



CLOs as Organization Transformation Catalysts

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Recently, many C-level studies and white papers have been calling attention to the same "key themes" surrounding the most critical issues that will challenge organizations over the next few years. Foremost among them: enabling organizational speed and flexibility, building strategic leadership capabilities, strengthening human capital/talent management and retention, stimulating innovation and creativity in the workplace and achieving greater customer loyalty and advocacy.

Assuming your organization is like most, this might be an opportune time for you to help drive organizational change efforts that address these key strategic concerns. I suggest you concentrate on three practical focus areas that can help you take the lead as a transformation catalyst.

Define the "Business Model" of the Future

Spend time with the executive team as both a group and with individual members to help flush out scenarios of what the "business model" of the future could (and should) look like. Clarifying a vision for the organization first allows you to prioritize strategic concerns, develop a plan for addressing each of them and conduct a "gap analysis" to determine where the organization stands in relation to its objectives.

Initiate Proactive Change

Although many organizations embark on large-scale transformations, few systematically employ the appropriate proactive "change readiness" scans and change management methodologies that enable leaders at all levels to plan, align and implement the necessary shifts to achieve the bigger vision. I've found the key contributors to success include the ability to uncover and anticipate where the obstacles to change might be and then position and work through them.

Of the many change management methodologies available, I most often use one that features just six critical steps: 1. Clarify your need. 2. Define your results. 3. Produce your plan. 4. Implement your plan. 5. Stabilize your outcome(s). 6. Assess the process.

Needless to say, a number of substeps and considerations also must occur. My point for sharing this model, however, is simplicity. It's crucial to have one methodology that can be learned and applied by leaders at all levels so they can effectively and efficiently plan and implement change, overcoming anticipated issues and obstacles and developing the appropriate contingency plans to achieve success all along the way.

Learn Skills and Mindsets

In this particular focus area, the adage, "When trying to change someone else, start with yourself first," certainly applies. To this end, when acting as a transformation catalyst, be sure you are willing (and able) to shift your own mindset and operating assumptions of how the future business model affects the way the organization works and conducts itself. Effectively facilitating and coaching others to challenge old assumptions, beliefs, processes and business practices will require that you be at least one step ahead of everyone else.

There is an additional, inherent challenge too: your ability to diagnose and define the competencies needed to successfully transform to the future business model. When taking the lead in this area, be sure to help the organization consider the following questions:

- What are the new skills and/or competencies needed on both the organizational and workforce levels to successfully execute our future business model?
- When do they need to be in place and functioning?

The answers to these questions will help you to "retool" your organization and its workforce in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

Clearly, taking the lead as a transformation catalyst will require a great deal of proactive effort — diagnosis, planning, follow-through — and a high tolerance for ambiguity. Being successful in this role, however, certainly will strengthen your position as a strategic business partner and leader within your organization. ■

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