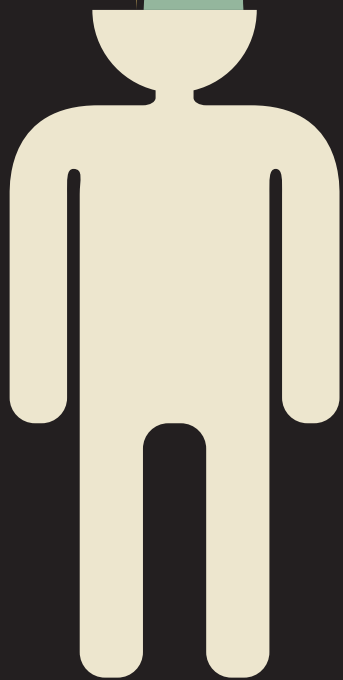


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SUMMER 2017

Influence: *Achieving higher performance*

Lead: *Willingness to use your voice*

Vision: *Shared discovery, challenge, & triumph*

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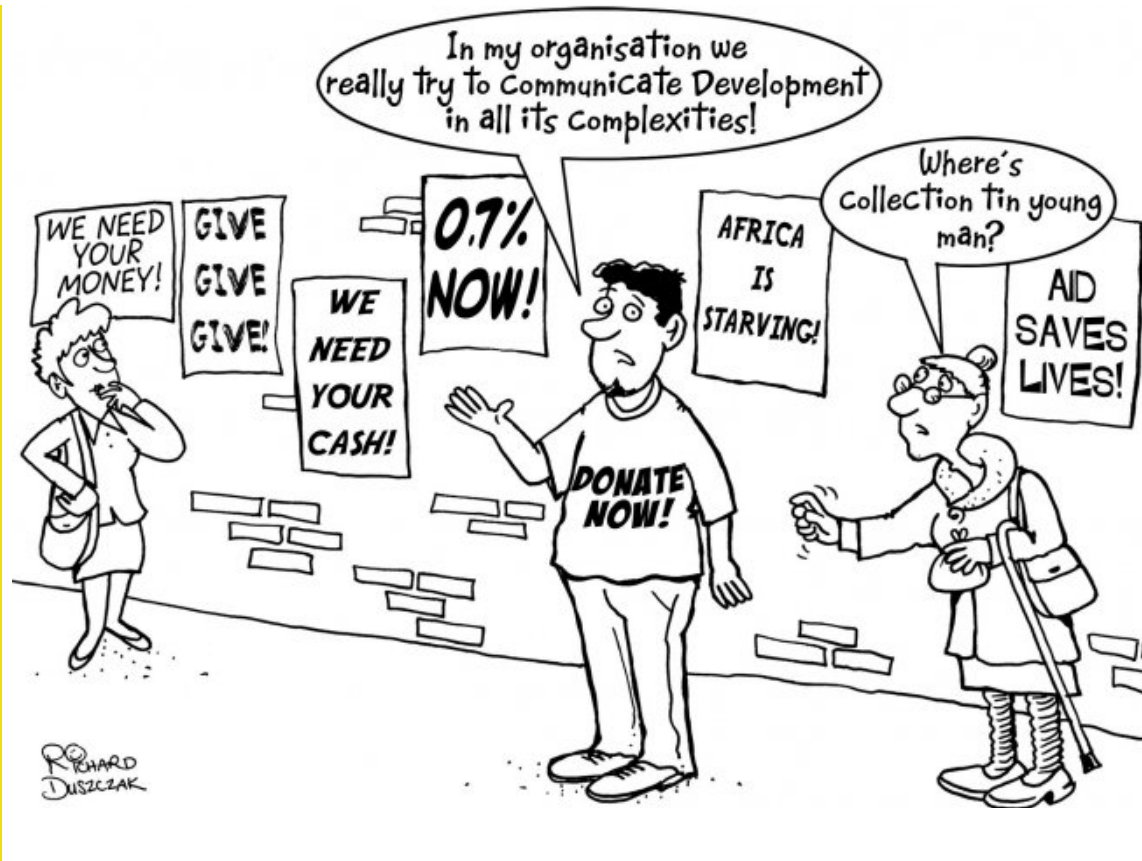
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WE ALL NEED CONVINCING

By Jarrod Shappell

Why did the chicken cross the road?

