Leadership Approaches for a New World

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The past few years have brought rapid changes to workplaces around the globe. Between moving to permanent hybrid or remote work setups, onboarding new team members in the wake of the Great Reshuffle, prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in new ways, moving to digital-first business practices, and capitalizing on shifts in market and consumer dynamics, businesses aren't the same as they were in 2019. As organizational dynamics and needs change, leaders also need to adjust their approach.

To thrive in the new world of work, leaders must adapt their styles, methods, and skills. They must be more agile than ever, equipped to guide their teams through periods of disruption, build strong relationships with peers and direct reports, contribute to an inclusive high-trust company culture, and rally their teams around the most important business goals to drive results.

This guide explores four leadership areas that require a new approach to ensure organizations thrive in the new world of work: change management, building trust, transparent feedback, and driving consistent execution.

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Managing Change as a Leader

Change has always been a constant in the workplace, but today, changes are happening faster than ever before. According to a recent Gartner report, 75% of organizations have experienced five major company-wide changes within the last three years. Successfully guiding your team through change takes more than a process. It's your people who make change happen, and as people, we're wired to react to change to survive, which can make change feel difficult or threatening.

While change hits every person differently at different times, there are five common reactions people tend to have in response to change. Understanding these reactions can help your leaders grapple with their reactions to change and help teams move away from the former status quo into a more innovative future:

1. **MOVE:** Acts quickly to embrace new changes.

2. **MINIMIZE**: Goes along with change but contains disruption as much as possible.

3. **WAIT**: Takes no immediate action, waiting for additional inputs.

4. **RESIST**: Fights actively against change and fights to maintain the status quo.

5. **QUIT**: Decides a change ultimately isn't the right next step.

Even the most positive changes, such as implementing more flexible work schedules or rolling out a new mentoring program, can lead to mixed reactions from individuals. In the new world of work, leaders must do all they can to meet their team members where they're at while also casting a vision of what the future holds as a result of the change. This takes time and authenticity—it can't be accomplished without accountability, honesty, and care for everyone on the team.

Creating safe spaces to work through change takes intention and effort, but leaders who do so will reap the benefits long-term.

Building Trust and Inspiring Your Team

The new world of work has created an urgent need for a new style of leadership. Existing employees who've stuck with your company during tumultuous times want leaders to value their contributions and support their personal development. New hires evaluating your company are looking for organizations where their skills will be valued, and their unique perspective will be respected. And every employee learning new job skills and taking on new responsibilities wants to be supported by their leaders as they sail into uncharted waters.

The traditional Command & Control leadership approach prevalent in most organizations doesn't inspire the level of commitment, motivation, collaboration, and performance companies desperately need. Today's leaders have an opportunity to build trust and inspire their people.

Leadership rooted in trust and inspiration requires a new mindset grounded in the principles of human effectiveness. Instead of trying to control others, successful leaders must look for ways to unleash each individual's potential. Rather than motivating people to perform tasks, leaders need to inspire others with a greater purpose and vision. Above all, today's leaders need to bring a mindset of caring and abundance to their daily work, serving others so they can be their best selves instead of putting their own ambitions first.

To make this lasting transformation, leaders must first examine their personal beliefs about people and leadership, then take this new perspective into their into their daily tasks. For leaders working with distributed teams, building trust may involve holding more one-on-one meetings with direct reports, monthly team-building activities to help team members get to know one another better, or running project retrospectives where people can share their honest feedback on what worked and what didn't. Inspiration may take the form of monthly all-hands meetings where leaders share what's exciting in their industry or team show-and-tells where individuals can present projects and customer stories that highlight the importance of your organization's mission.

When executives, managers, and their teams trust each other, everyone can change their behavior in ways that drive individual growth, improve business results, and transform your organization's culture.

