

Not taking kindly to transformation?

Incremental culture shift is slow, while transformation delivers wide-reaching changes fast. Michael Anglin takes a closer look

Is there really a need for transformation, or do we just need to keep pace with changing environments, increase customer expectation and the employee's desire for satisfaction at work?

Much depends on the objectives of the organisation, as all change should be driven by the needs of the company and not some whimsical belief based on the latest book.

All too often an executive board is presented with the solution to a commercial problem which involves the cascading of the new vision, endless papers on strategy and a sheep-dip workshop for employees that is designed to change mindset and beliefs.

When an organisation embarks on a culture change programme, the first step for senior managers is to really understand what culture is — and I would go as far as to say

The major influence on culture in an organisation is the management style and the way in which performance is managed. In my experience, if — as a business leader — I want my employees to act in certain ways, it is my job to create a context that they understand: one that gives real meaning to the demands I am making of them. I must also create an environment where it is not possible to display inappropriate behaviour and where people are actually recognised (paid more) for doing well. Therefore, at the core of any change programme must be a performance management system that supports and encourages new behaviours that are in line with the company's stated objectives. This can often mean the beginning of a very difficult period for



Incremental change is slow, laborious and goes unnoticed, so tends to have less impact. This is fine when a firm requires little change. But if fast, wide-reaching changes are needed, then transformation is the way to go.

However, it takes incredibly strong leadership and vision to take a company through a major transformation. Moreover, given the lack of time normally invested in developing leadership skills, is it any wonder that today's UK organisations struggle with the concept of culture and reduce it to a series of communications from 'up on high'?

It is wise to take note of the fact that there are many examples today of UK firms where the inability to transform themselves has led to take-over and even bankruptcy. This is because they keep their heads in the sand and were being managed by traditional business administrators and not leaders with an entrepreneurial outlook and a desire to be the best that they can be. ■

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Given the **lack** of time invested in developing leadership skills, is it any **wonder** that UK firms struggle with the concept of culture?

that even the use of the word 'culture' can become a distraction to those involved in managing change.

Rather than define what culture is, it is more useful to focus on the effect it is having on the people in the organisation and how that affects the way the firm then serves its customers. Whatever the culture is, it is reflected in the attitudes demonstrated by members of the organisation on a daily basis, so the true evidence of transformation can be measured by the changes in attitude.

managers and staff alike as the way that they think and feel about their jobs and themselves will be challenged.

So, back to change versus transformation. If I have a house and I build an extension, that can be termed as change. But if I take the same house and pull the whole thing down to its foundations and build it back up again so it's unrecognisable, this is more like transformation, which is why the objectives of the company and the commercial needs should drive any change initiatives.