To avoid the Green Peace person.

Am I the only one that avoids these street-corner-cause-hawkers? And what is it about a “salesy” person that makes me (and maybe you, too) want to avoid them so badly? It’s because every day we spend disproportionate amounts of our time either trying to convince someone else to do something, or deciding whether to be convinced by the countless messages and requests hurling at us from others. And the work of convincing, or screening the convincing of others, can be exhausting.

I live in San Francisco and on the weekends nearly all of our street corners have clipboard toting individuals collecting signatures for their cause. Last Sunday as my family and I were on a walk, we found ourselves surrounded on all sides. Pinned in by Green Peace, public school reformists, and someone with laminated sad pictures of puppies. There was no corner to cross to. I had to talk to one of these “salesy” individuals.

I began talking to Veronika. She told a personal story of how her organization, an arts education program in Oakland, had changed her life and the life of her siblings. She had a notebook with laminated pictures and donor cards. She never opened it. She didn't need to. Her passion for her organization was contagious. I signed. I donated. We hugged.


This lazy Sunday interaction reminded me of three things. Like it or not, 1) we all, in some way or another, do the work of convincing 2) convincing others begins with our own convictions, and 3) determining whether to be convinced by others is much easier when we know our own convictions.

It's easy to see the gimmicks that people use to convince a child to eat their vegetables or a stranger to sign up to donate for a cause. But the need for convincing extends beyond these cliché moments and into our every day organizational lives. IT Leaders convince skeptical employees to adopt new technologies. HR partners convince business leaders to invest in young talent. Marketing tries to convince Finance of the ROI on an upcoming media campaign. Middle Managers present their case for additional headcount to the executive team. Senior Executives are trying to convince an entire organization that strategic change is needed. Given the every day, every job nature of persuasion, shouldn't we all be trying to improve our ability to convince others? And unlike the fact that I was already primed to support Veronika because of my own convictions about education, organizational life is anything but people eager to be convinced. There is so much change being proffered around our organizations, it's hard to know what, or who, to be convinced by, and what to dismiss and ignore.

It would be trite to say that I avoid "salsey individuals" because I am a Millennial. Research shows that Millennials are the least pervious to marketing and promotion. And while that could be the basis of some of my sales-aversion, you may recall the street corner hug Veronika and I shared. All great selling begins with being sold. Or as famous philosopher Thomas Carlyle once said, "let him who wants to move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself." Veronika understood this. Convincing others does not mean that you force something on them or forcibly change their mind. It is demonstrating in the face of resistance, that you are convinced of what you're proposing. It means that we must express our own excitement, keenness, and hope for what is possible.

And though sometimes convincing can feel laborious, shouldn't it also – at least sometimes – be exhilarating? There is something triumphant about influencing others to adopt our ideas. Or seeing a longstanding unproductive behavior turn around. When we successfully convince, we are surged with a sense of significance. When our influence matters, we feel that we matter.

The art and science of convincing others of what we believe needs to be done is something that sets great leaders apart. Starting something new. Stopping something bad. Charting a new direction. Shifting precious resources. Organizational life is an endless series of finding ways to rise above all of the noise to have our influence stick. And given the reality of how much attention we are competing for, it behooves us to make sure our convincing is impeccable.

Over the next three months we want to help us all see that we all do the work of convincing – persuading, influencing, advising – and that in order to lead our organizations well, we must become masters of it. 

Genuine Connection is the Secret to Powerful Influence

By Ron Carucci



Leaders. Sales people. Parents. Coaches. Consultants. Marketers. Therapists. Inventors. Entrepreneurs. There are few roles in life that don't require an ongoing influence of other people. Getting others to reach higher performance levels. Behave in a new way. Buy something you're selling. Change their approach. Invest in your idea. Adopt your solution. Regardless of what you do, chances are you have to exert influence on someone else to accomplish what's expected of you.

