

**Mind Mapping...A Proven Way to Communicate and Sustain Change**

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## **Mind Mapping...A Proven Way to Communicate and Sustain Change**

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**Employees in Corporate America** sadly enough report in surveys that they do not understand the direction of the organization. They continue implementing what they feel is the direction, as they understand it. It is important that the individual is aware of what is expected of he/she in light of new changes and directions. Individuals report they want to help, but no one has involved them in any targeted dialogue as to what they need to do to assure that the organization is successful.

**Leaders at the top** feel that they have communicated and are frustrated that their words are not being heard. Leaders are particularly agitated with the middle ranks of management, who according to senior management, "just do not get it or do not want to change."

**Middle Management**, at the same time, is feeling disenfranchised and ill informed-decidedly not understanding what senior management wants.

### **Why This Dilemma and Mismatch?**

Most likely it is the fact that senior management has not taken the time to communicate behaviorally what is expected. Many senior managers feel that the information shared with the investor community easily translates to managers who are expected to implement the strategy. "CEO Speak" and financial projections have taken down too many sincere efforts to enroll and align organizations.

For successful change it is necessary there be consistent, integrated and aligned communications flowing down through the organization. Key populations must understand the change agenda and translate that agenda into behavioral terms so that there is a consistent alignment to support the change.

### **Test Your World**

- To verify if there is *a* need, one might want to use the following exercise used at Nationsbank. 100 members of the management team were asked about:
- Purpose/direction: Do you have a clear picture of where we are going? The rationale for change;

What is expected of you to win in this new arena?

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Ask yourself: How consistent do you think the answers would be?

- 10%
- 50%
- 70%
- 100%

**...the answer is not very encouraging in most corporations.**

### **Lessons Learned**

Events at Federal Express, Baxter International, NationsBank and many of our clients led to the following conclusions:

1. *A communications "game plan" is needed.* It cannot be a series of pronouncements from the chairman's office, but rather managers at various levels need to communicate a consistent message and do it on an ongoing basis. At Federal Express, a "manager" was used to provide key information about the company and its direction. Research shows that individuals want their managers to be "in the know" and a major source of information.

2. *The organization's senior management must have agreed on the details of the overriding change agenda/strategy to be implemented.* Supporting documents can be created, but initially the focus should be on some basics:

- Why change?
- The purpose/vision . . . where are we going?
- Where did we begin? /Where are we now?
- What will success be like?

3. *Communications must be done from a frame of reference of the employees versus the financial world.* While it is absolutely necessary to communicate to the investor community it is insufficient to engage the head, hearts and hands of those who must implement the change. If the communication is done correctly, people can experience control and master creating focus and momentum. We judge ourselves by our intentions; others judge us by our behavior. This phenomenon has been quite hard for senior management to deal with, in that they feel they are judged too harshly. They have communicated but what they have not done is put the communications in a form that is understandable or digestible so that it drives behavior.

4. *An internal traffic controller is needed to stay on top of the issues, orchestrating the various moves and assuring that there are no mixed messages.* This can be an assignment for an individual for a period of time, or designated to a senior officer. Whatever the structural arrangement, it must be tightly aligned to either the chief operating officer or the senior leadership team. Without a traffic controller the tactics of the change effort will be perceived as poorly thought out and a confusing set of "fad de jour."

5. *Communicating and implementing the change is not enough . Sustainability is the only measure of success.*

6. *Changing the plans and the processes alone are not sustainable .* The communications effort must also describe and change behaviors. From research we know that to change behavior it must be meaningful to the individual and it must involve an understanding of the issue-facts, logic-involving the head, a buy-in, commitment from the heart-and real, personal rewards and consequences. If all of those conditions are aligned you will then see an individual highly committed to the task-understanding, reacting and being highly productive.

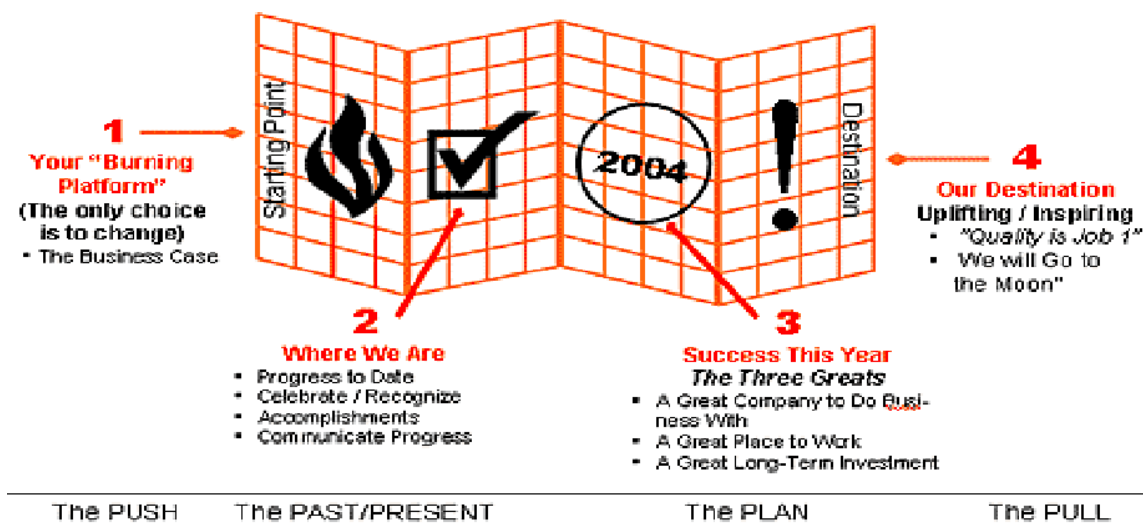
***Behavioral communications is different than contextual communications*** . There is a need to do both; however, corporate senior management does not understand the distinction between the two, and since they travel mostly in describing events and context, they have a hard time being specific in their intentions. They simply have not been trained in the process of communications. Some firms are getting better at this; however, the work in NationsBank, Chemical Bank and Jensen Communications is the exception rather than the rule. What then is the model behind the best practices?

