

Leading your own change

Questions about the future guide today's decisions in the right direction and prepare us to respond quickly and effectively to the waves of change.

BY ANDREA CHURBA

In a volatile and unstable environment, doing nothing, or continue doing the same as always, is equivalent to being swept away. We need to prepare ourselves and update our competencies to the needs of the new scenarios.

In the context of innovation and permanent change in which we live, conformity to customary ways of thinking and making is no longer possible. To adapt, keep growing and survive, organizations need to make profound changes, and they need their leaders to transform themselves at the same time.

A challenge of change is a dance between the organization and the individuals that compose it. If people do not change, organizations do not change, and the same thing happens in the opposite direction. The individual and the cultural aspects are deeply intertwined; they feed each other and move forward together in a spiral. People are shaped by the cultu-

re of the place where they work and, simultaneously, we are shaping the new culture with our own change. Which new skills and abilities do we demand from an uncertain and volatile environment? Although we do not know with certainty what the future needs are going to be, it is evident that some of the competencies and ways of thinking that up to now have been useful to us, they will soon become obsolete, if they are not already. We need a new mindset, intelligence for change that allows us to face not only the challenges of the present but also the successive waves of change, increasingly fast and disruptive. We can take the initiative and anticipate what the future proposes by leading ourselves to improve our attitudes and competencies, and acquire new ones that enable us to respond with creativity, agility and efficiency to the swings of the environment.

In the first place, we have to become more insightful in order to detect



Andrea Churba is the founder and director of the consultancy agency called Business Therapy, specializing in the development of strategies for growth and deep and simultaneous change of individuals and the culture of the organizations. She acted as general coordinator of the Enterprise and Business Division of the Argentine School of Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Coaching and as a staff advisor for Project 911 of the Ministry of Security of the Province of Buenos Aires. Together with her team, she assists several companies and institutions in their processes of change, including Techint, La Nación, Clarín, Turner, Transportadora de Gas del Peru (TGP), Compañía Operadora de Gas del Amazonas (COGA), Basf, Renault and Aeropuertos Argentina 2000. She currently collaborates with Red Solidaria to achieve labor reintegration of homeless people. She writes for Ohlalá, in the Magazines Department of La Nación and she is author of Lead your own change (Granica 2017).



new options that are available in the environment but our regular perception patterns, consolidated by our experiences, our culture and that of the organization, do not let us see them. Reading the context in a poor way is like using a GPS with an outdated program: it only informs about the narrow roads that we are used to go through and not about the recently opened four-lane highway, which can take us quickly and non-stop to the place we want to reach. If we flexibilize and enrich our perception we will be able to detect with greater clarity the opportunities and the risks and elaborate more adjusted hypotheses about what is to come. By expanding our perspective we can also imagine the future we want and build from there the steps to achieve it. To lead us towards the results we are looking for, it is useful to ask ourselves questions:

What do we need to change, improve or generate in order to move in the right direction? What do we need to do differently? What new attitudes and competencies demand from us the strategic objectives and the initial structures of the organization? In addition to the knowledge and technical expertise, it is very likely that we will have to invest in improving the skills to persuade and motivate others so that they get on the boat of change and paddle along with us in the same direction.

To allow something new to grow, we have to weed the ground beforehand. That is why it is interesting to ask ourselves which dysfunctional habits and practices we should eliminate in order to move faster and more effectively. Maybe we have to stop getting into everything, let go of the ego and control so that the people and teams

that we lead can gain autonomy. We may have to abolish an overly bureaucratic decision-making process that slows down or paralyzes initiatives. Or perhaps it is a matter of letting go of some of the goals in favor of others that represent a priority. No less relevant is to question ourselves what is important to keep through changes and design strategies to protect it. Whether it is proven practices that we still consider useful in this context, values or identity issues, lack of attention to what needs to be taken care of can raise the barriers of resistance in ourselves and in those around us, and sabotage the process of change. On the path towards personal transformation there are no magic recipes. Perseverance and patience, permanent experimentation and adjustments, tolerance to uncertainty, errors and frustration are required. Like any learning process, it has painful and uncomfortable moments that can only be overcome if we stay motivated, looking beyond the present to the difference that our contribution can make in the construction of culture and the type of organizations that we wish for. ▽

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