The problem is most of us become naturally resistant when we sense others trying to "change" us. We feel manipulated. We distrust their motives. We fear being taken advantage of. And we don't want the comfort of our routine disrupted.

There are some people who just have a knack for penetrating even the hardest of human exteriors and convincing people to get past what's familiar and do the unimaginable. Regardless of their profession, they all have one powerful thing in common. The way they connect. Known formally as "attachment," the ways they construct genuine relationships with those they want to influence melts away natural defenses and opens others to possibility, new ideas, and ultimately, commitment to change.

Attachment happens at the deepest psychological levels.

Attachment happens at the deepest psychological levels. The degree of our capacity for it is shaped by our earliest bonding with our parents. It's not an interpersonal skill mastered through polished technique. Your approach to relationships is a reflection of your innate psychological imprint, and in unhealthy forms, perhaps unaddressed psychopathology. Those who attach in healthy, truly masterful ways that have lasting influence, consistently display these six characteristics. I've intentionally included the "dark sides" of each to help distinguish how they can be used with ill intent, or in emotionally harmful ways.

1. They are vulnerable without manipulating intimacy. Self-disclosure is one of the fastest ways to break down walls and earn the trust of others. A willingness to share appropriate personal details lets others see more of who we are. It conveys a type of risk that invites reciprocity. In an organizational setting, shedding the professional veneer that masks the more human parts of ourselves, helps others feel less suspicious or guarded. It invites them to be at ease, and therefore more open to what we have to say. The degree of vulnerability you need to employ to build attachment is commensurate with the degree of risk you are asking of others, and in what time frame. For example, if you are asking your team to dramatically increase their performance levels in a shortened period of time, being honest about your own fears of failure, or your personal need to stretch to meet the goal can raise their confidence to join you in the leap of faith.

But vulnerability becomes dangerous when it is used to manipulate others to draw close. Sharing personal stories of tragedy to provoke sympathy or exaggerated self-doubt to summon reassurance eventually backfires. People soon realize your self-disclosure is a calculated attempt to engineer a particular reaction from them, destroying the very trust you sought to build.

2. They are curious without ignoring boundaries. Having invited some degree of trust using vulnerability, you can increase attachment by inviting others to open up. Being curious about their story, asking pertinent questions that offer a window into their world-view, struggles, and hopes should provoke true fascination. Great connectors are genuinely awed by what others have to say. They gently probe into areas that seem important to others, and are gracious in how they receive the information. They ask questions that honor the story teller's generosity to share, and paraphrase back to indicate they've understood. The critical focus is on pursuing what seems important to them. If you are guiding the conversation during a complex sale, drawing out the felt needs of your prospective buyer is a way to enhance trust. People feel less risk when exploring a substantial investment when they feel heard and understood.

The problem is most of us become naturally resistant when we sense others trying to "change" us.

But if you isolate details of what you hear just to fit your pitch, you will alienate your prospect. That's because curiosity becomes intrusive when it takes on an agenda. When you start asking questions in clear pursuit of your own interests, looking for ways to connect others' self-reflections to your cause, you have crossed a boundary. People feel honored when others are drawn to their story, especially the parts most meaningful to them. But they feel exploited when that story is picked apart by another's self-interest.

3. They are empathetic without having to rescue. The ability to express care for others is core to relationships of enduring influence. Relating to elements of struggle, legitimizing others' hard-to-admit anxieties, and expressing tender sorrow for others' pain, are key to leveling the playing field in a relationship. Mutuality is best established through common suffering. Change begins when people can take ownership of their difficult circumstances, harnessing insights that can help them learn and move forward.

But empathy goes dark the minute it's used to rescue others. Those we are influencing are often in predicaments, at least in part, of their own making. Peppered into their struggle are feelings of shame, guilt, and regret. Ineffective leaders can't resist the impulse to absolve people of their own contributions with remarks like, "That wasn't your fault" or "That's water under the bridge" or "How could you have known?" Worse, they hijack the focus back to their own struggle with one-up comparisons. "That's not as bad as what I did..." responses, intended to sound empathic, are actually dismissive of other's pain. Rescuing others from their struggles dangerously short-circuits the opportunity for them to learn and grow through them.

