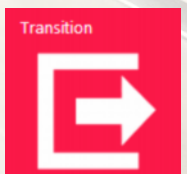
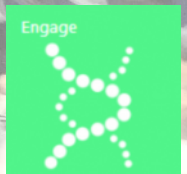


Welcome to our April 2016 e-bulletin.



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- Page 5 - Tania Hummel on **The challenges of leadership in times of change**.
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Championing team engagement: progressing from the question we never ask

(Clayton Glen – Co-Founder, ImaginativeHR)

Authentic culture building:

A recent National Venture Capital Association / Ernst & Young study reported in the Venture Capital Review (Issue 28, 2012) under the title *"Culture is a Business Issue..."*, concludes that culture is unique and provides arguably the most sustainable competitive advantage an organisation can have for distinguishing itself against the competition.

The study also found that *many factors help drive and define the culture, including "leadership styles, policies and procedures (or sometimes lack thereof), titles, hierarchy, as well as the overall demographics and workspace."* – a conscious appreciation of the impact of all of these business building blocks on the emerging culture of a business being key.

Culture develops because of our conscious actions, initiatives and strategies, *or* in spite of these conscious efforts; impacted by a broad mixture of situational and team realities; e.g.

- Alignment between business goals and individual objectives.
- The quality and authenticity of organisational leadership.
- The level of trust, honesty and transparency within the organisation.
- Alignment between values and behaviour.
- Focusing on learning and development across all levels of the organisation.
- The incentivisation of culture alignment efforts.
- The encouragement and celebration of 'heroes and superstars'.

The study concludes that *"... culture is a business issue that has significant impact on a venture's ability to generate a return on investment and should be prioritized and measured just like other business objectives such as financial growth, product development, sales, marketing and the like."* The key opportunity being to consciously design and champion an authentic culture which drives and supports financial growth.

An excellent illustrative example of *'what great culture building and authentic engagement stewardship looks like'* followed the early-2016 staff communication by LinkedIn's CEO, Jeff Weiner; addressing the 40% drop in share value following the recent 2015 earnings' announcement, who countered potential staff despondency with the following appeal:

"We are the same company we were the day before our earnings announcement, ... You're the same team you were ... and most importantly we have the same mission, vision and sense of purpose in terms of our ability to create economic opportunity ... None of that has changed."

Engagement diagnostics (staff surveys, focus groups and 360s) ... the means, not the end:

I developed a real passion for pinpointing the touchpoints of team engagement and morale and managing team engagement projects over 20+ years in HR and HR consulting; across a broad range of sectors with fantastic, diverse and very unique organisations like *Federal-Mogul, Shazam Entertainment, Universal Music, Honda, Viacom (MTV & Comedy Central)*,
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ITN, Roche Diagnostics, Dixons Carphone, Gluru, Ireland's Electricity Supply Board (ESB) and many others – ranging from well-established FTSE 100 or Public Sector organisations with 50,000 or more employees ranged across multiple business units and locations, to start-up organisations with under ten employees, operating largely virtually.

Regardless of size and complexity, the touchpoints of engagement are the same.

Generally, at these organisations, we have set out to measure levels of engagement (via surveys, focus groups, 360s and / or structured interviews), following or ahead of a major organisational event; e.g. pre and post restructuring, post re-branding, post-merger, post major strategic or market adjustments, aligned with employer brand development efforts, parallel with e.g. Sunday Times, Fortune, Glassdoor 'Best Company to Work for' efforts, or as part of a conscious culture building programme, aligned with new balanced scorecard / rewards strategy, etc.

As someone experienced in managing many engagement diagnostics projects, my starting position at all times when setting sponsor / stakeholder expectations is that the diagnostic (survey, focus group, etc.) is clearly *only the means, not the end* ...

All too often however, huge effort goes into building a defensible diagnostic with multi-stakeholder input; ensuring that the diagnostic asks the right and optimal number of questions, ensuring that norms and benchmarks are clearly established for future comparison purposes, ensuring that distribution communication and logistics work perfectly, calibrating excellent response rate, reporting and action planning dashboards, etc., though, all too often the post-measurement '*what's next and who owns it?*' piece gets lost in the detail; neglected and *unhelpful at best or destructive at worst* to future efforts to build '*winning engagement*'.

Ensuring ownership of post survey efforts – saying what you can't do up-front:

In an article I wrote ten years ago for the Industrial and Commercial Training Journal called '*Key skills retention and motivation: the war for talent still rages and retention is the high ground*' I concluded that engaging and retaining key organizational talent "*requires joined-up thinking, a clear business-driver link, and a good deal of thought and energy*".

