



**DISRUPTIVE HR**  
BUSINESS PARTNER PROGRAMME

## Your Interactive Workbook

### EPISODE 4: YOU AND YOUR LEADERS



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS

In this Episode we look at how you can better understand what makes your leader's tick and how you can help them lead more effectively by delivering HR differently.

## WHY IS CHANGE SO HARD?

A [McKinsey study](#) found that merely 26% of transformation initiatives succeed. The one thing in common in most successful transformations is - Change is driven through empowerment, not mandated from the top.

Let's begin by looking at why change is so hard:

1. It tends to be top down – change happens ‘to you’
2. It’s presented as something big, long and complicated which can be off-putting
3. It often involves loss – of status, of certainty, of habits
4. It’s seen as logical – a clear business case – rather than an emotional state

And yet, we have been able to change quickly during the pandemic!

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

Help your leaders understand ‘why’ they need to change. Begin by reflecting on the type of reactions you typically get when you embark on change to identify the issues you currently face with your leaders:

- They don’t listen to your advice
- They haven’t got time for the people agenda
- They want you to do it for them
- They have low level people skills

Once you’ve identified the issues, you can start working around how best to communicate with them. A great way to do this is to develop and use a leader persona to understand ‘why’ they would want to change and customise your messaging and plans based on them. Each persona will have their own attitudes, experiences, fears, and motivations, and we should be taking them into account. If we’re serious about crafting messages that work, we need to dig deeper into their needs.



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS



MICHAEL

For example, Michael is old school and resistant to change. He doesn't believe HR has anything to offer him. To help get this leader persona on board, focus your attention on getting early adopters to lead the change so Michael can see the results.



JESSICA

Jessica is neutral and would be willing to get involved if you showed her how it could help deliver business results. Build your messaging around presenting HR solutions that conveys to her what needs to change by providing other options that could perhaps be a better way of doing something and showing her possible results she can expect to see.



OLIVIA

Olivia is curious and willing to give it a shot. Tailor your messaging to make it exciting and informative for Olivia to want to get involved.

## GIVE LEADERS USEFUL DATA AND INSIGHTS:

The next step involves giving your leaders useful data and insights that will help them along this change journey.

Data is important but data alone never convinced anyone to change their behaviour. Use it sparingly to attract people's attention.



For example, Deloitte used 'shock and awe' data to get their management to sit up and take notice of the 2 million hours spent on performance management when 75% of them had got the same rating in a five-year period.



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS

Apart from useful data, consider ways to provide your leaders with insights regarding their team that will help them lead more effectively. For example, help them better understand what is unique about the individuals on their team or to be aware of the drivers for each individual on their team.



For example, at Wipro they had very high turnover and they wanted to look at ways to reduce the churn. They introduced a simple problem-solving exercise during onboarding. The results were shared with the individual and the line manager. This insight helped line managers make decisions that helped the new hire onboard in ways that worked best for them. As a result, they found that their turnover reduced by a third during the first 6 months.

## TIPS AND TOOLS TO GET THEIR OWN INSIGHTS



Equip them with tools to get their own insights like LinkedIn did by using stay interviews. When they found that they were losing technical talent to competition, they developed something called the 'Love Bus Tour'. The idea was to equip leaders to have conversations with those identified as a flight risk to recognise their contributions and understand their aspirations so they could then prepare personalised action plans accordingly.

The [SCARF Model](#), a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others is a great tool to equip your leaders with. You can use this framework for building self-awareness and awareness of others amongst leaders. Share this link to the [SCARF Assessment](#) with your leaders to help them better understand their own and their teams' threats to Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness.



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS

## DELIVERING HR DIFFERENTLY

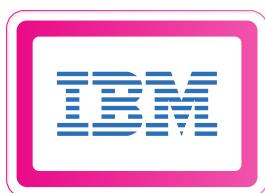
While traditionally we've had our set ways of delivering HR, if we want our leaders to buy into our ideas going forward, then we can adapt approaches from our colleagues in Marketing and Agile Product Development. Consider some of the following approaches:

### Think product, not services:

We are responsible for creating the conditions where our people can increase their agility, innovation, productivity and collaboration and to do this we need a mindset shift to think 'HR products' not 'HR services'. When we think of products, we have a different starting point when it comes to designing it. Whereas service design is all about streamlining the process, product design is all about the end user and this mindset shift will enable us to customise our approaches to reflect the needs of our people.

### It doesn't have to be perfect:

Incorporate agile product design techniques such as hackathons, sprint planning and minimum viable product (MVP). Using an MVP is an approach where your goal is to build the smallest, quickest, yet functional version of your idea — something that can be tested quickly and easily, over and over, until it works as you get early adopters on board.



For example, IBM adopted this method when they were reworking their performance management process. Rather than producing all the documentation, the process, training programmes, scripts to go alongside etc., they produced a video of what the new approach might look like. They sent this out and asked for people's feedback to which they received thousands of responses. They kept building in the changes to the video and sharing it to get feedback until they felt they were ready to finalise their new system.



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS

## Make it ‘Psychologically safe’ for them to try things out:

If you want your leaders to feel comfortable trying new things out, then you need to make them feel psychologically safe to come out of their comfort zone. You can do this by creating a safe space for them to share their problems and concerns or help them see the advantages of celebrating their failures to drive innovation and creative thinking.



For example, ‘leading together’ was a priority during Ford’s transformation. Top managers were brought together weekly to assess problems and progress. At every meeting, managers were asked: what have we learned by airing concerns, making course corrections, and especially, fixing problems together?

