TALOGY

CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS: EMPOWERING LEADERS TO DRIVE FUTURE-PROOF CULTURE CHANGE

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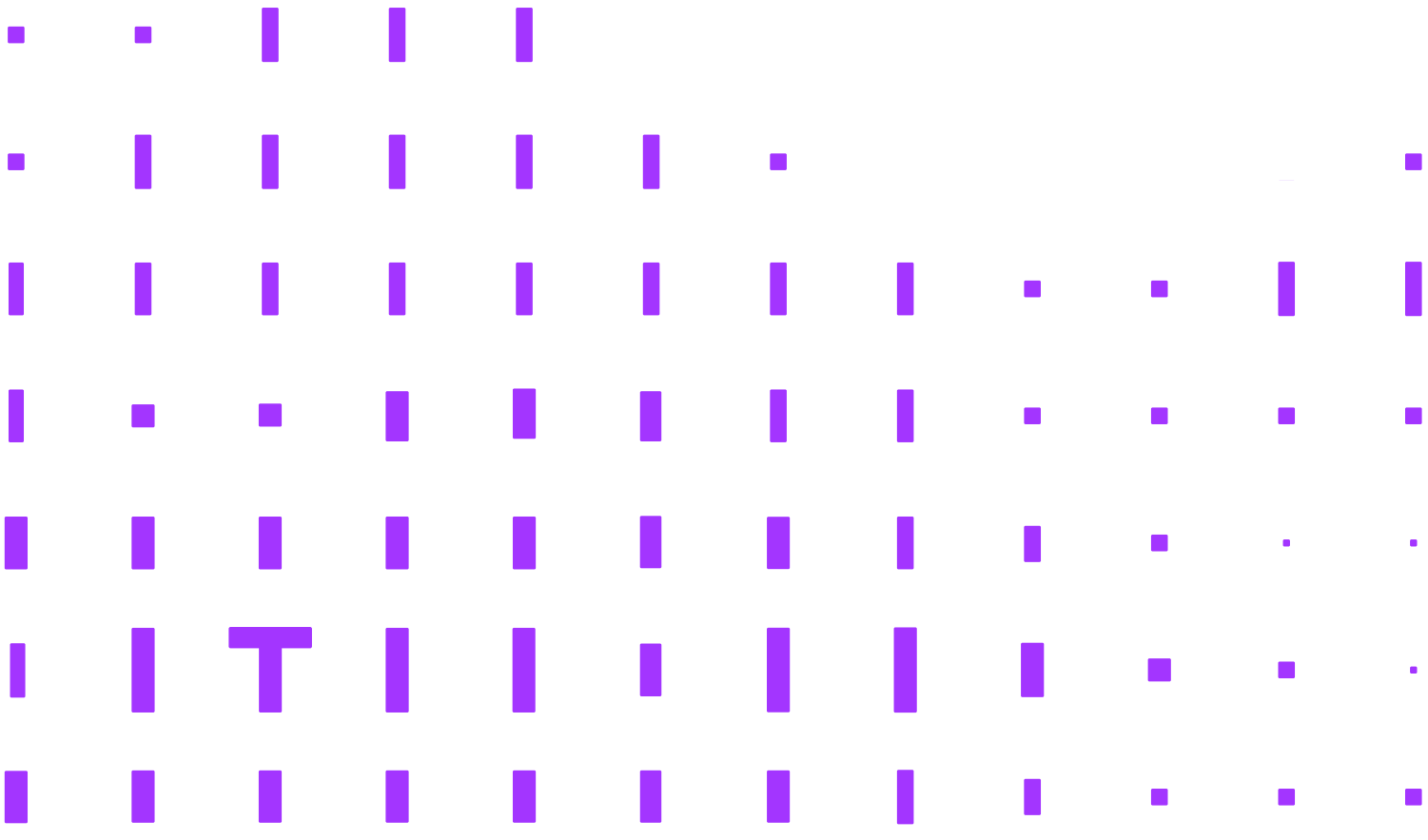

Rapid change has become part of the new normal in organizations worldwide, which is influencing what it means to be a successful company in today's marketplace. The organizations that enjoy lasting success are those that don't resist change but embrace it, understanding there is a key ingredient to success in times of transition: company culture.