I'm still amazed ten years' later that organisations I work with still largely continue to effectively separate the diagnostic means (surveys, focus groups, reporting and everything that revolves around these processes) from establishing *clear ownership* earliest around the '*what's next and who's accountable?*' – this disconnect needs to be actively challenged.

As many people who have participated in staff surveys will say; there is often a very tenuous link between the efforts and fanfare that went into promoting, validating and rolling out these surveys vs the efforts put into assuring tangible post-survey outcomes, actions and ownership.

For this reason, I tend to focus leadership attention on building honest FAQs and frank narratives *ahead of any diagnostic*; focused on a) areas where the organisation does not have the capacity, resources or inclination to make any adjustments, as this starts to build the narrative for what can and is unlikely to change in the future, and b) very clearly identifies who will be held accountable for post-diagnostic next steps ... be these senior leadership, line managers via the natural hierarchical / performance management cascade, or e.g. designated engagement champions.

By definition, this pre-diagnostic 'commitment' requires a multi-stakeholder orientation ... staff surveys should never be the sole domain of HR / Internal Comms; rolled-out by the people team to the organisation.

Investing in a multi-stakeholder approach aligns expectations and helps build the '*story for the future*' in any staff communication, prior to any diagnostic. It also ensures that staff are a step closer to answering the question we never ask: "*How confident are you that actions will be taken as result of this survey?*"

Developing engagement championship – sharing the engagement challenge bottom-up:

One of the difficulties with this approach is that, even with fantastic leadership and engagement sponsorship, line managers often have enough on their plate keeping the business going, meeting their and their team's commercial objectives and reacting to complex environmental challenges. It's realistic that some business leaders will not find the time to follow up energetically and creatively on the outcomes of the last staff survey and recommended actions generated from it.

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It's always sensible to balance top-down engagement efforts with bottom-up efforts; engaging employee reps or, better still, designating these as *'engagement champions'* who can help build momentum and a great narrative around the organisation's staff engagement efforts; linking these to broader strategic and commercial efforts.

But where's the DNA for *'engagement championship'*? Very often the core stakeholder DNA for an *'Engagement Champions'* steering group, sits in obvious places within the business; e.g. staff reps, the Customer Experience team, the Resourcing team, the Employer Branding / EVP team, the Investor Comms team, the Corporate Social Responsibility team, individual, team and regional exemplars of great customer service, recent graduate / intern appointments, HR, L&D and OD of course ... members of the team likely to expend discretionary effort in the interests of building momentum and a brave and authentic (evidence-based) and creative engagement *'story-line'*.

The challenge of course for any *'engagement champion'* is; *'What do I get out of it and how tangible is it?'* and *'What do colleagues get out of it and how tangible is it?'* Once these questions are part of a collective consciousness and can be answered, it becomes simpler to craft a fantastic engagement narrative and to share great, resonating stories across the organisation.

Optimally, these stories will assist refinements to future diagnostics – e.g. bi-annual pulse surveys, etc. and will provide a base for reminding line managers about which internal exemplar they need to look to, to enhance engagement and build motivation in their own teams.

Adopting an *'engagement champions'* approach as part of your team engagement strategy also increases the likelihood that you will broaden the base of multi-functional talent available to you who are experts in stakeholder communication, as well as increasing the chances that you will benefit from a broader base of knowledge and experience in the power of digital social platforms for external story-telling, best-practice learning and authentic employer branding purposes; e.g. team members skilled in leveraging e.g. LinkedIn's *Pulse*, Somewhere.com, Storify, Glassdoor.com, Facebook, Twitter, Slideshare, Vine, Instagram, etc. towards building your organisation's stakeholder *'story'*

Engagement champions are also very likely to find the time to explore other sources of engagement best practice; e.g. Engage for Success, CIPD, SHRM, a growing community of excellent engagement bloggers and commentators, etc.

Conclusion:

The objectives of engagement championship should always be to leave a lasting impression with all stakeholders; i.e.:

- prospective new hires (impacting the recruitment & selection process)
- new-starters (impacting onboarding and induction)
- partners (influencing partner relationships)
- investors (nurtured and measured with direct linkages to business value)
- customers / users (culture rubs off)

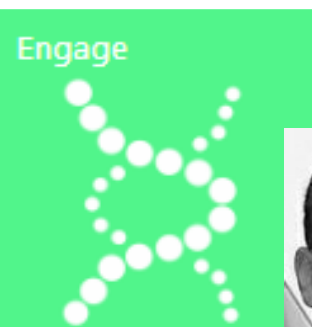
Maintaining discipline, energy and behavioural endorsement to build a winning / scalable organisational culture is what differentiates leading businesses like Google, Facebook, Apple, Samsung, etc.

