

# Agile and Ready for Change?

**At this time of economic, political and business change, what does your organisation need to be ready for?**

The September Taskforce session looked at both the readiness of organisation to adapt to change and the leaders' adaptability within the organisation. When you look back over the past 20 years the pace of change you realise the impact of that change is shocking because most of the time we are not ready for it.



Starting the day, we looked at the main research findings from the Working Futures meeting attendees and found that all of the HR Directors were facing similar challenges. These are grouped into three main areas:

## **1. Talent**

- Attracting and retaining talent
- Recruitment and retention of skills
- Succession planning

## **2. Technology**

- Disruption of technology on business
- How businesses (in all sectors) must transform to be more flexible

## **3. Specific fixes**

- Wellbeing, diversity, aging population, rewards and benefits, productivity
- Performance management and Engagement processes
- Brexit and migrant workers

The last finding is on agility and adaptability. Agile in a business context seems to be being used everywhere at the moment. But what do we mean by agile? Is the term over being overused or used out of context now?

With all of the disruption from technology the role of the leader within the organisation is still significant.

By deliberating agility this session looked to explore what is needed from leaders – both the operational and culture readiness to be able to change.

**Are you harnessing the power of dynamic conversation?**

Global Edge, a consultancy that prepares organisations for growth and change, harnessing the power of dynamic conversation then introduced the topics to discuss regarding business agility and readiness to change. Jonathan Bradley Founder and partner provided the context commenting that ‘to be successful in working through change requires managing our emotions. However, in business we can’t go around being emotional.’ and that ‘There is a difference to be ready for change in business that means to be effective we need to be operationally ready.’

Jonathan gave a valid and powerful introduction on the current requirements of leaders being ready to change and focussed on the conversations:

‘Leaders need to consider themselves as performers on a stage each day. We are all actors performing to each other, this is how business works. The biggest audience is the one in your head and you must prepare yourself to interact with them everyday.’

‘If you support dynamic conversation, you can adapt, be ready, and invest in manager and leaders. Leaders need to express their vision. Managers to solve problems. Both need honest feedback daily. You need to explore these things.’

This were high-level thoughts on how leaders need to be ready and the techniques needs to be used in different scenarios. They are to:



Jeff Benveniste, Founder and Partner then led an insightful session with the group by asking:

**‘What are the things your organisation needs to be ready for?’** mostly the group discuss the move to digital, the need to refocus efforts on new business units and managing ambiguity surrounding business change.

And then led the group to discuss:

**‘Where are the gaps? Where might you not be ready?’**

Attendees from Tesco, River Island, XPO Logistics, 3M, Aviva, Ogilvy & Mather and many more discussed conversations in more depth, the highlights from the table discussions include the following comments:

‘Behaviours drive performance. You can have as many processes and procedures as you like, but if you don’t have the behaviours that align those to your objectives, you miss the opportunity to maximise the input of every person in the company.’

‘If you create an environment where everyone is prepared to converse at every level, your organisation is better prepared for the growth and challenges it faces.’

Conversations in groups did lead back to the areas of readiness Jonathan had discussed earlier:

The ability of leaders to challenge. The need to review and talk through performance. The skill of coaching and taking ownership. Clarification from leaders to align and keep employees on the correct path. And the strength of leaders to provide direction.

## To get your Organisation ready, you must get your people ready

Following a spot of lunch, the conversations took a different path. Two actors illustrated through role play how a difficult conversation could be improved by being open, honest, clear. This was run in a forum theatre approach – where delegates could pause and reset the actor’s discussion, and try a new approach which was certainly a different example but illustrated the points and the potential pitfalls in not being able to control peer to peer conversations.

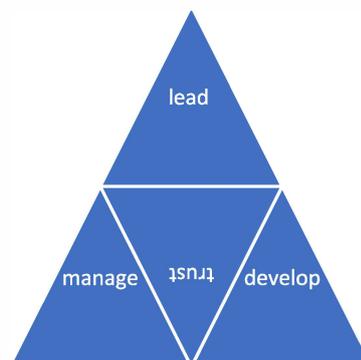
We found that dynamic conversations require bravery, courage and above all trust. Readiness gaps in the business require conversation and that one-sided conversation is about me - so you can address the balance by asking questions. If you are growing through acquisitions quickly, take time to stop and review if the strategy is working and staff are with you or if you are losing them.

Also to notice different teams having a positive or negative effect on others. Do notice the behaviours and manage or develop them. Stop yourself tripping up by being prepared to be bold, deal with difficult and prioritise. Strong leaders are prepared to challenge, take challenges on and engage their people.

## A model to build trust

Moving on to investigate where on the scale of change different organisations are, the following model was used as a reference, this illustrated below. If you are on the left of the triangle you are strong operationally and neglecting the culture, values of the organisation. If you are on the right side of the triangle, your business is strong culturally and you must be balanced to be as strong operationally.

To improve on this Jeff and Jonathan remarked ‘Practice, practice and practice leadership. Ask “What is my campaign?” Ask what is my opportunity to hear (OTH) and multiply that by 6 times to hear. Know how to inspire.’



‘Develop others so they have the potential to think and solve problems and be capable to achieve. Manage the disruptions and interferences. Tune into the frequency of your conversations and get the volume and tone right. Get the agenda right and ask for air time, air space and air cover. You will be rewarded with big relationships based on trust.’

Trust and authenticity are of paramount importance the taskforce group then discussed and the fact that if conversations and leaders are not authentic then the trust and respect falls apart. There is a fine line between managing and developing and it’s a skill to be able to change conversations instantly to the correct tone and level of support or guidance.

'Manage the operations. Have a line of sight into the business. Develop high trust to get high performance and integrity of your leadership will shine through.'

**Physical readiness - To get your Organisation ready you must get your people ready**

Dr Elizabeth Healey then took the group through the physical aspects of preparing yourself for conversations. Breathing and calmness of the body – preparing yourself both mentally and physically is important to be ready and to be your best.

To conclude the day, some of the key messages were discussed:

"Culture thrives only when conversations become dynamic"

"Values spread rapidly through dynamic conversations"

"Situational and emotional awareness feed the dynamic conversation - dynamic conversations fuel growth and change"

We've received great feedback following this investigative session. For more information on Global Edge's research and work with different companies please visit: <http://www.theglobaledge.com>



Our next HR Taskforce session takes place on 18<sup>th</sup> October on 'The Truly Inclusive Organisation'.

Full details are available here: <https://www.hrtaskforce.com/programme/>