

Just Change Your Mind

By Ted Santos

Businesses make enormous investments of time and money for new plans, strategies and the perfect employee with the hope things will change. Yet, at the end of the effort, not much changes. What happens?

In most cases, those new plans, strategies and employees enter a company with an existing culture. And plans, strategies and new employees have a way of conforming to the existing culture. The culture of your business is the result of a particular mindset. Most often, it is the mindset of the founder or executive management.

The founder has gotten to where he is because of specific skill sets, knowledge base and belief system, which unfortunately all come with inherent limits. Why? Skills, knowledge... come from what he or she already knows or has experienced. In other words, it comes from the past. We (people) try to make the past fit the future. Just because something worked in the past, doesn't mean it is appropriate for the future. As the saying goes, if you do and think what you have always done and thought, you will have what you have always had.

Therefore, lasting changes have to start with the way people think. To make changes in the way you think, you will be required to set goals beyond your core competencies and persistently think them through. It is a way to train yourself and people to get out of the proverbial comfort zone.

However, pursuing goals in an area that is unfamiliar or where you don't have all the necessary knowledge could be intimidating. At the same time, in the words of Henry Ford, "if you believe you can or you believe you can't, you're right". It is the mindset that allows people to accomplish that which has never been done. From that mindset, you get industry leaders and trendsetters. What do they have that most don't?

They practice handling the unknown. Furthermore, they have a mindset which allows them to be somewhat comfortable when dealing problems or disruptions. In fact, industry leaders can create problems intentionally. For example, in the 1930s, German scientists stated that they would build a machine to fly to the moon. This was a huge problem. In fact, most people thought they were insane. Yet, their commitment to fly to the moon empowered them to develop jet propulsion and the missile.

They didn't fly to the moon. Except, they did invent the technology which served as a platform for man to fly to the moon 30 years later. More importantly, they had a mindset that allowed them to accomplish many successes, even though it was in an area where there was no knowledge or blueprint. They created the knowledge for others to follow.

A New Model

Looking to the future of organizations, there may be a greater return on investment from training people in intrapersonal skills - a clear understanding of the relationship with self, chaos, opportunity, the future, change, risk, and colleagues. That way, people can learn to let go of old thought patterns and uncover blind spots. To develop intrapersonal skills, people have to confront assumptions which they hold as facts. Assumptions held as facts can make change appear risky.

In the book “Risk Intelligence,” David Apgar says that the biggest problem people have when faced with risk is that they know too much. What they know too much about is themselves. People identify themselves with presupposed limits and capabilities based on their knowledge and experience.

So, before you start implementing new plans, strategies and hiring the perfect employee, look at your mindset and the mindset of your enterprise. If you find yourself resisting change or believing that the time is not right for a new strategy, you don’t have enough money or don’t have the right people, work on your mindset first. A new mindset can help you see things you couldn’t see before or empower you to work effectively through insurmountable challenges.

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