Developing a cadre of engagement champions to support your efforts may be a no-brainer for your organisation.

Clayton Glen, BA, ABP, MBA, FRSA, is co-founder of ImaginativeHR and has worked in the HR consulting space since 2003 in senior commercial and CEO roles.

Prior to his time in HR consultancy, Clayton held a number of senior HR roles in the UK, Europe, the USA and Southern Africa.

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The challenges of leadership in times of change

(Tania Hummel, ImaginativeHR Senior Associate)



[ImaginativeHR delivers leadership assessment, 360 degree feedback, coaching and mentoring across all sectors.](#)

“Business is not physics, and people are not fundamental particles whizzing around inside the LHC, subject to largely immutable laws. If anything, business is governed by psychology, because everything depends on the unpredictable behaviour of human beings.” Andrew Saunders, Management Today.

Whether or not the need for transformational change is caused by disruptive innovation, or by other political, environmental, social or economic developments, leaders won't necessarily know the full extent of their characters – for better or worse – until they are truly tested and transformational change is by its nature, Truly Testing.

A typical scenario in the preparation for change goes like this:

- A major development triggers the need for large-scale change.
- Senior management disappear to off-site meetings.
- Consultants in grey suits with brief cases may appear.
- Soon there is an announcement.
- The Communications team go into full flow to steady the troops and to create messages designed to cascade the need for, and the benefits of, the change.

Depending on how long it's taken to get to this point, and how 'leaky' the organisational culture is, people may have heard rumours, have begun '*catastrophising*' or seeing the opportunity for 'land-grabbing'. Colleagues who may have worked peacefully together for years may find themselves on different sides of the fence. Gossiping around water coolers reaches a peak.

The original Grief Cycle model as devised by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross has been adapted many times to apply to organisational change.

While the senior team may have had the time to work through their own version of the Grief cycle, and may have had the benefit of a coach to work with, they often don't recognise the need for their people to have support working through the emotions that change can trigger.

It's not unusual to have an entire organisation at different stages of the model, with leaders looking to the future, while their people stay stuck in anger or denial without support.

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So here are 5 tips for recognising the various stages of the cycle and some responses:

1. **Shock** - often people express feelings of being numb, they might feel unable to cope, they may have difficulty completing routine tasks. They may recast the past as a 'golden era' while expressing fears that 'life will never be the same.'

Response: *Allow them to 'react'. Give them time to talk and explore what might happen, but challenge any wilful 'misinterpretation'. Help them to concentrate on using their strengths to get them through the change. Be positive, but avoid negative reassurance.*

2. **Denial** - sometimes people decide to cut themselves off from their emotions altogether. They might say things like 'it won't affect me' or 'it'll be fine'. They might cling to business as usual, longing for the day that it's all over, and may try to minimise the situation to make it insignificant.

Response: *Help them to identify any contrary information if it's available. Challenge discrepancies in the story they create. Discuss the change and its purpose. Help them to identify what is required and what is non-negotiable. Allow them to off-load, but with a focus on finding a solution.*

3. **Anger** - this can manifest as overt anger/aggression, but also as anxiety/depression. They may act defiantly, accuse the company of not caring. They may stop participating, work to rule or start making excuses or blaming, shirking their responsibilities.

Response: *Listen, acknowledge their feelings. Encourage them to stay involved. Help them identify positives and/or potential benefits. Don't tell them to change, or pull themselves together. Use an appropriate model to discuss where they are now and what might help them to move on.*

4. **Acceptance and Exploration** - at this stage, there may be confusion or even some chaos. As a result there may be some experimenting, and the start of acceptance of new working practices. People may start showing signs of enthusiasm, and may well be seeking reassurance, while still being easily disheartened.

Response: *Help them identify priorities, and facilitate the finding of short term wins. Encourage their ideas and experimentation of these. Help them not to be overcritical of themselves, and celebrate any positive developments.*

5. **Building Commitment** - people may now want to talk more, and take ownership. They may start persuading others and wanting to co-operate/co-ordinate activities. There may well be a visible increase in energy.