4. They offer delight without idolizing. Fewer social experiences are more gratifying than knowing we've been enjoyed by others. Great connectors show their delight in others. Like the amazing hospitality of a gracious host, great connectors make others feel delighted in, welcomed, and special. They create an undeniable warmth that dignifies others, signaling their presence is fondly appreciated. They offer sincere and deserved compliments, white-glove hospitality, and the esteem one would grant a special guest. In the company of such connectors, you hear others say things like, "They just makes me feel so good...like I'm royalty".

But that delight turns ugly when it's faked. We all know how it feels watching someone pretending to laugh at an unfunny joke to cozy up to the joke teller. We can sense when a compliment has been exaggerated past honesty. Feigned enjoyment has a clear motive to suck up, and though it can work on some with gargantuan egos, more often it lethally backfires.

5. They display courage that doesn't demand adoration. Exceptional connectors never pull their punches. They respectfully tell the truth to others even when that truth might be hard to hear. They resist the temptation to self-protect or avoid conflict and speak up when the obvious "undiscussables" need to be addressed. Consultants are often required to name particular issues about their clients that risk being disruptive to the relationship. But the truth is, such honesty strengthens relationships. Great connectors have the courage to say things like, "Jim, the way you handled that situation during the meeting was really inappropriate. I know you probably intended to be helpful, but your harsh tone and language likely left people feeling judged and defensive. Let's talk about what needs to happen now." And while Jim might feel defensive, it's highly probable he already knows things didn't go well and recognizes it takes a real ally to broach it.

Such relational courage is diluted when offered with subtle tones of superiority. Excessive bravura can make others feel beholden to return admiration. Expressions of gratitude that sound like, "Wow, nobody has ever been that honest with me before," or "I'm just so amazed at how you call it like you see it without feeling any reluctance," should not feel good, but signal concern that you've drawn the attention of your client to your behavior, and away from their own.

Building relationships of enduring influence takes hard, emotional work.

6. They offer wisdom without emotionally detaching. When influencing others, it's reasonable to assume that part of our credibility rests on some degree of knowledge or expertise about the particular issue at hand. Offering success stories of others' who've navigated similar challenges, insights about what does or doesn't work, and advice that is contextualized to your listener's situation helps build confidence that your influence is reliable. But the wisdom must ride on the back of the emotional connections discussed in the previous five characteristics, because commitments to change are ultimately made from an emotional place, not an intellectual one.

Wisdom is highly diluted when offered as a surrogate for connection rather than an enhancer of it. Such experts can come across as aloof, even cold. And though they may appear impressively smart, the absence of an emotional connection makes it difficult for listeners to completely trust the wisdom is being accompanied by a personal investment in their wellbeing. Wisdom absent emotional connection is relegated to merely "good suggestions."

Building relationships of enduring influence takes hard, emotional work. That starts with ourselves. The capacity to embody these six characteristics requires deep examination of our emotional and relational health. If you've chosen work that requires exerting ongoing impact on others, do the needed work to ensure you are sufficiently connecting with those you most want to influence. 🚩



How Life Helped Me Lose My Voice

By Josh Epperson



“Who in the room considers themselves a singer? Raise your hand.” Not a hand went up.

“How many hands would go up if we asked that same question to a room full of first graders?”

Someone shouted, “Everyone’s hand would go up.” Others agreed

“So what happened between first grade and now?” A lone voice responded, “Life.”

Everyone laughed.

Guys in Ties, an improv comedy troupe, opened a recent leadership meeting we attended with this back and forth. Their message was clear: Your life shapes your willingness to use your voice.

As a leader, your voice is the primary tool you possess to shape and influence outcomes. This becomes even truer when your success is predicated on others’ leadership. Your voice has the power to build competence, delegate responsibilities, ensure accountability, and set direction. Yet, as your career progresses, so does the library of experiences that help you justify the absence, abuse, or ineffective use of your voice.