In a 2021 survey, 72 percent of leaders and employees agreed that culture helps successful change initiatives happen. If so many understand its importance, why is organizational culture so often a hindrance to organizational change instead of a catalyst for it? How can organizations develop more positive, future-ready cultures?

The key to this question lies with the people in the organization. People are essential when it comes to realizing positive culture change.

Organizational leaders, specifically, play a key part in driving the change that needs to be realized. They are essential for communicating, role-modeling, and supporting change across your organization. Learn how to empower your leaders to be the champions of culture change that help your organization succeed, now and in the future.

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of leaders and employees agreed that culture helps successful change initiatives happen.

"A positive company culture is a significant determiner of employee well-being, motivation, performance, and — consequently — organizational success."

Why is culture change important for future success?

One of the only things we can accurately predict about the future is that change will continue to come. In order to adapt to change and remain viable, companies should focus not just on making the changes needed now to keep up but on being future-ready.

Future-ready companies can gain a competitive edge as they anticipate change before it happens, allowing them to more easily adapt to the evolving environment. In other words, they remain agile and open-minded in the face of new challenges.

Being future-ready has to characterize a company down to its very DNA at the culture level. It ensures an environment where employees are empowered to thrive, regardless of what challenges and changes come their way. This agility must be woven into the fabric of a company's culture to allow its people to shift and re-focus as needed.

What exactly is organizational culture?

Culture can feel like a fairly abstract word, but understanding its meaning is critical. Organizational culture is essentially your company's personality or identity and encompasses your organization's strategies, actions, values, and mission. Culture influences every aspect of your organization, and your employees could likely describe your organizational culture based on their day-to-day working experience.

The complex nature of culture means that it requires dedicated attention if an organization wants to change it or even wants to maintain a positive culture. Too many companies treat culture like a project, but it isn't as simple as a one-time initiative. Your culture will only fully flourish if you treat it as an essential asset you're constantly refining.

Why should companies invest so much time and attention into optimizing their organizational culture? In short, culture can be the linchpin that determines your overall success. According to McKinsey:

> Among the most successful companies, culture forms the backbone of organizational health and fuels sustained outperformance over time: **Companies with strong cultures achieve up to three times higher total returns to shareholders** than companies without them.

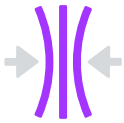
What are the key characteristics of future-proof workplace culture?

While we can't predict exactly what the future will hold, we can feel confident there are some qualities that characterize organizations that can successfully navigate the rapidly changing world.

The culture of future-proof organizations balances clear direction from a unifying purpose with the flexibility needed to embrace innovation and change.

Let's take a closer look at the key aspects that help build a future-ready company culture:

Agility to easily adjust approaches and redirect action when changes occur



Resilience to bounce back from setbacks and maintain a positive outlook

Employee well-being as a key condition for long-term motivation and innovation

Diversity and inclusion to create a dynamic and versatile, complementary workforce

Human-centered leadership where leaders empower their people and motivate and inspire

What role do leaders play in culture change?

When it comes to any type of culture change, leaders play a pivotal role. Their attitudes, words, and actions can either help or hinder the process.

According to recent Gallup research, there is a strong positive correlation between employees strongly agreeing that "their leaders help them see how changes made today will affect their organization in the future" and those strongly agreeing that "their company has the speed and agility to meet customer and marketplace change and [...] know what's expected of them." These employees also report higher levels of engagement and lower levels of stress, burnout, and excessive workload.

To encourage culture change among their employees, leaders must:

- **Inform:** Leaders need to talk about change in positive and informative ways to help employees understand why the changes are being implemented and what they're adapting to or striving toward.
- **Inspire:** Leaders must walk the talk by acting as role models for the attitudes and behaviors they want to see from their employees.
- **Enable:** Leaders need to enable change through a focus on optimizing well-being and motivation, maximizing room for collaboration, and ensuring access to resources so employees feel energized and ready to adapt.

How can leaders help their employees embrace culture change?

Changing an organization's culture is about changing both hearts and minds — inspiring the motivation to embrace change and building the understanding and skills to enable a new way of working in your company. There are several ways leaders can enable culture change in their organization and help employees understand and adapt.