Response: *Help them to create long term goals. Encourage team building activities, particularly if new teams have been created as a result of the change. Help them to keep looking forward and encourage further progress. Identify the positive effects of responding to the change.*

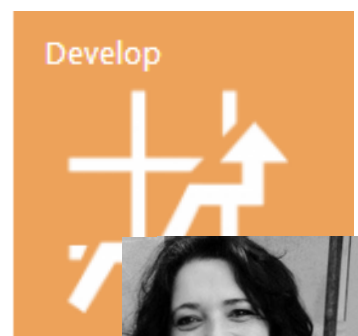
Leaders often talk about Passion.

Sometimes the quality that's needed most to navigate change successfully is *Compassion*.

Tania Hummel is an ImaginativeHR senior associate and was previously Global HR Director at Macmillan Science and Education, responsible for UK HR operations and global strategy for 1500 staff in the UK and 5000 staff worldwide, located in over 50 countries.

For more information and to speak to ImaginativeHR about our manager and 'survivor' support services during times of organisational transition, contact ImaginativeHR:

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Future-proofing your career

(Paul Diamond - ImaginativeHR Senior Associate)

Previously released as 'Career Transition and Toasters'

Decades of study into consumer behaviour has confirmed the fact that some of us only buy a new washing machine/vacuum cleaner/toaster/etc, when our current device gives up the ghost.

The consumer durables sector sometimes call this '*distressed purchase*', i.e. instead of taking our time browsing stores and cosying-up to brands, our need for clean clothes/dust-free floors/a slice of toast/etc, adds the dimension of pressure.

From the first time it was explained to me, I found this insight (and its many scenarios) fascinating. The evidence was all there in the way shoppers and consumers behaved but this framing of decision making under pressure resonated way beyond domestic appliances.

Career management: The toaster reveals even more

Newly equipped with this insight, and perhaps without even knowing why at first, I began paying attention to career decision making in a more 'consumer durables' way. It soon became apparent that similar forces/cycles of distressed purchase were at work during periods of significant career change and transition.

Some of the people I encountered were clearly struggling with transition in their careers - and with good reason because they were responding to big changes like the loss of a job, company buy-out, being overlooked for promotion, uncertainty around their career direction, and so on.

At the same time, I also came into contact with people managing change/transition well - some doing very well indeed, especially when you consider the pressure loaded on careers and career decision-making (e.g. financial income/stability, feelings of progression, fulfilment, success and so on).

Within this 'higher proficiency' group, were people who did not show any signs of distress during career transition, nor did they appear to be managing any kind of distressed purchase cycle at all. Looking back, these were among the most successful people I have witnessed from a career development point of view.

At first I had no idea how their lack of distress was achieved but, after some time and further exploration, the clues started piecing together. For example, there were people actively preparing themselves for change/transition long before it took place. A smaller number were also managing the development of their careers continually, strategically and holistically - as opposed to focusing on the management of individual moments/phases of change and transition.

Career Development: Minimising Distress

Instead of picking up/putting down career development (e.g. on a 'when needed' basis during transition) the people in this latter group were in constant contact with this subject. Like a great business strategy, career development was something they were continually in touch with - shaping, re-shaping, evolving and refining this over time, and with each new experience.

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The more time I spent working with (learning from and sharing new insight with) people of all ages and at all career levels, the more evident it became that career management/development was a medium some were continually engaged in. The millennial generation (and those even younger) seem to have an innate grasp of this continuity in career development, and the value of self management/self-ownership herein.

The shift to continuity in career management/development strategy may require a little more time, and a degree of focused thinking in advance, but the advantages (in terms of development, decision making, opportunity management, ambiguity tolerance, self efficacy, self-leadership, etc.) are evident.

I believe we can all engage in our individual moments of unforeseen change/transition with *greatly reduced stress*. We too can prepare ourselves for (and maybe even end up embracing) change and transition - which are perhaps the most critical, opportunity-laden points of acceleration, learning and growth in any career.

Regardless of your approach to career development strategy thus far, there is good news for everyone here. What the 'distress minimisers' have learned, we can learn too. What they know how to do, in concept and in preparation (i.e. in thought and deed) *anyone else can do too*.

Paul Diamond is an international career development consultant, author of **The Career Explorer's Journal** and host of the career development & discovery website **ExploreYourCareer.com**.

For more information and to speak to ImaginativeHR about our **career review services**, contact us at:

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- Assessment - for selection & development
- Coaching & mentoring - executive, virtual & team
- Staff engagement - focus groups, staff surveys, post-survey change facilitation & career management
- Career transition - career reviews, redeployment & outplacement

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