Leaders who wrestle with effectively using their voice, often resonate with one or more of the following archetypes.

ARCHETYPE	LIFE'S IMPACT ON LEADERSHIP
WITHHOLDER	<i>Last time I disagreed, he publicly reminded me that I am new to the business. Life has taught me to withhold and play it safe, because I am viewed as inexperienced.</i>
DILUTER	<i>When I've shared all the numbers before, he threw me under the bus for not 'telling the right story'. Life has taught me to dilute my message because the whole got me in trouble.</i>
AVOIDER	<i>I am sick of re-framing the business case, I think we just fundamentally see the opportunity differently. Life has taught me to avoid because I am too tired to do it right.</i>
CYNIC	<i>They're not looking for me to be proactive, they just want me to do what they ask. Life has taught me to be cynical because others don't really mean what they say.</i>
COLLUDER	<i>She's right, people don't listen to me and they're not going to. Life has taught me to collude with other's perceptions because 'they know better than me'.</i>

Do any of these archetypes resonate with your current leadership?
If so, some reflection and targeted action are in order.


REFLECTION: When did you lose your voice? Why do you choose to keep it that way?

- Name a current relationship/situation (e.g., Product Review team meeting; Managing up) and capture the optimal value you bring to it.
- Identify which archetype(s) you're most likely to adapt in that leadership context. (You may even want to write your own.)
- Consider how past life experiences (e.g., a boss who repeatedly criticized you, an important presentation you botched, a mismanaged project, or dealing with a difficult colleague) "warrant" diminished voice in your current context.
- Determine the extent to which those behaviors are still warranted.

TAKE ACTION: Your reflection will likely lead you down one of three paths. In some cases it is necessary to journey down multiple paths in successive order.

STOP PROJECTING REASONS NOT TO USE YOUR VOICE	ENSURE IT'S SAFE TO USE YOUR VOICE	BUILD YOUR VOICE TO THE REQUIREMENTS
<p><i>You may find you're projecting old beliefs into your current context in a way that is adversely impacting your influence (e.g., your current boss is great, but you're behaving as though s/he is your old boss). In which case, you need to stop projecting to effectively influence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the contexts different and warrant new behavior(s)? • Create a plan: If you're a Withholder, capture all your thoughts and ideas beforehand, select those that are essential and commit to sharing them • If it's 1:1, own your development and tell them you're working to not second guess yourself and bring your full point of view • If it's in a group, and not appropriate to own your development, partner with a trusted colleague on what you want to share • In both instances, get feedback on content, approach, and experience 	<p><i>You may be repeating the past (e.g., reporting to a boss who reminds you of an old boss). In which case, you need to ensure a degree of safety or confidence that it won't go how it has gone in the past, to effectively influence. (This work will likely require multiple, successive conversations.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit the archetypes and behaviors that make your voice ineffective • Identify dynamics in the relationship or situation that "trigger" the behavior(s), (e.g., public shaming leads to me diluting and 'playing it safe') • Create a short list of "when I experience X from you, I am inclined to do Y, and it negatively impacts the outcome by Z" • Generate a corresponding set of suggestions that would re-frame the dynamic between you • Scheduling time (over time) to discuss them and align on a way forward 	<p><i>In some instances, you may find you do not have the skills, knowledge, or experience to effectively influence a desired outcome (e.g., required product knowledge or expertise). In which case, you need to build the competence necessary to effectively influence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit the value that must be created between you/those involved • Take a draft pass at the skills, knowledge, experience you believe your "voice" is lacking with regard to creating that value • Individually schedule time with your stakeholders (e.g., one or two leaders you respect on the Product Review Team) • In those meetings: 1) vet your list with them, 2) brainstorm opportunities for you to close gaps, 3) enlist their continued support in your development • Follow up to ensure increased competence is growing your influence

Regaining the ability to Use Your Voice is a noble endeavor. Next time your voice of accountability, competence building, delegation, or vision setting is needed, raise your hand and boldly step in. If we wish to influence others well, we can't stop singing.

