

Why good initiatives fail?

Leading change with agility to success

Leadership is a combination of proper decision making and appropriate behavior. Embarking on a change program without these assumptions will result in failure. On the other hand, change is essential in life, is the norm in all processes, biological, human and social. The abnormal would be "no change".

We have all seen too many good ideas failing, initiatives and projects that looked great, but repeatedly fail in their implementation in companies and organizations. Good ideas, initially very interesting and promising projects necessary to get good results, to better position or to exit an unwanted situation, stay in attempts, run aground or not end up producing the expected results, with the consequent waste of resources and time . This failure comes too often to frustrate or increase suspicion of people to undertake new initiatives.



Managers (and non-managers) are all under pressure to get results. This means improving performance in a rapidly changing environment. Obviously, this also means a change in the organization or processes. Perhaps adapting new tools and systems.

There are multitudes of proposals that are promoted to help with this need. Therefore, they are continually bombarded with new systems and management methodologies. They are "proven methodologies" with recognized success. Just to name a few: Lean, 'Six Sigma', 5F, finite Planning, ERP, CRM, Balanced Scorecard and many more. Accompanied by many systems or "software", as proven in multiple companies.

But is our company ready for this? To what extent is ready to embark on as what kind of initiatives and projects? Which one or ones of these are most appropriate? And what should be the priority? Key elements of leadership are having a vision and indicate clear strategic direction to follow.

Innovation already represents a change that must be faced implanting it as a vital process to survive and grow, in turn creating a "culture of innovation".

To choose the right direction and get the change to the strategic needs of the company, you must take into account the current situation and evaluate, perhaps self-assess the degree of organizational maturity. Effective leaders recognize that this is only the beginning. They should get more, that change takes place through their own conviction that it is possible and for his ability to motivate people, leading this process from the beginning. The desired changes must become prioritized projects and they must therefore often be only one that we can take to achieve success.

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The organizational maturity, which is often forgotten, means that there are natural stages through which makes a company to mature as an organization. And each is manifested in a particular culture. Consequently, there is a logical sequence or methodologies to adapt management initiatives in each of the phases, according to the culture and possibilities of assimilation and usually is accompanied by transitions of the form of organization, the culture of the company and in the use of tools, technologies, measures and indicators.

Adapting to changes in the environment is another necessity. In addition, they must be entered in the decision making process and the management of day to day. You do not need anymore a budget or annual plan, even not a strategic plan as an event. You need a continuously revised plan incorporating the changes in our environment.

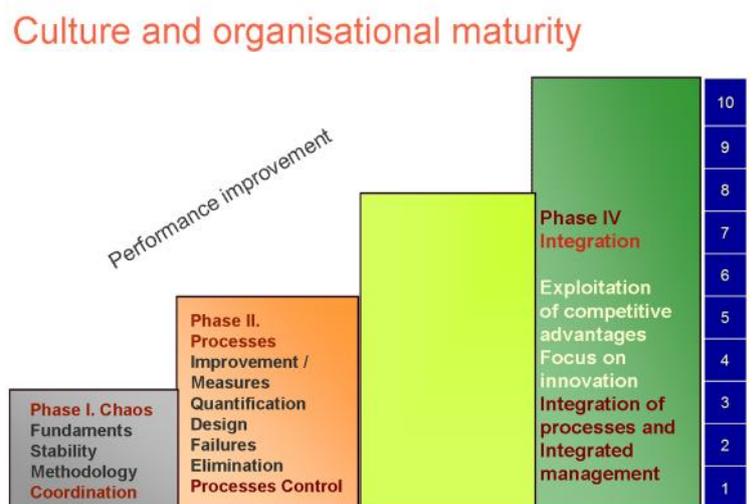
Change projects, multiply and are an essential element in companies and organizations. However, it should consider a few things:

1. A change begins with its own identification. There should therefore materialize every kind of change in a particular project. Like any project, with their ultimate goal, plan and organization, its leaders, its budget, its start and end dates and milestones.
2. No change should generalize intending span multiple targets at once, or to reach places not very concrete. Better define various projects.
3. Changes must be avoided in "small doses" or changes over long periods of time. We could increase distrust of all subjects and actors of change, workers and managers, individuals and teams. Therefore, it is best to take major steps in short time periods, but always being clear, the path defined as intermediate goals and immediate objectives. But above all, the information and communication both on where we are now, and what is the next step we want to accomplish.

