



4 ways to cultivate a transformation mindset and why it matters

By Adam Bennett

We live in an incredible time of disruption, change, and opportunity. We've not reached 'peak change' yet, and the combined weight of several different forces – including artificial intelligence, climate change, geo-political forces, technology development, and other macro and industry trends – means that this pace of disruption is likely to keep accelerating.

The biggest impact of these accelerating and colliding forces is that they put your organization's existing business model and the corporate 'way' you already do things, under constant pressure. This means that the period over which your business model continues to be perfectly calibrated to its external environment may be becoming shorter. Which then means that you must work harder to keep up, let alone get ahead.

In the face of this uncertainty and change, are you fixed and closed minded, or are you open and curious? Are you up for the inevitable change and transformation that's necessary, or would you prefer the status quo to remain in place just a little longer?

If you're a leader, then your answer is important. Now, more than ever, your mindset matters.

Transformation can be an over-used word, so before proceeding too far, let me first define what I mean by the term. True transformation requires the presence of three factors, including i) the identification of disruption, ii) the development of strategy, and iii) the execution of change.

Let's explore four elements that underpin a transformation mindset:

How you see the world

Put bluntly, the forces playing out in the world have no regard for whether you notice them, let alone respond to them.

It's therefore critical that you retain a genuine curiosity and sensitivity to the forces at play in the world and how they could potentially impact your industry and organization. This curiosity should stimulate reflection on what could be, rather than what is. Continually scanning the external environment and asking yourself what could represent a threat or opportunity should be part of your professional habits.

You should also reflect on the 'sacred beliefs' that you may have acquired over many years in your industry or company. By sacred I don't mean religious, but rather the deep rules, practices and existing protocols of your company and industry that you assume are immutable or take for granted. Sometimes, and increasingly, these are the very assumptions that start-ups and new entrants will use to reimagine your industry. Afterall, Sony didn't see the iPod coming, and nor did the big banks predict that Apple Pay would change their credit card businesses.

Increase your curiosity by cultivating a beginner's mind and trying to look through a less fixed or traditional lens.

How you view transformation

You should be ambitious for the success of your organization, and be determined to position it for success in the face of emerging disruption. You should also embrace

transformation as a necessary, energizing and positive renewal process rather than as something that's to be avoided just because it's difficult.

This means confidently identifying the very heart of what's important to winning in your marketplace and focusing all your energies and resources on moving that forward. Focus is a potent force: it's always better to move two or three things forward a mile, than it is to move fifty things forward an inch.

How you treat others

Transformation is a team sport, and no leader can transform an organisation on their own. It's therefore critical to identify the right people (based on temperament and skills), align them around the strategy, and then trust them to get on with things. Placing your trust in others, combined with respect, transparency and clarity, will bring out the best ideas and create an environment of opportunity, energy and potential, all of which will fuel the transformation.

How you manage yourself

You must also remember that transformation is difficult and there'll be setbacks as people resist the change, decisions take longer than anticipated, and technology systems prove more complex than first thought. After all, during transformation, no one ever turns over a rock and finds buried treasure. Things are always harder.

How you turn up therefore matters.

When things get tough you must be prepared to change tack, try different approaches and remain resilient. Leading transformation is not for the faint hearted, and not everything will go to plan. It will require the very best of your energies, commitment, patience and determination. As a leader, and in particular a transformation leader, it's your job to pick yourself up and keep going.

Cultivating the right mindset will be key to how you sense what's changing in the world, the strategic response you develop and whether you can then implement it. Therefore, reflect on how you see the world and perceive transformation. Consider how you treat others, and how you manage yourself through adversity and challenge. All of these will ensure your transformation is aimed at what matters, proceeds at pace, and has a higher chance of success.

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