

Being an Effective Transformational Leader

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Change is the only constant in business today, which means organizations need to transform themselves regularly in order to stay ahead of shifting industry conditions and marketplace demands. In response, CLOs, like all senior leaders, must role model transformational leadership skills and competencies to enable their organizations to address their unique opportunities and challenges.

There is no doubt that the future will require new leadership attitudes and capabilities. And clearly, there is a wide range of leadership skills, strategies and techniques to consider when developing them. However, based on many years of consulting and advising senior executives on large-scale organizational transformations, five critical leadership dimensions stand out. They are included in my “VITAL” transformational leadership model. Following this model, transformational leaders demonstrate:

Visioning

To lead employees in the right direction, transformational leaders must have a clear vision of where the organization is heading and a solid understanding of how the team they lead aligns with that vision. Embracing an organization-wide vision for the future provides a framework for making informed decisions and achieving optimal performance during times of change. In addition, by creating vision alignment within your team, you provide members with strategic guidance as to what the organization’s focus is and how they collectively contribute to it.

Inspiring

Understanding the “core” passions of the organization enables you to align with them and motivate others toward success. Feeling passionate about the organization’s transformational vision provides you with the energy and commitment to turn vision into reality.

Teaming

Teams that produce superior results can help the organization transform and realize its vision. Being an effective leader means understanding and embracing the diverse communication styles of others and knowing how to adjust your own management and

behavioral styles to theirs in order to guide them more effectively.

Leaders are only as successful as their teams. You know you have achieved success when your team communicates well internally across functional areas and externally to customers, suppliers and other stakeholders, solving complex problems quickly, facilitating conflict resolution in a win-win manner, and making key decisions in a systematic way.

Achieving

To be an effective transformational leader, it is crucial to know exactly to what extent your team achieves results and contributes to the attainment of organizational goals. By establishing a “measurement scorecard” for your team, you will be able to evaluate what it has actually achieved in terms of aligned performance results. Gauging achievements and results will depend on your ability to measure the “right” things within the context of your business realities and transformation priorities. Peak performance will come from planning, coaching and evaluating individual performance in a systematic way — that is, simultaneously strategic and practical.

Leveraging

In this “do more with less” world, integrating strategic goals, business processes and human resource talent is crucial to leveraging your team in a way that keeps the cost of doing business at an optimal level. So too are developing and applying personal influence skills. Your ability to plan, inspire and lead innovative cultural change with the support of other key stakeholders in the organization will keep your team alive and thriving during times of change.

Remember one key thing about leading organizational transformation: It’s very much like swimming upstream against the downstream flow of habit. Clearly, taking the lead means effectively helping to steer the organization upstream toward its vision, as well as developing and coaching other senior leaders in these five critical leadership dimensions. As you do, you enhance your credibility as both an effective CLO and a transformational leader. ■

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