

Nuggets on Change Leadership

By Mike Huszar (with Harold Chapman)

Each year I attempt to reflect on what has occurred while setting direction for a new year. 2013 has been a year of growth for Drive, Inc. (thanks to all of you) and has been a year of big changes for us, including our name change! Of course, our jobs have us facilitating change every day. As we journey toward 2014, I leave you with a few nuggets on leading change.

LEADING FROM THE TOP

Managing change effectively in any organization requires enormous energy from the top. When asked, leaders acknowledge this requirement. So, why do so many leaders relegate the lion's share of change management to the middle? So many businesses that we have observed have middle managers pushing from the middle out, fighting both sides of the equation; so many of them try to gain a foothold in the culture without the authority needed to be successful. This truly is a lack of respect for our people and, in my opinion, demonstrates poor leadership at the top. What's the biggest thing plaguing your company today? Now, YOU are responsible for changing it – throughout the entire organization. No excuses – go make it happen! If you don't, guess what? Nobody else can!

THE POWER OF PARADIGMS

Decades ago, a group of scientists conducted an experiment to observe how paradigms are developed and maintained. They put five monkeys in a cage with a bundle of bananas located at the top of a ladder. The monkeys naturally want to get the bananas. When the first monkey attempted to climb the ladder, the other four monkeys were sprayed with cold water. This occurred repeatedly. In a very short period of time, whenever one monkey began climbing the ladder, the other four monkeys would pull him down and attack him. At this point, none of the monkeys were trying to get the bananas. Then, a new monkey replaced one of the original five monkeys. He immediately attempted to climb the ladder (this is similar to a



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new associate seeing the obvious areas for improvement). The other monkeys, having previously been sprayed, attacked the new monkey and

kept him from getting to the top of the ladder. However, the scientists were no longer spraying the monkeys. In fact, none of the monkeys had been sprayed in days, and yet, none of them tried to get to the bananas. Over the course of some days, the remaining original four monkeys were replaced with new monkeys. The end result was five monkeys that had never been sprayed, yet they would attack any monkey that tried to get the bananas. If you could ask the monkeys why they would beat up any monkey trying to get the bananas, I presume that they would say, "Because that is how we have always done it." Have you ever heard someone say that in your organization? Have YOU ever said that in your organization? As a leader in your organization, it is imperative to challenge paradigms. It takes great leadership to challenge what is happening now, and not let those old paradigms stand in the way of how things can be in the future.

COMPASSION AND STRENGTH

A friend of ours and his wife had traveled to a village in Africa as missionaries. As with most tribes, this tribe was living without many amenities that we take for granted. Their method for drawing water was to send very strong men down into deep wells to gather water and climb out carrying the water on their backs. During one of their visits, one of the tribesmen had fallen back into the well and broken his legs. Everyone in the village had tried to free him from his watery grave, but no one was strong enough to climb out with the man. The villagers summoned the chief from his tent. He appeared on the scene robed in fine garments and wearing a large headdress. The chief looked in the well at his fallen villager. A tear rolled down his cheek and he began to disrobe. He then removed his headdress and proceeded down into the well. A few minutes later he rose from the well with the large man on his back. Our friend was in awe that the chief of the village had the strength and will to go into the well and save a villager. Isn't this what we are called to do in our businesses as well? We are looked upon the most in times of greatest adversity, which includes times of great change. It is then time to engage and tackle the most challenging items. The chief could have told the villagers that this was caused by stupidity or carelessness, and that if the



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man had followed his directions, it never would have happened. It took compassion and strength to solve this problem. The result? Continued water for the village. How will you ensure that your village has sufficient water in 2014?

FINAL THOUGHTS

I know you are very busy, and I am honored that you would spend your valuable time reading something we have created. However, I would ask that you not move forward in your journey unless you are ALL IN. There will be many trips to the well for you. There is no room for false starts. We need to get this right the first time. Many challenges face you each day. You must be competitive despite labor costs in low wage countries, inflation and dollar valuation, pricing and cost pressures, the need for increasing product variations with decreasing time to market expectations all with increasing costs to do business. Overcoming these challenges is difficult. Transforming a culture is a long journey, and it WILL NOT be easy.

Some companies start the journey only to pull off at a rest stop and do tool implementation. This journey will require us to constantly look at the system that drives the processes. As you know, leadership is hard work. You are physically and mentally drained at the end of each day. You are physically drained because you are on the beat talking to the people that make your business run and mentally drained because you are putting the brain power into making a great company that will be around for generations to come. Many leaders are tempted to jump straight to tool implementation to get quick wins.

I want to impress upon you the importance of the Journey. It is long. It is lonely at times, but it is the only way to instill true World-Class behaviors and systems in your organization. Your time spent in the GEMBA (the real place where work is being done and value is created) will increase significantly while you ensure things are being done and results are achieved. You must send the message that every leader's responsibility in your organization is to ensure that standards are maintained, continuous improvement is embedded, and innovation is adopted. Although you may lose some to the pressures of this crucible of change, you will see others unexpectedly rise to the challenge. After a few years in the journey, the



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leader of each function should be able to become a world-class consultant for that function.

We will always have more good ideas than we will have resources to accomplish them, so we must align everyone in the organization to the vital few initiatives and problems. We must remove items from our people's

plates that are not providing sufficient ROI or might otherwise be distracting us from accomplishing the vital few tasks and initiatives. It is our job as the top leader in the organization to say no to good ideas so that everyone can have a laser focus on the key initiatives. These wildly important goals must either make us money today or set us up to make money in the future. Please remember:

You must engage the people in your organization to improve the work that they do in accordance with company expectations and goals!!

Let us partner with you to start or continue your journey, building a culture that will take you beyond World-Class. For a no-obligation introduction meeting, please contact Paul Eakle at paul.eakle@driveinc.com or call 865-323-3491.

