, we have entered into the era of discontinuity. The future is snapped from the past, and linearity is gone. This is what is re-writing the rules of business models, capabilities & winning strategies. Hence organizations are choosing to embrace **'change'** on a war footing, as leaders struggle to script the journey of transformation.

The theme of change management is not new. From the times of sailing and exploring the world, mankind has experienced 'changing winds' and responded successfully. It is just that, change cycles are getting shorter. The era we are living in is very different than the era we were born in. In fact, our work life span comprises multiple 'eras'. Our character, personality,

behavior, and mindsets that shape us and our organizations, are indeed under big stress. I have been working in the corporate world for the last 30 years. I have seen a lot of changes, led many, failed in a few, but mostly cherished the virtues of outcomes. I am seeing a big difference between the so called 'old world' & the 'new world' era.



The old world changes were gradual, less intense and infrequent, whereas the new world changes are radical, more intense and frequent. This has an enormous impact on the way we are leading and managing change, to stay competitive and relevant in the future.


Change management approaches vary. Let's look at and demystify how to power our change effort successfully, as traditional change management techniques no longer work. The CMBT (change management and business transformation) journey always begins with a purpose and smartly defined desirable outcomes. Any successful CMBT initiator will always articulate; what are called '**as-is**' and '**to-be**' positions. Without these two clearly understood states, organizations shouldn't move an inch. However, the devil is in the details.

The architecture of a successful CMBT has three levers: new '**directions**', new '**capabilities**' and new '**behaviors**'. Most change initiatives that I have witnessed, over-emphasize the first lever of change called 'strategy' or call it, new directions. I have been a party to many top management strategic 3-5 years plans that often stay as plans, as they just tell us 'intent'. Such plans are made every year showing a new and fresh looking 3-5 years intent. This is meaningless. In fact, colossal time is consumed in superfluous deliberations. I jokingly called them as 'destination focused CMBT' with too much focus on 'finishing line' and 'arrow direction'. We can't build winning business transformations just with this first lever of change.

A good business transformation can really start with the second Level of CMBT that focuses on building new **capabilities**. They make all the difference between more effective transformations and simple efforts under the first lever, that fade quickly. Building organization-wide new capabilities aimed at new competencies are essential architecture for driving new results. Capabilities such as customer centric value creations, differentiated customer experience, strong go-to-market delivery capabilities, new technology platforms, lean manufacturing etc. cannot be department-wise transformations. These must begin on organization-wide efforts. Capabilities

are like muscles. While the first lever gives clarity on the to-be state, it is this second lever that adds a lot more strength and power.

Great business transformations, however, occur only when the third lever of CMBT is invoked. This is the critical lever in shaping new organization **behaviors**. I have witnessed the enormous impact it creates. Not only does it make the speed of journey faster and impact organization wide momentum, but also creates enduring changes. By nature, human minds are hard-wired with consistent patterns and tuned with those, all the time. We hate anxiety and carry a fear of the unknown, but we also carry an innovative mindset. Hence no true CMBT outcomes can occur without a solid employee engagement piece.



CMBT is not rocket science or artificial intelligence. It is simple human (emotional) intelligence. All we have to do, is shift the ownership of change from top layer to a few layers below.

Leaders can do this smartly; ownership will come with participation. Most change management initiatives are decided at the top and pushed down. It is not necessarily bad to set the change management ball rolling from the top, as a more holistic 'wide angle view' is possible. However, in that wide angle lens, we must not miss out specific behavioral changes that are an essential component. To embed the transformation's 'always ON' button in our organizations, let's change the importance of sequence of change levers from D-C-B to the B-C-D.
