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The Dynamics of Communicating Change

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Most organizations operate at the nexus of business, operational, process, and personal drivers. As increasing demands on businesses, force cycle time reduction and increased customer responsiveness, internal processes dictate inventing on a timeline which in turn interact with employee-specific issues like individual growth and task ownership. As organizations seek to gain competitive advantage by embracing change, it is imperative to align these different and differing prerogatives into one single communication strategy.

There are **4 key elements** to this process:

1. First, bring together a **Leadership “Dream Team”** to inspire and energize your organization. Leaders must change themselves and be aligned before they can effectively lead by example. This is ideally achieved by an executive off-site session where leaders discuss organizational dynamics (i.e., confront reality and plan to change the fundamental issues). For change to cascade down through the organization, however, individual leaders whose behavior already exhibits the desired performance must be engaged and distributed throughout the organization to spread the message.
2. Next, unify and invigorate your organization by creating a **Burning Platform** that explains what the change is, why the change is necessary, and how it fits within the overall organizational strategy. The burning platform then becomes a battle cry that energizes your organization. The burning platform has to be translated into a series of “sticky” messages that are memorable and easily remembered & understood.
3. The Burning Platform also has to be created within the context of a **Unique Voice** that is your organization’s own. An important lever in communicating change is creating the right stimuli for changing minds – one that is just right for your organization. As Howard Gardner, a Harvard University professor and psychologist states, in his book “Changing Minds,” “[p]eople with different types of intelligence respond to different stimuli, [and] the process for changing minds is almost a creative endeavor” Thus, the unique voice that needs to be created is actually a series of contextualized, individualized messages that target identified populations within your organization.
4. Finally, a successful and cohesive communication strategy requires a **communication infrastructure** that ties the aforementioned pieces together. This is best achieved by utilizing multiple channels (email, voicemail, Internet); vehicles (news flashes, desk drops); and forums (lunch & learns, gallery walks). Communicating change, thus, requires the orchestration of several key elements – focused and committed leadership; a burning platform with related “sticky” messages rendered in the organization’s unique voice; a communication infrastructure that effectively delivers the messages; and, most importantly, key employees who evangelize the core message constantly.