1. Ensure awareness and understanding

Leaders should clearly communicate to their employees the what and, more importantly, the why behind the change. In other words, share the organization's vision for the change with employees so they know and can appreciate what they are working toward.

For example, if employees are asked to make time for one-on-one chats with coworkers, they should know this move relates to a larger effort to enhance collaboration and closer connections across the organization. The more employees understand changes in the organization, the more likely they are to positively contribute to the process.

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2. Build commitment through listening

A transition takes time, generally starting with employees letting go of the old way, then moving through a neutral period before they fully embrace the new. Leaders must give their employees time and space to adjust without feeling whiplash.

One way to build commitment amongst employees is through group sessions and individual meetings, where employees can share their concerns and questions and leadership has the opportunity to genuinely listen. Feeling heard by leadership is essential for creating true buy-in and trust across the organization.

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3. Inspire your employees by acting as a role model

Setting the right example is essential for inspiring employees to adopt culture change. Leaders must act as role models, showing what it looks like to embrace transformation and help create a new company culture.

Research shows that leading by example significantly influences the cooperation of followers. When employees see their managers enthusiastically participating in change and contributing to a positive culture, many will naturally find themselves imitating this behavior.

4. Motivate employees to change

Leaders can help their employees see change as a positive opportunity and actually get them excited about changes instead of being gripped by apprehension. One way to boost employees' motivation and morale is by celebrating successes throughout the process.

Leaders can also motivate employees to embrace change by including them in it, asking for and leveraging their ideas on how to change or how to implement change. This collaboration can greatly enhance buy-in and positivity across the organization.

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5. Support employees with the resources they need

Employees may need extra support as they make changes, and leaders should do their part to provide this support. No matter how high employees' levels of motivation or willingness to adapt are, if they lack the practical tools they need, they may still flounder.

Where employees are struggling, managers should identify these issues and proactively seek out solutions so their people feel capable of embracing the culture change and acting in the new intended way.

How can organizations empower their leaders to drive culture change?

In order for the organization to truly change its culture, individual leaders must be supported and enabled to embrace change and lead the way for their employees.

Build buy-in and understanding

It starts with important conversations behind the scenes to help leaders understand the vision for change. It can be difficult for managers to spearhead change when they're impacted just as much as their people. Organizations should recognize that leaders need space to come to terms with change, too, and share their thoughts before they're ready to motivate others. Leader forums can be a great way to facilitate these discussions.

Discuss leader-employee dynamics

Leaders should also understand their role in helping employees embrace the vision for culture change. Discuss questions like:

- How do we want our employees to behave, and how do they need to feel to behave this way?
- How do we move them from their current beliefs and feelings to where they need to be?
- What do people believe about the organization that will help or hinder this change?

This important exercise can uncover core beliefs that may derail change, such as a lack of trust in senior leadership.

