

## Moving forward at pace

A Transcend Learning

### *"All hands on deck"*

When the pressure is on to implement and embed complex change rapidly, leaders frequently call for "all hands on deck" in order to move the work forward the best way they know how. However, without a common framework to help "navigate" the change, the result can be an increased level of activity without the required impact. Without a common pathway to help navigate, there can be increased confusion and misalignments amongst those leading the change, and in the organisation.

This is the time to "**slow down in order to speed up**" - building understanding and agreement amongst the leaders about how you will **navigate** the change (**what** to do), as well as **how** you intend to lead it.

An example of this comes to mind. We were working with a large multinational organisation intent on accelerating delivery of their newly-formed and stretching strategy. Feedback from senior leaders was that they needed to improve their ability to lead change. We worked with the team to develop a common change framework (loosely based on our "pathway").

During the development, I had the opportunity to work alongside one of the Learning and OD heads to test the emerging change framework with a leadership team. The team had been busy working on their change agenda for about five months and were fast approaching significant deadlines which would lead to organisational and structural changes. We met with the team for couple of half days and introduced the newly developed change framework. Through the use of it, it became clear that there was a need to "slow down in order to speed up". So what happened? Many things:

- The conversations made such an impact that they decided to hold a four day working-meeting for the entire team asap.
- The change framework gave them a common language to talk about the change. This enabled them to test/check assumptions and discuss more easily the different approaches people were taking.
- They recognised that each of them felt more comfortable in some phases of the change than in others, and that none of them gravitated towards the "final" phase of embedding change. They realised that this needed to change, and they already needed to build in the means to embed it.
- They were able to identify what they had achieved so far, as well as the gaps.

- They could identify which phase of the change pathway they were on, and recognise what work they needed to start preparing for in the future.
- They were able to work "systemically" to identify the main areas of issues outstanding that required their leadership.

*"The Change Framework helped the team align their thinking and see ways forward that they hadn't seen before, almost magically at times. We all felt the shifts as insights happened throughout the workshop. The Framework was a powerful way to help the team set their leadership and change agenda." VP L&OD*

When the entire team then met for four days, they were able to build on what had been done earlier; the work to be done was much more focused and clear. During these days, as we "slowed down", they also realised the need to strengthen their own leadership of the change, including what they would lead together/lead apart; what non-negotiables/guiding principles they would follow; what change approach they would use to lead the work.

As we said in our last edition of Front Foot, *"the only thing you can change is the present moment"* – and this was happening before our eyes. Long-standing issues were being raised and dealt with; much-needed decisions were being made; a coherent and connected change plan was being developed; a stronger leadership team was being formed. By "slowing down" – the leadership team are now in a stronger place to "speed up" – and they left the meeting ready to do just that.

Nancy Clay

July 2009