For more on overcoming ineffective leadership you may appreciate this set of short articles titled, What's Your Challenge? 



What Good Executives Know About Selling Change

By Mindy Millward

WHAT GOOD EXECUTIVES KNOW ABOUT SELLING CHANGE AND WHY IT'S AS MUCH ABOUT THE SELLER AS IT IS THE CHANGE

She was biting her nails while she sat at her desk reviewing the agenda for the off-site.

I was sitting with this senior executive building an implementation plan for a set of integrated changes that would (hopefully) impact the future of her organization. As she picked apart the agenda, she again wondered whether we had done enough to plan for the activities and events surrounding the roll-out.

Her focus continued to be on the “what” of the change as opposed to the how and who, and most importantly, the “who cares?” I reminded her that the details and content were successfully handled, and now it was time for her to shift focus to how she would personally influence and impact those around her with personal conviction and leadership to what’s next. She gave me the “deer in the headlights” look. Then she quickly said “okay fine, but can I see the t-shirt we are giving everyone that has the new values printed on it?”

Even with all of this focus on off-site agendas and t-shirts, change efforts still fail 70% of the time. So, what do we know about the leaders of the 30% that are successful?

When organizational change failures are discussed (as in the HBR article by Beer & Nohria in 2000 that calculates the 70% failure statistic), focus is often on the dichotomy of whether change is led from the top or encouraged from the bottom. We posit that it isn’t where leadership for change is coming from, but how leadership for change is asserted and exhibited by all leaders as they work to enlist and engage their organizations in a different story of the future. In other words, they know how to sell change, and more importantly, they understand that change is inextricably linked to the convictions of the seller.

In our research on newly appointed executives, we’ve discovered that fully 50-65% percent of them are doomed to fail within the first 18 months. When we think of many of the reasons a new executive is promoted in the first place, a significant amount of them have to do with organizational change being

implemented and those promotions being part of a larger scale change effort. This makes them the centerpiece who is responsible for promoting and selling a vision of the future. One which they probably didn't create, or have yet to find a way to totally embrace for any number of reasons. Does this sound like a familiar recipe for disaster?

So what about the 30% that lead successful change? The most successful leaders, proposing any kind of change for their organization, know that they aren't selling themselves or their own agenda – they are selling a vision for the future. And it takes you being connected “within” (knowing yourself), and “between” to peers to make it a believable sell to the “among” (the greater organization). They are successful because they use their power to influence, persuade, and convince others that staying where we've been is not an option, the future offers better potential for our success, and the journey will be one of shared discovery, challenge, and triumph.


Power isn't defined by span/scope of direct reports, size of P&L, or whether a leader has the ear of the CEO. Instead, we have found that successful leaders define and derive their power to convince from four sources:

Breadth – Leaders that have a comprehensive view of an organization, and its disparate and numerous parts, are more able to build and sell a vision that is inclusive and feels both connected to reality yet hopeful for a different future. They see hairy change problems as a set of systemically linked issues and solve for them without functional or personal bias. People in the organization see themselves as part of the vision for next steps because these leaders are gifted and linking across the many boundaries and silos that conspire to keep us apart – and they ultimately hold others accountable for working across these same organizational divides.

Connection – Executives that have deep personal connections across the business set themselves up for critical support during times of change. They are adept at redefining those relationships as the need arises, without those involved feeling used or faux. They are deep and genuine listeners and are able to turn what they hear into shared stories of desire and accountability for different. They intentionally monitor and use their personal impact both within relationships and across the broader organization as they work to drive change.

Context – Great change leaders know that the change is not about them – and that they cannot be the “savior” for the organization, no matter how big their role is. Instead, they go out of their way to establish deep fluency in the business, its drivers of performance, and how it relates to the external world. Selling change requires that this view of ourselves is deeply and transparently connected to our view of the world. Leaders with great context skills are hugely curious about what is happening beyond their walls and use that knowledge to connect their intimate change to the broader world of the future.

