

FIVE TIPS TO LEADING IN TURBULENT TIMES

By Amy Pott & Arne Buthmann

Are you tasked with leading a function through a major transformation? Here are five tips for successfully getting into a steady water.

1. Develop a common purpose

The first thing is to develop with your leadership team a common purpose behind which you and your team could rally. The purpose defines why the function exists and what its contribution to the business would be. In creating the purpose statement together, the team will own it and will be committed to making it happen.

2. Invest in your leadership team

Engage your leadership team in looking at their individual and collective learning styles, developing behavioral norms for themselves, and exploring how each would respond under pressure and ways to support each other. It is difficult to find time to step back from the crush of day-to-day issues to reflect and invest in the team; however, it is key to the team's ability to ride through the turbulence that lay ahead.

3. Identify flagship initiatives

While keeping the wheels of day-to-day business turning, transforming the function requires the leadership team to be prioritized what needs to be done to build towards the purpose. The team needs to define flagship initiatives that will help them to anchor itself and that represent "must-win" deliverables for the function. The flagship initiatives are also a great way to involve the rest of the function in its execution and, thus, build commitment from everyone.

4. Engage employees and stakeholders

Clear, transparent communications both within the team and externally with key stakeholders and business partners is essential. On the internal side, strong communication platforms help engage and recognize talent. The leadership team needs to invest in in-person meetings such as fireside chats or 1-on-1s. With external stakeholders regular business reviews are important to ensure value delivery.

5. Strengthen capabilities of employees

In the spirit of building an agile organization which can respond to unanticipated changes and requests, it is also imperative to advance key capabilities across the team to foster professional development and maximize the full potential. The leadership team needs to commit to investing in the team and their development by providing learning opportunities in areas such as leading through change, emotional intelligence, continuous improvement, project management.

Conclusion

Leading in turbulent times requires exceptional skills in balancing attention to short, medium and long terms issues, focusing clearly on corporate and business (often competing) priorities, yet taking the time to invest in the development of individual team members, staying open and honest about the challenges and issues, while maintaining a positive attitude and concentrating on what you can influence and improve. The leadership team needs to support each other through the ambiguity and uncertainty. The resilience comes from a strong common purpose, belief in the value of every individual involved, and unwavering commitment to creating an environment in which everyone has the best chance possible to fulfil their own potential.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Arne Buthmann is leading our Pharma Practice Area. As a trained industrial psychologist and specialist in operations improvement, Arne believes that changing how work gets done and learning to behave in new ways are two sides of the same coin.



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Amy Pott has over 15 years of experience in the areas of private and public healthcare. She is currently Head of North America at Sobi – an international rare disease company.

Her past experience includes positions at Shire such as Head of US Commercial Operations as well as US Franchise Head Internal Medicine & Oncology. At Baxalta, she was Vice President of Strategy, Planning, & Analytics. At Baxter she was a Director for Business Model Innovation in Europe and Director for Market Access UK & Ireland. Her executive leadership and international roles have allowed her to support the growth of organizations to the fullest while working with both rare diseases and medical devices.