

Mind the (Transformation) Gap

Much of Oaklin's work these days would fit under the banner of digital transformation and focuses on the translation of business strategy into the subsequent programme execution. This activity is often in response to our market-leading clients driving change in their sector. These market changes are, in turn, commonly in response to seismic global and social dynamics. As specialists in helping organisations to shape and drive complex transformation, the team at Oaklin operate successfully in a huge variety of organisational cultures in order to deliver these changes.

In any digital transformation, whilst the technology is a powerful enabler for change, it is the success of the people-centred change management activity which has the biggest impact on whether, and how quickly, strategic transformation objectives are met. Whilst there are numerous people-centred change management approaches, at Oaklin we find that a pragmatic application of PROSCI methods and tools work well with our diverse range of programmes and clients.

The adage that culture eats strategy for breakfast is as true today as it ever was, and it applies to transformation strategy as much as it does to business strategy, and hence to change programmes. A business must embrace and embed a transformation culture for their transformation strategy to be executed effectively. Applying a robust change management method is not enough. Organisations must address the transformation culture gap which often exists, and at a fundamental level this involves helping all impacted individuals to prepare themselves to support, work through and accept the change.

Addressing the transformation culture gap means enabling everyone in an organisation to adopt a 'transformation-ready mindset', creating a culture which recognises that transformation is challenging at a personal level, and helping to prepare everyone to make the transition. By helping not only key individuals, but ultimately everyone impacted by the transformation, to operate with a 'transformation-ready mindset' the organisation will be more able to adapt and embrace the transformation.

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What do we mean by 'transformation-ready mindset'? In brief, impacted individuals will have adopted this mindset when we can see clear evidence that:

- There is a clear collective understanding of the vision for the business, therefore a strong rationale and benefit for the transformation.
- With this, an acceptance that things must change for them personally to achieve the collective vision, that new ways of working and new technology will become the norm.
- People are comfortable with a level of ambiguity and uncertainty, with an expectation that clarity comes through time and practice, and know they have good support from the business and the programme.
- They are encouraged to input, and with that, the confidence to challenge appropriately and the opportunity to ask for clarification and support as needed.
- They accept that things will not run perfectly from day one, and that some workarounds may be required; the business will address these workarounds in time and will not be content to leave the work unfinished.

This requires transformation sponsors and leaders to be visible, accessible, supportive and understanding. There must be tangible progress, and a relentless focus on measuring and celebrating success. There must be no doubt that the business will see through the transformation too. Applying a change management method such as PROSCI does play a key role, but this must be augmented with an approach that helps individuals to adapt, break old habits, and form new ones. Perhaps most importantly, there must be an acceptance that cultivating an enduring 'transformation-ready mindset' through the business takes time and effort.

A 'transformation-ready mindset' should now become a core competency at all levels of an organisation if it is to evolve into transformation-ready business, fit for this age of digital transformation.