Choice – Finally, great leaders of change know that what they are selling is complex. There will never be a complete set of data that will be the truth for everyone. Instead these leaders are artful at combining instincts (well-honed from a variety of experiences) and analytics. They are thoughtful as they work to make the myriad of decisions which holds enterprise change together. They know when to declare, when to blend, and when to delegate.

If you find yourself biting your nails, stewing over the details of your change plan, remember that most of the decisions we make in life turn out to be right or wrong, not because we had the best plan, but because after we made a decision we were willing to stand up for it with conviction. And there is no t-shirt that will help you with that. 



Insights from Today's Best HR/OD Leaders: 4 Tips to Increase Your Impact

By Whitney Harper

It is difficult to be a prophet in your own land. This is the sentiment most likely to be tattooed on internal HR and OD professionals. Many HR/OD professionals are frustrated at being excluded from substantive discussions or passed over to lead interventions intended to improve the organization's competitiveness. So how do you overcome this perception and generate significant impact? Five industry experts share their insights.

1

BE A BUSINESS PERSON, NOT A CHEERLEADER

“Good talent managers think like businesspeople and innovators first, and like HR people last... During 30 years in business I’ve never seen an HR initiative that improved morale... Instead of cheer-leading, people in my profession should think of themselves as businesspeople. What’s good for the company? How do we communicate that to employees? How can we help every worker understand what we mean by high performance?”

Patty McCord

“I’m not paid to be popular, I’m paid to bring in change for the better of the organization... HR people can’t whine about sitting at the top table if they can’t bring a point of view. They need something to aspire to. They need to be businesspeople in HR - not HR people in business.”

Michael O’Hare

If you want to be a cheerleader, your impact will be limited. If you care about popularity, your impact will be limited. If you focus on morale, your impact will be limited. If you show up as a business leader that is involved in setting and executing strategy, your impact is limitless.

2.

IMPLEMENT WITH THE TOP FIRST

“We take a top-first approach rather than a top-down approach because that’s so crucial to our culture. We always have followed the practice of leaders teaching leaders... Talent development leaders have to be relevant in the C-suite. They have to play the role of partners with our business leaders. And second, we have to implement our new performance achievement approach with them so they can model and lead it.”

Rahul Varma, Accenture

Accenture shocked the business world by eliminating the traditional performance review process. Rahul Varma then lead the internal change effort to completely reinvent their performance approach. As Rahul mentioned, they went “top-first” as a signal to the organization that the changes being made were going to be far reaching and profound. By starting with the top, HR leaders ensure that the senior leaders are engaged, bought in, and aware of the impact this will have on the organization.

3. EXECUTE THE TACTICS FLAWLESSLY

HR is largely still viewed as an administrative function. The work of paying people, providing benefits, solving people problems, and staffing is important — and needs to be executed flawlessly. Only once those tactical bases are covered does HR have the opportunity to do more.”

Renee Raming


In today’s HR world, outsourcing and artificial intelligence is eliminating a lot of the administrative work of the HR department. That being said, it is still a necessary requirement for the business to run. Demonstrate your effectiveness by helping with the maintenance side of the business so you don’t risk an implosion due to HR structures not being in place. (Google Thinx CEO steps down). When you have the administrative side of HR running smoothly, you have the freedom to focus on other areas of impact.