But even more experienced managers embark on the implementation of excellent tools and methodologies, from the purely technological, to others as we have said, before even having paved the way for these initiatives. Or simply, without considering if better resolve first other key issues.

Consequently, good initiatives fail. Fail a good idea, a project that might achieve a necessary goal, conducted by highly trained people, with good motivation, but fails. And usually undertake another initiative, another even more ambitious project. And fail again. And the third or fourth will finally discourage and frustrate people to undertake anything.

These errors can be observed in all organizations or companies which plans to undertake initiatives that do not match their current maturity stage, unforeseen events 'occur' and



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consequently there is a widely entrenched culture of 'firefighting'. In this environment, the more sophisticated the tools to implement rather fail and produce less return on investment and the necessary improvement. We must undertake the improvements that apply to your stage in culture and organizational maturity before moving on to others. If not, the process is so inefficient that never come to formalize and much less assimilate and turn into habits. Why? "Only increases our bureaucracy." Inefficient processes, not only waste many times, but overwhelmed by unexpected events, encouraged the figure of the 'solver' unforeseen problems, the 'fire fighter'.

Figure 1 shows various stages of "organizational maturity", from a phase of "chaos" and improvisation, without processes defined or consolidated to a stage that we have indicated as "Phase IV" where business processes have been consolidated and in many cases automated. Improved habits and culture of change have been created around them, and have been integrated into a streamlined management process, focused on innovation and continuous improvement. They assumed various cultural changes and this process can take up to 10 years.

Improvements will come and change initiatives will be successfully implemented and sustained over time, only when you get to lay the foundation. That is, when the tasks and procedures are clearly defined and consistently made by people who feel "as their own" because they influence their design. Highly trained individuals, who also behave consistently and appropriately because 'know' what they do, the 'because' do and 'how' to do. Moving a company from phase I, 'coordination and putting out fires', to overcome it and create a new culture and management style, requires strong and consistent leadership.

In phase II, unforeseen events' are less frequent. Processes are under better control and routine tasks routinely performed with consistent procedures and with few errors. The goal then is to persist in improving core processes, in creating habits and best practices. Measuring the speed of processes, its consistency, and eliminate measuring errors.

These means doing self-analysis, exploit value creation, eliminate the unnecessary or 'waste', reducing process variability, improving their speed and agility. The result is a business management more responsive to the changing environment with flexibility and agility, far from the chaos and improvisation.

Enter phase III means the target is automation, using knowledge based systems. Putting automation of all processes by using technological tools. Thus errors in the processes that have been removed are not transmitted to the automation systems, increasing chaos and confusion.

Phase 4 is the integration of all systems and processes with optimum use of technological tools in the service of people, processes and business strategy, connecting it with the day to day.

I think the first requirement of a leader is to grasp the logic of the maturation process of an organization and consider this logic in selecting priorities and improvement initiatives including management methodologies.

The second requirement would be its ability to generate excitement and bring a change program to success. Easy to say, but that requires a real understanding of the business opportunities and ability to see that future is what you want. Enthusiasm for the shared vision is essential in a management team, therefore, is essential for the leader, sharing his knowledge; his vision of the future and your concerns with your direct team and act as such equipment, offering a model for the rest. Without this, no management team

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will be able to drive a substantial change.

The third is that the executive leader should recognize the power of self-leadership signals that act as symbols. The words, behaviors, actions they are constantly sending messages to other people at work each day. People respond to this. I mean, are these signals, positive message you want and confirming what has been said in big meetings and presentations? Or conversely, are conflicting and contradicting it.

Organizational maturity for Innovation



Finally, leaders consistently undertake and maintain this commitment in time, preventing commitments volatilize. The first three points will only serve to facilitate the latter, which ultimately is the bottom line. Only with the commitment and responsibility of all may be a change program to success, and this program will provide quick profits that fuel the most difficult stages of the program.

These stages of maturity related to the innovation process, are shown in Figure 2, with specific more detail behaviors, typical of the different phases of innovation culture, just to list a few without being exhaustive, which obviously require more space.

In a future article we will start with simple self-assessment tools, orienting companies that want to innovate, from the implementation of an agile innovation process until creating the desired "culture of innovation"

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