Creating a Culture of Transparent Feedback

Giving and receiving feedback is a critical skill for leaders at every level. Feedback can help team members develop confidence and competence, and seeking feedback from others can help leaders grow. However, creating a culture of transparent feedback can be challenging. One study found that 44% of managers find giving and receiving feedback stressful or difficult. Providing feedback in a distributed, asynchronous work environment can add new friction to an already fraught process.

For leaders to effectively deliver feedback, their

teams must know and believe they intend to help them develop their skills and talents, not criticize their performance. In an office setting, this might look like a leader taking a team member out for coffee to have a candid conversation about their strengths and areas for improvement. In a remote or hybrid environment, creating opportunities for feedback requires more intentionality. Some tactics include:

- Scheduling a monthly feedback session with individual team members to give and receive feedback.

- Investing in a digital people management platform that facilitates ad hoc peer feedback.

- If your organization is large enough, fielding anonymized digital surveys to gather feedback on areas for leadership improvement.

- Providing real-time feedback to team members via video chat or one-on-one working sessions.

The more feedback becomes a core part of your leadership culture, the easier it will become for every person to share their candid thoughts and receive feedback with a growth mindset.

"One of the greatest gifts you can give another human being is constructive feedback on a blind spot they never knew they had. It's a great disservice not to say what needs to be said because it isn't comfortable. Care enough to give honest, accurate feedback."

– Dr. Stephen R. Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

Driving Consistent Execution

In today's workplace, where teams are distributed, people work asynchronously, and company goals evolve quickly, it's never been more important to set clear expectations and connect individuals to your organization's mission, vision, and values. Leaders play a pivotal role in helping their teams execute consistently against your business's most important goals—and understanding why their work matters. Your leaders must guide their teams to prioritize and focus on the most important goals. Additionally, leaders must discern the actions and activities that will create the greatest impact and rally their teams behind these activities strategically.

"When your team begins to see a breakthrough result move as a direct result of their efforts, they will know they are winning. And we have found nothing that drives the morale and engagement of a team more than winning."

– Chris McChesney, coauthor of *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*

A few key principles can help your leaders continue to achieve stellar business outcomes, even if they can't check in with individual team members in an office setting every day:

- **DEFINE THE BREAKTHROUGH**: Communicate a clear vision of what breakthrough results will look like so every team member understands what they're working towards.

- **ACTIVATE FRONTLINE TEAMS**: Strategically engage your people to get buy-in and support. Leaders can help everyone focus on a common goal and ignite each person's intelligence to achieve it together.

- **CREATE ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSPARENCY**: Invest in a scalable digital platform with scoreboards that let everyone know if they're winning or losing as individuals, as a team, and as an organization. You can also use weekly meetings to highlight recent successes as well as areas for improvement to course-correct quickly.

- **PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY**: Consistently measure your progress, not just during quarterly or annual check-ins, so you know where your team is heading— whether that's toward the goal or off the map entirely.

Using these key principles, leaders can build a framework for consistent execution, focusing everyone's collective talents and energy toward strategic goals that have a lasting impact on their organization.

Embracing a New Era of Leadership

Leaders in the new world of work need to adapt their approach to build highly effective teams, turn uncertainty into innovation, and deliver exceptional business results. As working norms and business outcomes evolve, help your leaders thrive by:

- Finding effective ways to lead people through change.

- Retiring Command & Control leadership tactics in favor of Trust & Inspire.

- Delivering feedback and communicating openly and candidly.

- Adopting a repeatable system of execution.

Organizations that embrace new leadership methods are well-positioned to change behavior in ways that positively impact everyone, driving collective action and engagement that's sustainable for years to come.

Develop Exceptional Leaders in Every Work Environment

Even great leaders have room to grow as the needs of their team and organization evolve. A whole-person approach to leadership development can help leaders adapt quickly, build highly effective teams, navigate change, and deliver exceptional business results. With the FranklinCovey All Access Pass®, you can maximize your L&D investment by providing access to principle-centered content, a deep bench of expert consultants and facilitators, and innovative technology that supports and reinforces lasting behavior change.

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