#### **Communicating at the Organizational and Individual Levels**

The communications package should be put together at two levels. Initially, at the organizational level(s) and then secondarily, for specific key populations where specific behavioral changes are needed.

*Organizational communications* should have been crafted and agreed to by the senior management executive and/or team. Normally it requires a work session to solicit their views; a draft of the communications package is forwarded to the team to assure that there are no major surprises or areas of disagreements. The old adage from the Fram commercial should always be kept in mind-"Pay me now or pay me later." If there are areas of disagreement, lack of clarity or buy-in it is better to surface it.

Many times it is misperceptions, minor disagreements or personal slights that need to be dealt with. The senior team as a whole and the individuals within the team are made aware that they will in turn be expected to put together cascading, supporting documents that help to "drill down" the communications.



### Outline of the Mind Map "Package"

- **Reason for Change: The Push.**

You cannot move someone to change unless he or she sees a compelling reason or future state to go to, or a strong incentive to get away from something.

The "burning platform" is a bit of folklore making the rounds in organization in which hypothetically a guest on Nightline-Ted Koppel's program-is recounting a harrowing story of survival from a disastrous situation of a burning platform derrick. The individual had jumped into a cold, debris-laden oil slick that was afire. Ted Koppel supposedly asks the oil worker why he chose to jump into the North Sea. With a look of amazement the individual tells Mr. Koppel, rather straightforwardly, that he had no choice. "It was either burn or try to survive in the water. What choice did I have?"

In order to change an organization, leadership must create a compelling reason for change, describing it so that there is no other rational choice than to do something else, jump, if you will, into uncharted waters. Leadership must create a crisis or get the organization to react to a real crisis. Whether it is called the "burning platform," the need for change, or the business case, it is getting at the same issue-pushing the organization into the future.

### The Past to the Present.

- Many change efforts implore individuals to reject the past and to go full bore into the present. Traditionally this does not work well and only accentuates the frustration and tension between those architecting the change effort and those attempting to orchestrate it throughout the organization. Individuals are rightfully proud of the traditions of the organization and their individual contributions-to ignore or discount this fact causes problems. If there is this bridge from the past to the present, the communications is much more effective and palatable to organization members.

What is important is to honor the past and respect the legacy, describing the behaviors that should be continued and enhanced and being specific about the behaviors that should be left behind. It is necessary to describe progress to date by citing and celebrating accomplishments.

- **Our Destination.**

The vision of the future should be bold, uplifting, simple and somewhat vague. Vagueness seems almost contrary to what was mentioned in the earlier discussion of purpose; however, to drive change and provide some degree of freedom for the future, a degree of generality is required.

Federal Express in earlier days described the vision as "the premier carrier of critical business information." Ford described its vision as "Quality if job #1." These types of headlines are intended to capture the heart and pull behavior towards the vision.

Fred Smith was absolutely, positively the best at creating a reachable mountain to climb. Initially it was the de-regulation of the airlines; following that, it was the introduction of the large body aircraft (747s and DC 10s). In addition, the linkage of his formula-People, Service and Profitability-laid the groundwork and made implementing "Success in 2000" (or the future) more palatable and understandable.

- **Defining Success-the "Three Greats."**

It is necessary to be explicit as to what we mean by success. The mantra of People, Service and Profitability provides an excellent framework in which to describe the key factors of success and what they mean to the organization. Jim Shanley and his staff at NationsBank took these ideas further and provided an outline in which to describe and shape what success means:

- **People** . . . translated to "a great place to work"
- **Service** . . . translated to "a great company to do business with" and
- **Profitability** . . . translated to "an excellent company to invest in"

Sadly enough what we usually have is not a balanced approach, but senior management emphasizing only the financial return. What is said to the investor community is a part of what needs to be communicated internally. People do want to be successful, but they need to know what that means. This framework seems to help.

### **The Benefits to Laying out the Change Road Map**

#### **For senior management:**

- Provides a forum to raise/work through various points of view/items needing clarification
- Consolidating information prior to going public provides opportunity to surface disagreements
- Provides focus and alignment of thinking of the senior level team
- Assures that the same message is being provided to the total organization

- Packages the change message beyond the financials
- Provides a troubleshooting framework to assess where there are disconnects in the change communications

**For middle management:**

- Provides thinking of senior management regarding the change behaviors required for them to provide leadership
- Allows tailorability to the local level with the overall game plan of senior level deliberations as a backdrop
- For those uncomfortable with presentations, provides a briefing package

**For employees most impacted by the change and expected to change/modify behaviors at the task level:**

- Provides the basics regarding the change required
- Provides a step by step "mind map"; thus, the path to change is visible and understandable
- individuals can transition to the desired state
- Translates the corporate mandate for change to their work site, rather than just a personal perspective
- Allows them to cognitively understand the change and the emotional reaction to it in graduated forms, rather than a general mandate to "change"