Set performance expectations

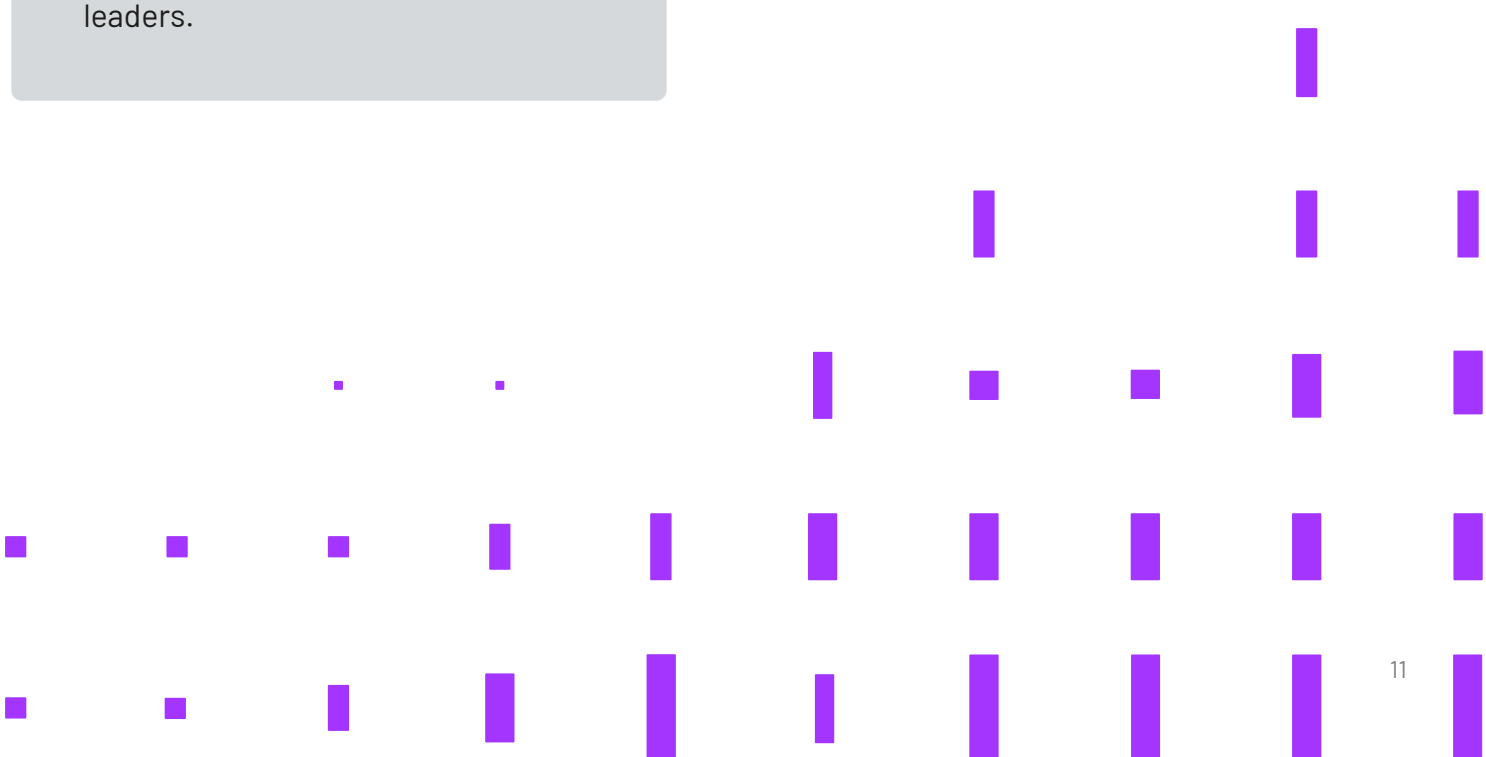
Organizations must also set performance expectations for leaders that will support culture change because their positions as role models are so critical to the culture. Ensure leaders know what's expected of them going forward and what measures of success will look like.

Provide the practical support leaders need

Organizations must also equip leaders with the practical resources they need to drive culture change and empower their employees. For example, this might include training on how to communicate change and new technology tools to facilitate collaboration.

Invest in leaders' well-being

Culture change is an intense process, not just for employees but also for leaders. Companies must invest in their leaders, ensuring they're set up for success and that their mental well-being is always a priority. Don't allow leaders to become overworked, overwhelmed, and burnt out. Even when the pace of change feels demanding, promote a healthy work-life balance for your leaders.



How can Talogy help companies embrace and drive positive change?

Change is inevitable, so now is the time to consider whether your organizational culture enables the agility needed to succeed. Are your leaders and employees resilient enough to meet the next set of challenges head on and continue to flourish?

At Talogy, we understand organizational culture and the impact it has on success. Talogy provides consulting, using our own research on resilience and effective leadership to help organizations future-proof themselves and enhance their culture.

This process typically involves:

- Identifying the culture you need to deliver your business strategy and stay future-ready
- Determining where you are in achieving that culture
- Working with your organizational leaders and leadership teams to help you close the gap
- Developing leaders and leadership teams to equip them with the skills required to remain agile and future-focused

Ready to learn more about how Talogy can work with your organization to help empower leaders and achieve your goals? Explore our talent management solutions for creating a resilient and adaptable culture, and feel free to reach out to our team whenever you're ready.

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