## Shrink the change:

Make the change seem smaller by shrinking it down to manageable chunks. While a long-term programme or change initiative may seem complicated and scary, breaking it down into smaller and more achievable tasks, may encourage your leaders to try it.



For example, at Electronic Arts they call it ‘smallifying’. They found that when tasks were broken down into particular problems to be solved, which were manageable and could be tackled within one or two weeks, developers were more creative and effective.

## Focus on what you want them to achieve:

Instead of complex competency frameworks and lists of skills and behaviours that no one can remember, let’s turn that on its head and start with the outputs we want to see. What do we want our leaders to achieve? What does success look like? How do we want people to feel as a result?



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS



For example, Microsoft had a complex leadership model to start with. As part of their cultural refresh, they revisited Microsoft's leadership principles and went from over 100 competencies to three big ideas: Create clarity, generate energy, deliver success. Since clarity, energy, success is so simple and cohesive it makes it easier to guide decision-making in the moment which after all is why you created the competencies in the first place? Did that meeting generate energy? Does that marketing plan create clarity?

## Use nudges:

Using nudge techniques is a great way to provide subtle suggestions or encouragement to 'nudge' people towards different choices. Here's a great template from the [Google whisper course](#).



For example, at the Boston Consulting Group, they use nudges to promote better work life balance. BCG created a digital nudge as part of an internal directive to be more considerate of employees' life outside of work. The firm recognised that BCG leaders have to reinforce the desired culture through their own behaviour. It created a macro in the company email application that causes a pop-up window to appear whenever leaders attempt to send a message after hours.

The nudge appears at the exact moment leaders need a reminder that the action they're taking may not align with what the company expects of a considerate team player. In keeping with the nature of good nudges, it doesn't block their ability to send the message. Nudges shouldn't take away someone's ability to choose; they should simply make the desired behaviour easier or more compelling at the moment of decision.



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS

## Reframe to help leaders think differently:

Challenge your leaders to look at things through a different lens. Reframing, simply put, helps your leaders to see things differently, thereby helping them to come up with alternative solutions.



For example, to help their leaders reframe the issue of flexible working with a different mindset, Unilever says their starting point is that “every job can be done flexibly”. That way it’s up to the individual and their manager to try and make it work.

## Learning from each other:

Provide opportunities for your leaders to learn from one another. Make sure it's not all about the process as that shouldn't be the focus of these sessions. Encourage leaders to discuss their challenges, discuss movement for their people or just provide a safe space for them to talk about any issues they are facing.



At Novo Nordisk they set up something called a ‘Manager Club’ where leaders could bring to the table any issues, they wanted to discuss like for example employment policy or reward practices.

## Think marketing, not compliance:

In HR we tend to be very ‘proper’ in our communications and most times this comes across as lacking personality. Try and adopt practices from your marketing colleagues to help make your comms more appealing. Some of the ways in which you can do this is by adopting practices like naming it something catchy to attract attention, building a relationship with your target audience through adopting permission marketing, provide useful content to engage your audience instead of using broadcasting, consider using a rolling launch instead of a one-time roll out so you can keep the excitement going and introduce new features and benefits as you go along and finally put some effort into getting to know your audience so you can market your change based on their needs, preferences and wants.



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS



For example, at Virgin Trains, they named their reward programme 'You're Amazing'. This brings attention to its reward and recognition element and also ties in beautifully with its consumer brand. The 'Virgin Trains Benefits Programme', on the other hand, would sound like some type of social security plan!

## Attract rather than force:

Instead of pushing out stuff to our people like mandatory training, mass roll out of programmes etc. try to gradually bring your people along with you on the journey. Do this by starting with the early adopters – people who are happy to try the beta version first. We spend so much time and energy on trying to convince the biggest resistors which usually ends with us delaying our launch or compromising and diluting our offers when what we need to be doing is using a pull strategy by shining a light on those that have adopted it and to emphasise the benefits they have seen from it.

Also consider finding influencers within your business and using them as change agents. And finally keep reminding your leaders of the impact they have so they continue to role model throughout the period of change.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. We need to be clear on why our leaders would want to change. Use persona to help you understand what makes them tick.
2. Give your leaders useful intelligence to help them manage their people better. This might include data – but give them insights too.
3. Try out some agile design techniques – such as 'early adopters' or 'sprint planning' to deliver HR in different ways.
4. Make it psychologically safe for leaders to try new things.
5. Use 'nudge techniques' and re-framing to help change behaviours.
6. Think like a marketeer! We have to sell to our leaders if we want to engage them.
7. Don't waste your time and talents on the biggest resistors.



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS

## REFLECTION:

Reflect on different leader personalities in your business area. Identify and create your employee persona for your business area (ideally 4, think about their personalities and preferences to get started). You might find this [step-by-step guide](#) helpful while completing this exercise.

## YOUR ASSIGNMENT:

Share the [Disruptive Leader's Diagnostic](#) with your leaders to help them build more self-awareness.



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS

## FINDING THE EARLY ADOPTERS:

Identify one or two leaders who might be open to the idea of doing HR differently. Have a chat with them to get an idea of what they are curious about or frustrated with.

Based on the feedback, find what changes (however small they may be) you can make to start collecting data or see the result/impact of the change. This will help you build your case for when you want wider adoption of the change.

What could be done differently?

How can you make the change?



# YOU AND YOUR LEADERS

## MY NOTES