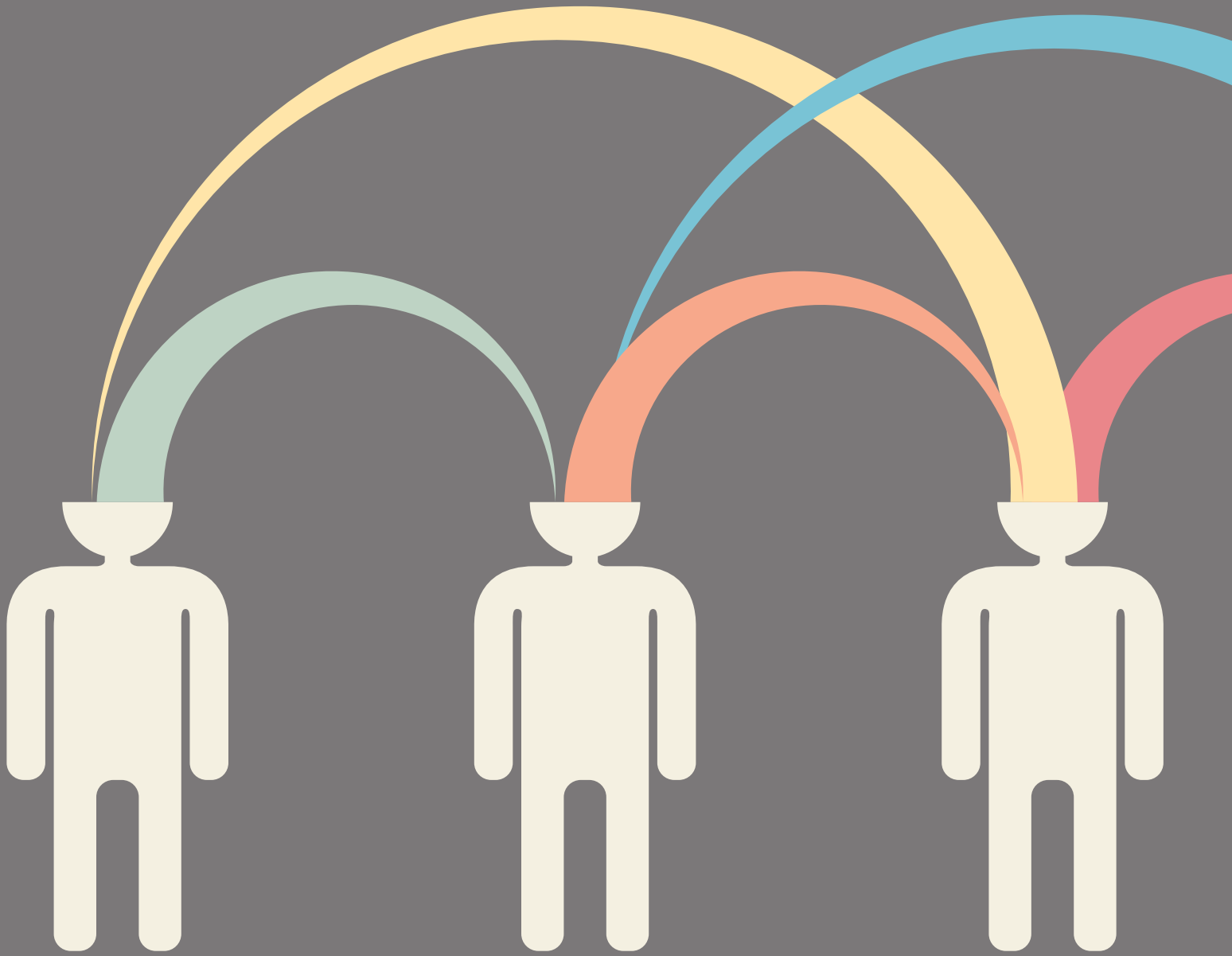
4. STAND FIRM

“This is easy to write, but I can tell you from experience that it’s very hard to do. Managers hate the idea that they can’t hire their own people. Interviewers can’t stand being told that they have to follow a certain format for the interview or for their feedback. People will disagree with data if it runs counter to their intuition and argue that the quality bar doesn’t need to be so high for every job. Do not give in to the pressure. Fight for quality.”

Laszlo Bock

I saved this one for last, because if you follow the first three points, you have earned the right to be stubborn. Prophets are often driven out of their homelands by the majority, which means if you have a fringe point of view, no matter how salient, you are going to have to fight.

To be the prophet that the dictionary describes as the one “who advocates or speaks in a visionary way about a new belief, cause, or theory,” you will need all four tips. And we believe by following these four tips you will be better prepared to both speak to and bring about the future that is best for your organization. 



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