

Tipping Point Leadership

Doing more with less quickly

Executing a strategic shift, particularly fast and with limited resources, is difficult. Yet it can be done by challenging conventional wisdom and leveraging tipping point leadership to address the hurdles to strategy execution and by focussing on factors of disproportionate influence. Tipping Point Leadership is a critical component for making strategy happen. It aligns employees' actions with the new strategy.

Tipping Point Leadership turns conventional wisdom on its head to win employee backing with less resources in executing a break from the status quo. Tipping point leadership hinges on the insight that in any organisation, fundamental change can happen quickly when the beliefs and energies of a critical mass of people create an epidemic movement toward an idea.

Key to unlocking an epidemic movement is **concentration**, not diffusion. Tipping point leadership builds on the rarely exploited corporate reality that in every organisation there are people, acts and activities that exercise a disproportionate influence on performance. Therefore, mounting an effective massive challenge is about conserving resources and cutting time by focussing on identifying and then leveraging the factors of disproportionate influence in an organisation.

Break through the Cognitive Hurdle

Inspire a fast change in mindset that is internally driven of people's own accord:

- **Ride the Electric Sewer**
To break the status quo, employees must come face-to-face with the worst operational problems. Direct and personal face-to-face experience of poor performance is shocking and inescapable, but actionable. This direct experience exercises a disproportionate influence on tipping people's cognitive hurdle – and fast.
- **Meet with Disgruntled Customers**
Get your managers, particularly the top team, to listen to their most disgruntled customers firsthand. Don't rely on market surveys or reports.

Jump the Resource Hurdle

Get the organisation to execute a strategic shift with fewer resources by using tipping point leadership to concentrate on multiplying the value of the resources you have:

- **Redistribute resources to your Hot Spots;** activities that have low resource input but high potential performance gains.
- **Redirect resources from your Cold Spots;** activities that have high resource input but low performance impact.
- **Engage in Horse Trading;** encourage managers to fill remaining resource gaps by trading resources they don't need for those of others they do need.

Jump the Motivational Hurdle

For a new strategy to become a movement people must not only recognise what needs to be done, they must also act on that insight in a sustained and meaningful way. Tipping point leaders encourage this by focussing on three factors of disproportionate influence in motivating employees:

- **Zoom in on Kingpins**
Concentrate your efforts on kingpins, the key influencers in the organisation; the people who are the natural leaders, well respected and persuasive or who have an ability to unlock or block access to key resources. As with kingpins in bowling, when you hit them straight on, all of the other pins come toppling down.
- **Place Kingpins in a Fishbowl**
Motivate the Kingpins in a sustained and meaningful way by shining a spotlight on their actions in a repeated and highly visible way that, with inclusion and fair process, makes kingpins' actions and inaction transparent to themselves and others. Fair process means engaging all the affected people in the process, explaining to them the basis of decisions and the reasons people will be promoted or sidestepped in future, and setting clear expectations of what that means to employee's performance.
- **Atomize to get the organisation to change itself**
This relates to framing the overall strategic challenge to be attainable in a believable way that presents concrete goals within the capabilities of the people at the different levels of the organisation.

Knock over the Political Hurdle

Organisational politics is an inescapable reality of corporate and public life. Even if an organisation has reached the tipping point of execution, powerful vested interests will resist the impending changes. To overcome these political forces, tipping point leaders focus on three disproportionate influence factors:

- **Secure a Consigliere on your Top Management Team**
A respected senior insider who knows how to remove the landmines that will be faced in implementing the new strategy, knows all the key players, how they play the political game, and can advise on their likely attitudes and behaviours.
- **Leverage your Angels**
Identify your Angels; who will gain the most by the strategic shift, who will naturally align with you. Don't fight alone - get the higher and wider voice to fight with you.
- **Silence your Devils**
Who are your Devils? Who will lose the most by the strategic shift? Who will fight you?

Identify your detractors and supporters and strive to create a win-win outcome for both. Move quickly. Isolate your detractors by building a broader coalition with your angels before a battle begins. Discourage the war before it has a chance to start or gain steam. The key to winning over your detractors or devils is in knowing all their likely angles of attack and building up counter-arguments backed by irrefutable facts and reasons.

Acknowledgement

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